What Impact Does Agent Engagement Have on CSAT?

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Enough studies have now been conducted to prove the link between agent engagement and positive customer satisfaction. Even without a study to corroborate this link, when one thinks of Apple stores or Zappos , an immediate association between highly engaged team members and superior customer experiences comes to mind. According to the 2013 Gallup study, "State of the American Workplace", the top 25% most highly engaged companies have significantly higher productivity, customer ratings, profitability and less turnover and absenteeism than companies in the bottom 25%. And yet according to the *Gallup Management Journal*, only 29% of U.S. employees feel actively engaged in their jobs. This clearly indicates a disconnect between employees and their employers. The good news, however, is this chasm can be overcome.

What do we mean when we talk about employee engagement and how can your organization mimic the success of the top 25%? Employee engagement goes far beyond motivational posters on the wall and office parties. Forget buzzwords and motivation techniques that ring hollow. For meaningful employee engagement that translates to positive outcomes for your customers, your employees need to feel and know that they are trusted to do the right thing in any defined situation. When employees feel they are part of the solution and they're entrusted to behave positively and productively, they feel engaged. When employees are given the opportunities to collaborate, innovate and communicate they are more likely to deliver exceptional customer service. When your customers feel an honest connection to your company via your agents, they are more likely to remain loyal to your brand. Agent engagement isn't something that can be taught in a one-day training course, and it doesn't happen in a silo. Honest engagement happens organically when the culture fosters a two-way relationship between employee and employer. For agent engagement to translate into positive customer satisfaction, your company culture must allow for agents to be empowered to act in the customer's best interest.   One such company that emphatically believes in the merits of engagement is TELUS International. They co-developed and implemented a "Moment of Truth" approach to customer service, which was shared with every agent and leadership team. The "Moment of Truth" program was founded on a binary measurement system and an ethos that empowered agents to solve a customer's issues and then document their decision-making process. There is a direct connection between culture, engagement, attrition, CSAT and revenue as seen at TELUS and other organizations that focus on their culture and engagement.

A published paper by Solomon Markos and M. Sandhya Sridevi of Andhra University "Employee Engagement: The Key to Improving Performance" found that a stronger predictor of positive organizational performance is in how its employees are engaged. When there is a two-way relationship between employee and employer, employees feel more emotional attachment to their company and thus perform at higher standards. Employees will go that "extra mile" if they feel

engaged and empowered to have enough autonomy in their interactions with customers. While the idea of giving such leeway to employees makes some managers squirm, the data clearly shows that this type of leadership and company culture has more positive upsides than negative downsides. Having a strong manager-employee relationship is paramount for employee engagement and retention. In order to create a highly engaged workforce, a manager must: Align efforts with strategy, empower their employees, encourage and foster teamwork and collaboration, help employees grow and develop both personally and professionally, and provide the appropriate support and recognition. We know the benefits to your company's bottom line when your agents feel engaged, but what about your customers? How is customer satisfaction measured? There too, we have ample data showing the positive effects between agent engagement and customer satisfaction. Many metrics used to identify productivity within a call-center don't always paint a full picture. The old thinking was the most productive agents, in terms of length of call and number of customers handled in an hour, were seen as the best, but when productivity was matched with customer satisfaction surveys a whole new picture appeared. When CSAT surveys are carried out in tandem with monitoring delivered service, it is found that being on hold for an additional thirty seconds has little effect on satisfaction, but CSAT surveys bottom out when customers don't feel engaged with the agent. As customer's expectations change it becomes increasingly important to understand how to best engage them so they remain loyal and willing to try your different products. Agent engagement with customers matters more now than ever. Research done by the government of British Columbia, to see to what effect employee engagement had on customer satisfaction, found a direct correlation between employee engagement and customer satisfaction.

Hopefully your organization is already on its way to changing its culture to better empower your agents through collaboration, communication, and innovation. The results are clear: When employees are engaged, not only is it better for your bottom line but your customers will be more satisfied as well.