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33 How to improve work engagement?

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Introduction: from treatment and prevention towards "amplition"

This chapter deals with how to enhance work engagement and other related, positive psychological states. In answering this question, we take an individual as well as an organizational perspective. So we rephrase the question in the title as: what can the employee do in order to flourish and thrive at work, and what can the organization do in order to promote a flourishing and thriving workforce? Before providing an overview of individual- and organization-based intervention strategies, we outline the broader positive psychological framework of these "positive" interventions.

Traditionally speaking, individual and organizational interventions in occupational health psychology are rooted in the so-called "medical disease" model. This means that interventions are carried out only when something is wrong or malfunctioning, and with the sole objective of fixing it. Essentially, a preventive approach operates according to the same logic of the medical model, albeit that the intervention focuses on future damage and damage control, rather than on momentary damage *per se*.

Currently it seems that we are entering into a novel phase of development that we would like to dub "amplition" (Latin, *amplio*; to enlarge, increase, or magnify). In contrast to treatment and prevention, amplition is not based on the maxim of the medical disease model – fix what is broken – but on the positive psychology principle of improvement or betterment (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Amplition is about "positive" interventions that promote, increase and improve employee health and well-being, including work engagement. In a way this is a logical next step of widening the scope because treatment is – by definition – restricted to employees who suffer from an identified disease, whereas prevention is restricted to those who potentially may suffer from it. Amplition goes one step beyond to include the *entire* workforce because it is based on the belief that improving employee health and well-being – including work engagement – is a long-term mission that requires continuous and sustained effort. Instead of replacing one another, treatment, prevention and amplition supplement one another by widening the scope, not only from diseases via potential diseases to employee health and well-being, but also

from individual sick or distressed employees, via particular groups at risk, to the entire workforce of the organization.

About "positive" interventions, happiness, and work engagement

Unfortunately, to date only very few interventions to improve work engagement exist and have been tested. The available interventions – particularly those that focus on the individual – are typically not targeted at the workplace and aim at increasing happiness in different life areas instead of engagement at work. For that reason we have to broaden our scope and include other positive psychological states, which are usually subsumed under the overarching and interchangeably used headings of "happiness" or "subjective well-being". Basically, happiness or subjective well-being refers to the preponderance of positive emotions such as joy, satisfaction, enthusiasm, and interest. These positive emotions partially overlap with our definition and operationalization of work engagement in terms of vigor, dedication and absorption. For instance, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale includes items that explicitly refer to positive emotions, for example: "I am enthusiastic about my job" and "I feel happy when I am working intensely" (Schaufeli et al., 2002). The main difference between happiness and work engagement is that the former refers to a more general and context-free positive psychological state, whereas the latter is more specific and work related.

That happy employees are important for organizations is exemplified by a meta-analysis of Lyubomirsky et al. (2005) which showed that happy employees:

- are more likely to secure job interviews;
- obtain better jobs with more autonomy, meaning, and variety;
- are more positively evaluated by their superiors and by others;
- handle managerial jobs better;
- are less likely to show counterproductive and retaliatory workplace behaviors such as stealing, bullying, and sabotage;
- exhibit pro-social behavior at work, such as altruism, courteousness, and helping others;
- show less withdrawal behavior, such as turnover and absenteeism;
- are less likely to burn out;
- show more extra-role behavior ("going the extra mile"); and
- show superior performance and productivity.

This profile of happy employees is remarkably similar to that of engaged employees, who also work in challenging jobs, show personal initiative, pro-social behavior, extra-role behavior, less withdrawal behavior, lower

burnout levels, better physical health, and superior academic and job performance (for an overview, see Schaufeli & Salanova, 2008; Salanova & Schaufeli, 2009). Taken together this suggests that it is viable to broaden our scope and to discuss positive individual interventions that promote happiness.

An overview of individual-based interventions

"Positive" interventions that aim at increasing the individual's level of happiness – including an employee's work engagement – may focus on changing the individual's behavior, on changing the individual's beliefs, or on changing the individual's goals and motives.

