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Key Strategies for Employee Engagement Enhancement Initiatives -A Case of Monthly Employees of the Private Seafood Manufacturing Company

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Abstract

Employee engagement is critical for driving organizational performance, reducing turnover, and promoting employee well-being. This study focuses on identifying the key factors influencing employee engagement in a private seafood manufacturing company in Thailand. A mixed-method approach, combining both quantitative surveys and qualitative management interviews, was employed to gather insights from 259 employees from monthly employees out of the total population of 748 people based on the selected working location. Key findings indicate that recognition, well-being, and collaboration are significant factors affecting employee engagement, with recognition being the most influential. While company culture and leadership were explored, they showed no significant impact in this context. Based on these findings, strategic recommendations were proposed to enhance employee engagement through tailored recognition programs, work-life balance initiatives, leadership development, and the integration of technology to improve communication and productivity. These strategies aim to create a sustainable work environment that fosters employee satisfaction and long-term business success. Future research could expand the scope to explore engagement factors among daily employees and across different industries.

Keywords: Employee Engagement, Recognition, Well-Being, Collaboration, Leadership

Introduction

The global business environment, particularly in the seafood industry, is undergoing rapid changes. Uncertainty across multiple domains societal, technological, economic, and political requires businesses to adapt and innovate. Employee engagement has emerged as a critical factor in organizational growth, promoting motivation, productivity, and adaptability in employees, which are essential for business continuity and competitiveness.

In a globalized and increasingly competitive market, the seafood industry faces challenges like rising costs, fluctuating energy prices, and geopolitical tensions. Employee engagement in such industries is paramount to ensuring sustained productivity and overcoming

external economic factors. Engaged employees demonstrate proactive behavior, making them invaluable assets in a workforce that is increasingly seeking flexibility, autonomy, and a meaningful work-life balance.

In the Asia-Pacific seafood industry, there is an increasing focus on long-term strategies such as environmental, social, and governance (ESG) compliance. Companies are also capitalizing on more diverse labor forces across countries. However, labor shortages and the growing demand for purpose-driven jobs remain a challenge for sustaining talent engagement.

In Thailand, the manufacturing sector is heavily reliant on labor, with millions employed in the industry. To remain competitive in the labor market, organizations must ensure their compensation and benefits align with industry standards. Additionally, companies must foster a culture of responsibility, inclusivity, and clear communication to attract and retain talent.

Organization Background and Problem Statement

This case study focuses on a private seafood manufacturing company of Thailand that has demonstrated strong leadership and strategic planning in navigating industry challenges with its core business from seafood expertise and innovation illustrated by successful global brand portfolio both branded and OEM in various countries around the world.

The company's efforts to enhance employee engagement through structured programs, leadership development, and cross-functional collaboration have contributed to its resilience and success.

The company, as it continues to pursue growth and achieve its revenue targets, acknowledges the significant role employees play in overcoming challenges and adapting to global and domestic changes. Employee engagement drives proactive behavior and commitment, which are essential for organizational competitiveness. Through a positive work environment, leadership, collaboration, and well-being programs, the company aims to unlock employees' full potential. This study explores the key factors influencing employee engagement, integrating practical strategies from research to enhance engagement and drive organizational performance.

Research Objectives

1. To identify key factors that influence Employee Engagement of the monthly employees in a private seafood manufacturing company.
2. To gain insights from the management group interviews that are related to the factors influencing Employee Engagement.
3. To design key strategies for enhancing Employee Engagement based on the research findings.

Research Questions

1. What are the key factors that influence Employee Engagement of the monthly employees in a private seafood manufacturing company?
2. What are the themes from management group's insights gained from interviews that relate to the factors influencing Employee Engagement?
3. What are the key strategies and recommendations to enhance Employee Engagement based on the research findings?

