

Guest Contributor, From the PHP Team

Employee Engagement vs. Employee Satisfaction What's the Difference.



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Hear from Christine Boles, PHP Director of Human Resources, on taking your company to the next level through employee engagement.



While the terms "employee engagement" and "employee satisfaction" may sound like the same thing, they are actually quite different. Even though these terms are frequently used interchangeably in the HR world, you need to understand the difference and how they relate to each other if you're building a thriving company.

First, some definitions and a tiny bit of theory

Employee satisfaction is the state of a worker enjoying their job, and the job meeting *their* needs. Elements of employee satisfaction are associated with hygiene needs in **Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory** and include things like pay and benefits, working conditions, supervision, and perks. Imagine the employee who shows up, puts in their time, does the job, and leaves. They have great relationships with their co-workers and like their boss, they enjoy the company perks and feel they are paid fairly....they are completely satisfied with their job. Who wouldn't be? This sounds like a great place to work!

Employee engagement is something that occurs when workers are committed to helping their companies achieve company goals. Engaged employees are motivated to show up to work every day and do everything within their power to help their company realize its vision and goals. Motivation factors in Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory include things like challenging work, recognition, meaning, growth, and being part of something you believe adds value to a larger purpose.

What do turnover rates indicate?

Many companies focus on whether their employees are satisfied or happy, and expect higher satisfaction will lead to engagement. This is understandable-hygiene factors are pretty easy to identify and to improve. When a team is satisfied with their jobs, they're content with showing up to the same office every day and aren't on the lookout for the next job. These companies have low turnover rates that convince management the company is doing pretty good from an HR perspective, with a high level of satisfaction throughout the team. But, this doesn't translate into how a company is doing on the engagement front.

Why engagement is important

While engaged employees are usually satisfied with their jobs (Herzberg would say hygiene items must first be present in order to move to the next level of motivation), satisfied employees are not necessarily engaged employees.

Satisfied employees may handle the responsibilities and duties of their job well, but will seldom go above and beyond on a regular basis. This is the key differentiation between engaged team members and satisfied workers. When employees are engaged, not only are they happy to have their jobs but they also think about how their company can be better, find ways to innovate or improve, and are willing to spend their discretionary effort to help the company succeed.

Understanding the difference between satisfaction and engagement, what each means, and the fact that *both* must be present in a company, is your first step toward meaningful employee engagement. Engagement is what will make the difference in the long run between a company that survives and a company that thrives.

<https://educationlibrary.org/herzbergs-motivation-hygiene-theory-two-factor/>