Behavioral strategies

Practicing virtues One of the basic principles of positive psychology is that sustained happiness – or work engagement, for that matter – is not fostered by the pursuit of pleasure (*hedonism*), but instead by leading a meaningful life (*eudamonia*). That is, a virtuous life that is in accordance with one's own spirit or true self. Living an authentic life and fully realizing one's strengths, talents and potentials constitutes the key to sustained happiness (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Hence, identifying and developing one's unique personal strengths – so-called "signature strengths" – is crucial. Based on the Signature Strength Questionnaire (see: www.authentic happiness.org) one's signature strengths can be identified (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). An internet study in which respondents received individualized feedback about the top-five signature strengths and were encouraged to use them more often during the next week showed an increase in happiness, particularly when they were used *in a new and different way* every day of the week (Seligman et al., 2005). Similar positive results were found with the "Strengths-Finder" (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001) – which assesses 34 work-related strengths. Administering this tool and providing employees with follow-up activities to develop their dominant talents, significantly increased employee work engagement (Clifton & Harter, 2003).

Being kind to others Committing acts of kindness may boost happiness because such acts are likely to elicit positive feedback (for example, gratefulness, appreciation) and to stimulate reciprocation (for example, helping of others), and positive social interaction. Moreover, acts of kindness towards others may help the person to view him- or herself as altruistic, which may boost self-esteem and confidence. When participants were invited to practice acts of kindness (for example, holding the door open for a stranger, visiting an elderly relative, or donating blood) during a

surprisingly, optimism is associated with happiness, better mental and physical health, high self-regard, a sense of mastery, superior achievement (Peterson & Steen, 2002), and work engagement (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009a). Optimism can be cultivated by visualizing and writing about one's "best possible self", a mental exercise in which one focuses on one's best possible future self. It appeared that writing a narrative description of the "best possible future self" for four consecutive days increased happiness and decreased physical ailments in the five months after the writing sessions (King, 2001). Another strategy is to replace pessimistic explanations ("My boss did not speak to me today; he must not like me") – though using disputation ("What other evidence do I have that he doesn't like me?") – by more optimistic explanations ("He was probably too busy"). This boils down to unlearning a pessimistic and learning an optimistic attributional style (Seligman, 1991). Techniques such as writing about the best possible self or unlearning a pessimistic attributional style can be applied quite straightforwardly to the work situation.

Savoring This is about mindfully accentuating and sustaining pleasurable moments as they unfold, and about deliberately remembering experiences in ways that rekindle enjoyment. People who are inclined to savor life's joys are more self-confident, extraverted, and less hopeless and depressed (Bryant & Veroff, 2006). Various strategies have been suggested to foster savoring, such as reminiscence together with colleagues, replay happy days, be open to beauty and excellence, and take pleasure in the senses (Lyubomirsky, 2007). There is some empirical support for happiness increases as a result of these kinds of strategies. A remarkable finding is that *analyzing* positive experiences rather than *savoring* them seems to nullify the positive effect (Lyubomirsky et al., 2006). Since savoring involves stepping back, taking a time-out, and deliberately shifting one's attention to particular pleasurable events and experiences seems to be at odds with work. Nevertheless, work breaks may offer excellent opportunities for savoring, either alone (for example, enjoying one's coffee) or with one's colleagues (for example, looking back at a joint festivity).