Significance of the Study

The findings from this study will offer valuable insights and designed strategies to enhance employee engagement within the labor-intensive industry. By analyzing key themes and exploring impactful initiatives, the study provides practical alternatives for executing engagement strategies. These findings will serve as a reference for companies facing similar challenges, showcasing how successful engagement initiatives can improve business performance. Ultimately, the study contributes to the existing body of knowledge, offering a case study that highlights effective approaches to boost employee motivation and organizational success.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

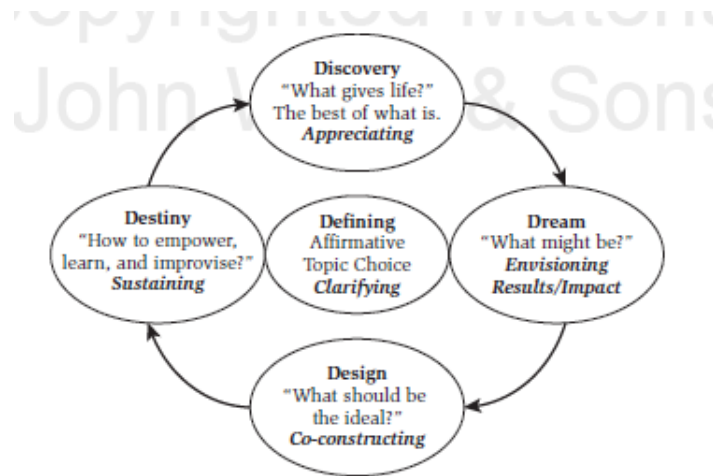
The research was conducted within a private seafood manufacturing company in Thailand, targeting monthly employees across all levels and work functions within a single business entity. The study excludes daily employees, primarily Burmese nationals, due to potential language barriers. The target population represents 10 percent of the total employee base. Findings are specific to this location and context, limiting their general applicability to other subsidiaries or businesses within the group, which may operate under different business conditions and organizational structures.

Literature Review

Employee engagement, as outlined by Kahn (1990), is influenced by psychological factors such as meaningfulness, safety, and availability at work. Building on this foundation, Bakker and Albrecht (2018) further explain that engagement arises from both personal and job resources. Specifically, when employees feel valued and have access to leadership, recognition, and development opportunities, their engagement levels increase. This heightened engagement involves a deep psychological involvement and commitment to tasks, leading to increased productivity and organizational success. Engaged employees demonstrate proactive behavior, problem-solving, and dedication (Deepalakshmi et al., 2024; McShane & Von Glinow, 2010).

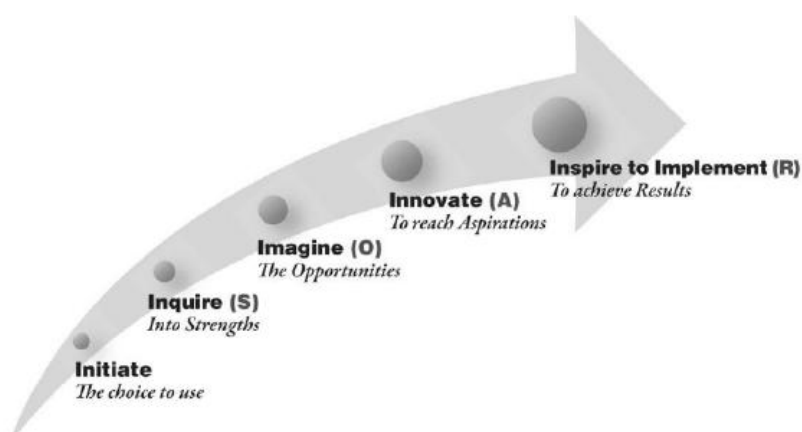
Moreover, frameworks such as Positive Organization Scholarship and Psychological Capital focus on human potential and strengths. These approaches not only enhance employee commitment but also contribute to long-term organizational success (Luthans & Youssef, 2004; Stavros & Cole, 2014).

In addition to these frameworks, Appreciative Inquiry introduces a the concept of positive changes by focusing on strengths, generating new connections and innovations (Stavros et al., 2018).

Figure 1*5-D Cycle of Appreciative Inquiry (Stavros et al., 2016)*

It guides practitioners the process in organization development as identified in Figure 1 which comprise of Defining, Discovery, Dream, Design, and Delivery, representing the process of defining the purpose, discovering the goal, dreaming to amplify the positive core by imagining possibilities for the future, designing toward action steps and continuing on the promise dreams. (Stavros et al., 2016)

In alignment with the concept concentrating potentials and possibilities, SOAR Framework drives organizational performance through strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results (Stavros & Cole, 2014) as demonstrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2*SOAR Elements (Stavros & Cole, 2014)*

SOAR engages the stakeholders in conversations to inquire into strengths, opportunities, and aspirations to create shared values, vision, mission, goals, strategies, and results.

Integrating leadership and motivation theories, transformational leadership motivates employees by creating a vision, fostering trust, and inspiring high engagement through recognition and collaboration as explained by Bass and Riggio (2015). It supports the positive principle of SOAR Framework by emphasizing strengths and aspirations, thereby enhancing overall organization performance.

Furthermore, Social Exchange Theory (SET) as explained by Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) suggests that when employers provide resources e.g. recognition, career growth, employees reciprocate with engagement and performance. This relationship underscores the importance of resource allocation in fostering an engaged employee.

It is also backed by Vroom's Expectancy Motivation Theory that motivation depends on expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. Employees are motivated when they believe their efforts lead to valuable rewards, thereby aligning individual goals with organizational objectives (Dessler, 2017).

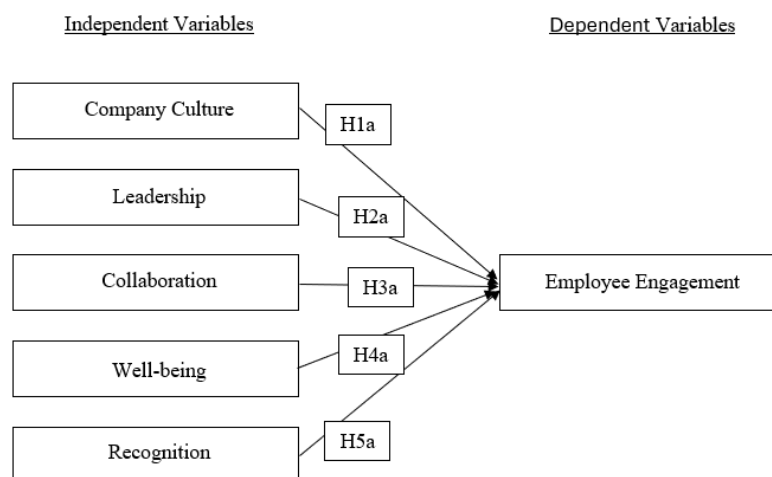
Similarly, Equity Theory which explains that employees perceive fairness by comparing their input-to-outcome ratios to others. Perceptions of under-rewarding can decrease motivation, while equitable rewards foster sustained engagement and commitment. (McShane & Von Glinow, 2010) Designing proper reward distribution is thus critical for maintaining high levels of employee engagement.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is comprised of 5 independent variables company culture, leadership, collaboration, well-being and recognitions which are assumed to show influence level toward the dependent variable employee engagement.

Figure 3

Conceptual Framework



Hypothesis

According to the dependent variables and the independent variable proposed as the conceptual framework, there were five hypotheses for examination of relationship.

Table 1*Statistical Hypotheses*

Hypothesis	Statistical Hypotheses
H1o	Company Culture has no significant influence on Employee Engagement.
H1a	Company Culture has significant influence on Employee Engagement
H2o	Leadership has no significant influence on Employee Engagement.
H2a	Leadership has significant influence on Employee Engagement
H3o	Collaboration has no significant influence on Employee Engagement.
H3a	Collaboration has significant influence on Employee Engagement
H4o	Well-being has no significant influence on Employee Engagement.
H4a	Well-being has significant influence on Employee Engagement
H5o	Recognition has no significant influence on Employee Engagement.
H5a	Recognition has significant influence on Employee Engagement

Research Methodology**Research Design**

The study adopts a mixed-method research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to identify key factors that influence Employee Engagement of the monthly employee from the employee's point of view in cooperated with leadership (BU Head Level)'s point of views and their endorsement from potential initiatives and possibility holistically based on SOAR and appreciative inquiry approach. Data collection involves an online questionnaire survey using a 6-point Likert scale and open-ended questions (based on SOAR and AI concepts) distributed via online form. A semi-structured interview was conducted for targeted informants. Descriptive analysis was applied for demographic data, while inferential analysis (multiple linear regression) tested the hypotheses. Qualitative data were coded and summarized into a frequency heatmap and content themes.

Research Population and Sample Size

The study targets 748 monthly employees in a private seafood manufacturing company, focusing on shared experiences of company culture, leadership, and welfare policies. A sample size of 259 respondents was determined based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970), representing diverse demographics. Additionally, 8 informants from management (BU Head Level) comprising various functions ranging from Production, Quality, Safety, Health and Environment, Planning, Logistic and Procurement, and Human Resources who participated in the interview.