Volitional strategies

Setting and pursuing personal goals Trying to achieve personal meaningful goals is important because it provides a sense of purpose and meaning, it bolsters self-esteem and efficacy beliefs, it adds structure and meaning to one's daily life, it structures time, and finally it encourages social contacts. It is easy to recognize the similarity with the psychological functions of work, which illustrates that work goals may act as very powerful personal

goals. There are various ways to properly set and pursue personal meaningful goals that are intrinsic (gratifying in themselves), authentic (rooted in one's core interests) and harmonious (complementary rather than conflicting) (Lyubomirsky, 2007). For instance, in order to choose – or uncover – a proper long-term meaningful goal one may write down the personal legacy that one would leave after one had died. Or one may critically examine one's commitment to a particular goal; is one really committed to the goal with passion and zeal? Or break down a higher-level goal (for example, being promoted to supervisor) into smaller low-level goals (for example, enrol in a leadership training course and be a more active networker). The effectiveness of some of these strategies has recently been demonstrated in an intervention study by Sheldon et al. (2002) that focused on increasing goal identification, fostering intrinsic motivation and integrating the current goal into an overarching long-term goal. As expected, goal attainment led to enhanced well-being and personal growth, but only for those participants whose goals "fit" their interests and values. Another study demonstrated the effectiveness of a brief intervention that focused on developing goal-setting and planning skills (MacLeod et al., 2008). Participants either received collectively three one-hour weekly sessions or completed the program individually in their own time, using an instruction manual. In both cases an increase was observed in life satisfaction, efficacy beliefs and positive affect.

Increase resilience A subset of people who, confronted with a major challenge that unsettles their personal foundations, report personal growth, strengthening or even thriving. They have a renewed belief in their ability to endure, their social relationships have been improved, and last but not least, they developed a deeper and more sophisticated and satisfying philosophy of life (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). In short, these people are said to be resilient. Finding meaning in what has happened particularly fosters resilience. Numerous studies have shown that writing about one's deepest thoughts and feelings related to the negative event for about 15–30 minutes each day on three to five consecutive days leads to enhanced immune functioning and physical health, less depression, anxiety and distress, more life satisfaction, and also to less work absenteeism, and an increased likelihood of finding a new job after unemployment (Frattaroli, 2006). It seems that this positive effect is *not* caused by emotional catharsis but by the highly structured act of writing itself. Recently, resilience has also attracted the attention of organizational scholars. For instance, Sutcliffe and Vogus (2003) defined resilience as the maintenance of positive adjustment under challenging conditions; more specifically, the ability to bounce back from untoward events, to absorb strain and preserve or improve

10-week period, they felt happier than before (Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2009). This positive effect was particularly strong for those who performed a *wide variety* of kindness acts and who concentrated their acts in a *short time period*. Acts of kindness can easily be committed at the workplace because social interactions with others (colleagues, supervisors, customers) are inherent to work. In order to be most effective, acts of kindness should be varied and committed in a short period, for instance at a designated “kindness day”.

Expressing gratitude Expressed gratitude promotes the savoring of positive life experiences instead of taking them for granted. Moreover, it bolsters self-worth, builds social bonds, and last but not least it is “an antidote to toxic workplace emotions” (Emmons, 2003, p. 90). In their internet study, Seligman et al. (2005) showed that writing and delivering a letter of gratitude to someone who had been especially kind or important increased happiness. Although writing gratitude letters at work might not seem immediately applicable, numerous occasions exist for expressing one’s gratitude verbally.

Learning to forgive Forgiveness involves suppressing or mitigating one’s motivation for revenge and retaliation in response to an abuse such as an insult, an offence, a betrayal, or a desertion. As a result, negative emotions are replaced by more positive or benevolent attitudes, feelings, and behaviors. People who forgive are likely to be more happy, healthy, agreeable and serene, as well as less anxious, depressed and neurotic (McCullough, 2001). An intervention study with a group of elderly women who felt hurt by an abusive interpersonal experience and learned to forgive, showed that their level of anxiety decreased and their self-esteem increased (Hebl & Enright, 1993). At work, potentially threatening, harming or abusive events are plentiful, such as dismissal, reorganization, missed promotion opportunities, favoritism, violence and harassment by colleagues or customers, and negative performance feedback. It follows that there is great potential for acts of forgiveness at work. For instance, by writing a letter of forgiveness to someone who did wrong, by empathizing with an offender and granting him or her imaginary forgiveness, or by practicing empathy for the person who hurt you (Lyubomirsky, 2007).