Quantitative and Qualitative Research

The questionnaire survey was designed based on existing literature and adapted from relevant textbooks, articles, and studies on employee engagement. It consists of 36 questions, with 30 questions using a 6-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree) as a part of quantitative data gathering, and 6 open-ended questions are considered as a part of qualitative data gathering. The survey is divided into two sections: Section 1 covers demographic information, while Section 2 explores the factors affecting employee engagement, aligning with the research objectives and conceptual framework to gather data for comprehensive analysis.

Three questions based on SOAR and AI were proposed for the semi-structured

interview for management group to gather additional qualitative data for further analysis. The proposed questions are:

Table 2

Open-Ended Questions for Interviewing

SOAR	AI	Interview Questions
Initiate	Define	What does Employee Engagement matter for the company in your point of view?
Inquire	Discover	What are key factors influencing Employee Engagement?
Imagine Innovate Implement	Dream Design Destiny	What strategies or activities can we do to enhance Employee Engagement going forward?

Validity and Reliability Test

The result of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) from 3 specialists participating in this study to validate the structure and congruence in alignment of the research objectives and definitions of terms shows that the total 36 questions were accepted to proceed in the questionnaire survey with the average result at ≥ 0.66 .

The acceptance level of the Cronbach's Alpha result is at > 0.7 to determine the validity and consistency of scales for assessment. The set of questions was conducted in a different group of respondents for 35 respondents in total.

Table 3

Result of Cronbatch's Alpha

Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability
Company Culture (CC)	5	0.788	Reliable
Leadership (LS)	5	0.886	Reliable
Collaboration (CL)	5	0.921	Reliable
Well-Being (WB)	5	0.866	Reliable
Recognition (RC)	5	0.904	Reliable
Employee Engagement (EE)	5	0.769	Reliable

Results and Discussion

Descriptive Result

From the descriptive result comparison among six variables, the mean scores for these variables range from 4.57 to 5.00, reflecting overall positive perceptions of the employees.

The result shows positive factors from employees' perception toward Leadership (LS), Well-being (WB) and Collaboration (CB) with the average mean scores 5.00, 4.90 and 4.89 in which Well-being (WB) shows the strong consistent agreement with the average standard deviation 0.795, while Recognition (RC) has more room for improvement, based on the lowest mean score 4.57 and highest variability of standard deviation at 0.957.

Table 4*Means and Standard Deviation of Factors Influencing the Level of Employee Engagement*

Abv	Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
CC	Company Culture.	259	4.74	0.845	Agree
LS	Leadership		5.00	0.862	Agree
CL	Collaboration		4.89	0.844	Agree
WB	Well-being		4.90	0.795	Agree
RC	Recognition		4.57	0.957	Agree
EE	Employee Engagement		4.68	0.850	Agree

Multiple Linear Regression Result

Multiple Linear Regression result, revealing that Collaboration (CB), Well-Being (WB) and Recognition (RC) have significant influence toward Employee Engagement (EE) of the company. On the contrary, Leadership (LS) and Company Culture (CC) have no significant influence toward Employee Engagement (EE) of the employees.

According to the beta result, improving activities or strategies related to recognition programs and practice would positively impact 39.36 percent change in the level of Employee Engagement (EE). The respective results guide that improving activities or strategies related to employee's well-being would influence the level of Employee Engagement (EE) for 23.41 percent and 16.88 percent from improving sense of collaboration among the employees in the organization.

The Coefficient of Determination $R^2 = 0.619$ determines that the independent variables; Company Culture (CC), Leadership (LS), Collaboration (CL), Well-being (WB) and Recognition (RC), represent 61.90 percent of the variance from all factors influencing Employee Engagement while 38.10 percent can be explained by other factors beyond this study.

All VIF values are within the acceptance range at below 10, indicating no significant multicollinearity issue among the predictors.

Table 5*Summary of Multiple Linear Regression*

Independent Variables	Beta	Significant (p)	VIF	Influence Rank
Recognition	0.3926	<0.001	2.75	1 st Significant Influence
Well-being	0.2341	<0.001	2.58	2 nd Significant Influence
Collaboration	0.1688	<0.001	1.62	3 rd Significant Influence
Leadership	0.1196	0.854	2.33	No Significant Influence
Company Culture	0.0107	0.110	2.24	No Significant Influence
R	0.787			
R^2	0.619			
Adjusted R^2	0.612			

Hypothesis Testing Result

From the result of Significance (p), it can be concluded that Company Culture (CC) and leadership (LS) have no significant influence toward the level of employee engagement of the company. While the result supports the idea that Collaboration (CL), Well-Being (WB) and Recognition (RC) have significant influences toward the level of employee engagement in this context.