Sharing good news Research has shown compellingly that sharing good news or telling others about a positive experience increases the positive emotions (Gable et al., 2004). Moreover, it appeared that positive affect continues to increase with additional sharing of the good news, and that positive events that are shared are more likely to be remembered. It follows

that celebrating one’s successes at work together with other members of the team, such as having closed a lucrative business deal, seems an effective way to increase levels of work engagement. In addition, sharing good news might bolster the team spirit because indications have been found for the “contagiousness” of engagement in work teams (Bakker et al., 2006).

Nurturing social relationships The most important function of social relations is that others provide support in times of distress. This social support comes in various ways, as practical help or assistance, as emotional support, or as information. Numerous studies have documented that social support at work is associated with better health and well-being. For instance, a meta-analysis including over 200 studies revealed that social support at work was associated with job satisfaction, self-reported health, less burnout and lower withdrawal intentions (Viswesvaran et al., 1999). In order to nurture social relationships at the workplace, employees could spend time together (for example, socialize during work breaks instead of isolating themselves), not only talk about work but also about personal matters, and be loyal and supportive helping others, listening to them, and giving them useful information.

Cognitive strategies

Counting one’s blessings This is about the savoring of positive life experiences instead of taking them for granted. One way of doing that is by keeping a journal in which daily three to five things are written down for which one is currently grateful. An internet study showed that keeping a journal like that increased participants’ happiness levels up to a period of six months (Seligman et al., 2005). Another way to count one’s blessings is to choose a fixed time and to simply *contemplate* each of the things for which one is grateful, and reflect on *why* one is grateful and *how* one’s life has been enriched. A six-week intervention that used this contemplation method increased participants’ happiness levels (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Emmons (2003) argued for incorporating counting one’s blessings into the everyday ethos of organizations. The reason is that – in addition to increasing happiness – gratitude serves a buffering role that allays embarrassment, shame or other negative emotions that undermine self-honesty.

Cultivating optimism Generally speaking, optimism refers to the expectation that the future is bright and to the belief that one’s goals can be accomplished. Because they feel confident that they will achieve their goals, optimists are likely to invest the necessary effort to succeed. Not

functioning despite the presence of adversity. According to Sutcliffe and Vogus, employee resilience – and with it personal growth and development, including work engagement – is fostered by adequate job resources (for example, colleague and supervisory support, job control) and mastery motivation (for example, optimism, self-efficacy). Recently, the effects were evaluated of a micro-intervention that aimed to increase not only the employees' resiliency, but also their self-efficacy, optimism and hope (Luthans et al., 2006). The combination of these four psychological states is dubbed "psychological capital" (PsyCap). A group-based intervention to increase employee's PsyCap consisted of: (i) formulating a specific work goal and being instructed how best to attain this (for example, by taking small steps, by having concrete and measurable end-points); (ii) specifying the pathway to be followed (that is, generating and discussing multiple pathways to the goal); and (iii) preparing to overcome obstacles (that is, building anticipatory abilities to overcome obstacles). Compared to the non-intervention control group, the intervention group showed a significant increase in PsyCap.

Applying individual interventions at the workplace

It is important to acknowledge that some of these individual interventions may be applied to the work situation but have a wider, more existential meaning. This relates to practicing virtues, setting and pursuing personal meaningful goals, and fostering resilience. These strategies involve the person's core values, interests and preferences; ultimately they are about knowing oneself. This not only implies that one is aware of one's talents, values and goals at work, but also how these fit into one's larger, existential scheme of things.

The most promising individual strategies focus on the interpersonal aspects of work and involve other people such as colleagues, supervisors and customers (that is, being kind to others, expressing gratitude, learning to forgive, sharing good news, and nursing social relationships). These strategies can easily be applied at work because communicating with other persons is inherent to most jobs. The reason why we believe that these strategies are particularly effective is twofold. First, they are likely to elicit positive reactions from others, which encourages the employee to continue with the positive behavior. As a result, this positive behavior is likely to be reciprocated by others in the form of smiling back, self-disclosure, kindness, and offering help and assistance. So, by using these interpersonal strategies at work, it is likely that the employee enters a self-perpetuating upward spiral (Salanova et al., 2010b). Second, these positive interpersonal strategies act as a double-edged sword. On the one hand they increase the employee's level of engagement, but on the other they also improve the

social climate at work by fostering group cohesion, resolving conflicts, and increasing loyalty, team spirit, and pro-social behavior.

An overview of organizational-based interventions

The shift from the prevailing traditional, negative approach that focuses on sickness and unwell-being toward a more positive approach that focuses on health and wellness provides the opportunity for human resource management (HRM) and occupational health psychology (OHP) to join forces. After all, organizational health – the domain of HRM – and employee health – the domain of OHP – are co-dependent, meaning that increasing the former also increases the latter, and vice versa. This co-dependence is illustrated by the growing recognition that the organization's financial health correlates with investments in employee well-being (Goetzel et al., 2001). Hence, analogous to the classical adage "a healthy mind in a healthy body" one could formulate as common goal for OHP and HRM to promote healthy employees in healthy organizations.

In our opinion it is essential for building work engagement to initiate and to maintain so-called "gain spirals". Research suggests that upward spirals exist that are sparked by job resources and personal resources (that is, self-efficacy beliefs) and may result in various positive outcomes such as extra-role performance, via work engagement (see Salanova et al., 2010b for a review). In turn, these positive outcomes increase resources and foster high levels of engagement, and so on. Following the logic of these gain spirals, work engagement may be increased by stimulating each link of the spiral, be it resources or positive outcomes. Below it is outlined how this can be achieved, using strategies that focus on: (i) assessing and evaluating employees, (ii) designing and changing workplaces, (iii) enhancing transformational leadership, (iv) work training, and (v) career management.

Personnel assessment and evaluation

The ultimate purpose of personnel assessment and evaluation is to optimize the chance of having the right person in the right spot. That is, to create an optimal balance in terms of a good fit between personal values and goals, and those of the organization. More particularly, personnel assessment and evaluation is about increasing identification, motivation and commitment – from the perspective of the organization – as well as about personal and professional development – from the perspective of the employee. Work engagement plays a crucial role because, on the one hand it fosters employee identification, motivation and commitment, and on the other, it fosters employees' development; for instance by increasing the level of self-efficacy, which is an important prerequisite for

organizational learning (Bandura, 2001). An essential tool for successful evaluation and appraisal on the job is systematic, tailor-made – preferably positive – feedback. The following three strategies can be distinguished that may enhance work engagement:

- *Establishing and monitoring the psychological contract* The psychological contract reflects the employees' subjective notion of reciprocity: the gains or outcomes from the organization (for example, salary, recognition) are expected to be proportional to one's own investments or inputs (for example, effort, loyalty). When the psychological contract is violated and reciprocity is corroded, this might lead to burnout (Schaufeli, 2006) and a host of other negative outcomes, including the intention to quit, turnover, job dissatisfaction, cynicism, poor organizational commitment, and absenteeism (for example, Rousseau, 1995; De Boer et al., 2002). Hence, a fair psychological contract should be established that reflects an optimal fit between employee and organization in terms of mutual expectations. This can be achieved by: (i) assessing the employee's values, preferences, and personal and professional goals; (ii) negotiating and drafting a written contract (Employee Development Agreement) that guarantees the necessary resources from the organization to achieve personal meaningful goals; and (iii) monitoring this written agreement periodically in terms of goal achievement.
- *Periodic work-wellness audits* The aim of these audits is to inform individual employees, as well as the organizations they work for, about their levels of wellness, including engagement. This information is important for making decisions about measures for improvement that should be taken, either individually or organizationally. Based on the job demands–resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), work-wellness audits were developed in Spain (www.wont.uji.es) and in the Netherlands (www.c4ob.nl). These audits include job stressors (for example, work overload, conflicts, role problems, emotional demands, work–home interference), job resources (for example, variety, feedback, social support, job control, career development), burnout, engagement, negative personal and organizational outcomes (for example, depression, distress, absenteeism, turnover intention), and positive personal and organizational outcomes (for example, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, extra-role performance). In addition, personal and job information is included, as well as personal resources such as self-efficacy, and mental and emotional competencies.
- *Workshops on work engagement* Workshops are structured group