Table 6*Summary of Hypotheses Testing*

Hypothesis	Statistical Hypotheses	Statistical Analysis	Significant (p)	Result
H1o H1a	Company Culture has no significant influence on Employee Engagement. Company Culture has significant influence on Employee Engagement	Multiple Linear Regression	0.110	Fail to reject H1o
H2o H2a	Leadership has no significant influence on Employee Engagement. Leadership has significant influence on Employee Engagement		0.854	Fail to reject H2o
H3o H3a	Collaboration has no significant influence on Employee Engagement. Collaboration has significant influence on Employee Engagement		<0.001	Rejected H3o
H4o H4a	Well-being has no significant influence on Employee Engagement. Well-being has significant influence on Employee Engagement		<0.001	Rejected H4o
H5o H5a	Recognition has no significant influence on Employee Engagement. Recognition has significant influence on Employee Engagement		<0.001	Rejected H5o

Table 7*Theme Summary from Semi0Structured Interview*

SOAR	AI	Interview Questions	Top 3 Common Theme
Initiate	Define	What does Employee Engagement matter for the company in your point of view?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employee retention and turnover reduction - Employee growth, development, and passion toward their jobs - Knowledge sharing and succession for business continuity
Inquire	Discover	What are key factors influencing Employee Engagement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supervisor and leadership - Welfare and benefits - Work environment and relationships
Imagine Innovate Implement	Dream Design Destiny	What strategies or activities can we do to enhance Employee Engagement going forward?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employee development program - Work-life balance and workload allocation - Flexible benefits

Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that employee engagement is crucial for organizational success in the context of a private seafood manufacturing company. A high level of engagement drives employee retention, productivity, and growth. Recognition emerged as the most influential factor, significantly boosting employee motivation and performance. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses aligned in identifying leadership, collaboration, and well-being as key drivers of engagement. However, there are differing perceptions regarding work-life balance, highlighting the need for tailored strategies to meet diverse employee needs to capture more opportunity in drawing diverse skilled talents from external market, however, the identical business requirement may need further discussion and proper design to support business operations effectively. Alternative flexible programs such a flexible benefit can be designed and proposed for discussion in order to assess potential impact both internal employees, business operations in terms of costing and potential talents in the external market as well.

This comprehensive alignment underscores the importance of enhancing leadership and recognition programs to improve employee engagement and organizational performance.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis and conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance employee engagement:

1. **Employee Development Programs:** Well-designed employee development programs, budgeting and effective learning tools to support structured learning opportunities like leadership coaching, best practice sharing, and cross-functional projects to foster continuous skill development and motivation.

2. **Compensation, Benefits, and Recognition:** An annual plan to regularly review compensation and recognition programs, offering flexible benefits aligned with employee needs, such as health insurance and family coverage.

3. **Leadership Development:** A leadership capability development program of middle-management and lower level to create a firm foundation with proper managerial skills in promoting proper communication, giving constructive feedback, transparency, and trust-building of the next generation leadership. The well-equipped leadership capability can sustain talent pipeline in succession planning program to ensure business continuity holistically.

4. **Technology and Innovation:** Software that leverage process efficiency and decision making such as PowerBI for data visualization driving strategic data-driven decision making for management and further analysis for middle-management to identify possible areas for improvement, while Power Automate which apply Robotic Process Automation in process and flow design in which reduce repetitive processes and routine tasks automatically. These improve process efficiency and better time allocation of employees to focus on strategic action and process improvement instead of non-value added activities which can improve collaboration, productivity, and work-life balance.

5. **Teamwork and Collaboration:** Activities and leadership as a role model to encourage a team-oriented culture through group activities to enhance team spirit, relationships and productivity.

Implications for Future Research

The findings of this research provide valuable insights into employee engagement strategies within monthly employee groups of the seafood manufacturing industry. The study can be replicated in other companies where they seek for how to improve Employee Engagement situation in prioritizing Company Culture, Leadership, Collaboration, Well-being and Recognition variables. Future research could explore more among daily employee groups in which have more diversity in terms of nationalities and number of population as well as external factors, such as market conditions or technological advancements, influence employee engagement. Additionally, comparing these findings across different industries or regions may provide a broader understanding of the strategies needed to enhance engagement across various business environments.

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