meetings of employees to promote health and well-being, including work engagement, usually by means of augmenting personal resources. Workshops that aim to build engagement are similar to so-called “quality circles”, except that they focus on the enhancement of personal resources, such as cognitive, behavioral and social skills (for example, positive thinking, goal-setting, time-management, and life-style improvement).

Job (re)design and work changes

The (re)designing of jobs serves two purposes: from an occupational health perspective it aims to reduce the exposure to psychosocial risks, whereas from an HRM perspective it aims at increasing employee motivation. It follows from the job demands–resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) that, in order to increase engagement, reducing the exposure to job stressors is not an option because this would also eliminate job challenge. Instead the motivating potential of job resources should be exploited because these stimulate personal growth, learning and development of employees. In contrast, the lack of organizational resources has a detrimental effect on workers' motivation and performance (Wong et al., 1998) since it precludes actual goal accomplishment, and undermines employees' learning opportunities (Kelly, 1992).

Another related strategy is to implement work changes. In doing so, job resources are not additionally provided or increased, but they are merely changed, for example, when jobs are rotated, when employees are temporarily assigned to carry out special projects, or when they are transferred to entirely different jobs. Based on qualitative research on engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2001) we may add that, most likely, changing work also increases work engagement. This will be particularly the case when employees feel challenged in their new job while at the same time they have the necessary competencies to meet the challenges (Salanova et al., 2002).

Transformational leadership

An important task of leaders is to optimize the emotional climate in their team. A good leader is able to enhance motivation and engagement. Research suggests that engagement is “contagious”, it crosses over not only from partner to spouse, but also from one team member to another (Bakker et al., 2006). It also appears that engagement is a collective phenomenon, meaning that teams may feel “engaged” when their members closely collaborate to accomplish particular tasks (Salanova et al., 2003). Hence, team leaders may have a positive impact on levels of individual and collective engagement depending on the way they manage their work teams. For example, Aguilar and Salanova (2009) found that leaders who

were task oriented *and* supportive were more successful in increasing individual work engagement than those displaying other leadership behaviors. Such considerate leadership behaviors stimulate a favorable group climate that is characterized by fairness, trust, openness and constructive problem solving. In addition, considerate behaviors such as coaching and providing feedback and social support are important resources in and of themselves that may promote work engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2009).

According to Bass (1985), transformational leadership goes one step beyond this considerate, employee-centered leadership style by offering employees a purpose that transcends short-term goals and focuses on higher-order intrinsic needs. This kind of leadership is of special importance for today's organizations that go through profound changes and are therefore in need of charismatic, inspiring and visionary leaders, who are able to motivate employees and build engagement. Transformational leaders display conviction, take a stand, challenge followers with high standards, communicate optimism about future goal attainment, stimulate and encourage creativity and innovation, and listen to followers' concerns and needs (Avolio, 1999). Not surprisingly, this leadership style has a positive impact on followers' health and well-being (Nielsen et al., 2009), as well as on their performance and motivation (Salanova et al., 2010a). More particularly, the latter study showed that transformational leadership increased followers' work engagement, and in turn, also their extra-role performance.

Work training

Work training is a traditional HRM strategy that is used to enhance employees' levels of work engagement. In order to do so, work training programs should be particularly directed at personal growth and development instead of being exclusively content directed. In our view, building efficacy beliefs (that is, the power to believe that you can) is the cornerstone for the promotion of work engagement via work training.

According to social cognitive theory (SCT), self-efficacy lies at the core of human agency and is important because it influences employees' behavior, thinking, motivation, and feelings (Bandura, 2001). Research on work engagement has shown that it is related to high levels of self-efficacy (for example, Salanova et al., 2002, 2003, 2010a, 2010b). Even more so, research suggests an upward gain spiral in which self-efficacy boosts engagement, which in its turn, increases efficacy beliefs, and so on (for an overview, see Salanova et al., 2010b). This means that efficacy beliefs serve as a kind of self-motivating mechanism: as a consequence of evaluating their own competence, employees set new goals that motivate them to mobilize additional effort, focus on achieving these goals and being

persistent in the face of difficulties. Engagement seems to fulfill two roles in this dynamic process, namely as an antecedent that fosters self-efficacy as well as a consequence associated with successful goal attainment.

But how can self-efficacy – and therefore work engagement – be enhanced? According to SCT, efficacy beliefs may be augmented by mastery experiences, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and positive emotional states (Bandura, 2001). Hence training programs should include, for instance, practical exercises to provide experiences of vocational success (mastery experiences), role models of good performance (vicarious experiences), coaching and encouragement (verbal persuasion), and reducing fear of rejection or failure (managing emotional states). According to SCT, mastery experiences are the most powerful tool for boosting efficacy beliefs. The best way to evoke mastery experiences in employees is therefore by tackling work problems in successive, attainable steps. In a similar vein, if people see similar others succeed by sustained effort, during work training, they come to believe that they also have the capability to succeed (vicarious experiences). Trainers and supervisors may also use social persuasion in order to influence employees that they have what it takes to succeed, and so they make more effort and are more likely to persevere if they have self-doubts when obstacles arise. Finally, employees' negative emotional states may be reduced by applying stress-management techniques. These principles to increase self-efficacy may also be applied by supervisors when coaching their employees.

Career management

Although most employees still favor lifelong job stability and vertical, upward mobility, current changes in organizational life make this perspective no longer a self-evident one. Hence, instead of a fixed career path, of which each step requires specific pre-defined experience and expertise, nowadays employees have to cope with a much more unstable job market. More than before, employees have to rely on their own initiative to continuously develop themselves professionally and personally in order to remain employable.

Employability also includes a high level of engagement because it makes employees more fit and able to do the job (Salanova & Llorens, 2008). However, following the upward gain spiral of work engagement, the reverse might also be true: by carefully planning one's career, that is, by successively selecting those jobs that provide ample opportunity for professional and personal development, it is likely that levels of engagement will remain high.

So the key issue for employees to remain engaged in their job is to keep developing themselves throughout their career. Some of the tools that

have been introduced previously in this chapter can be used for career management. First, by completing a work-wellness audit periodically, the employee can monitor his or her level of engagement across time. Second, by including the development of specific skills and competencies in the Employee Development Agreement employability can be increased. Third, jobs can be re-designed, or work may be changed in such a way as to foster employee development. Finally, work training can be used to increase self-efficacy and hence work motivation. Taken together, these strategies are instrumental for keeping one's job challenging.

Conclusion

Improving work engagement is important for organizations and individuals alike. Given the vested interest of companies in a healthy, flourishing and thriving workforce they are well advised to advertise and promote work engagement. In order to survive and prosper in a continuously changing environment, modern organizations do not merely need "healthy" employees – that is, employees who are symptom free – but engaged employees, who are vigorous, dedicated, and absorbed in their work. This is in line with the basic tenet of Integral Health Management (IHM), a strategic approach to reduce employee sickness and promote their health and well-being, while at the same time fostering productivity (Zwetsloot & Pot, 2004). IHM posits that organizations have a legitimate business interest, not only to cure sick employees and to prevent others from becoming sick, but particularly to increase the well-being of the entire workforce. It seems that work engagement may play a crucial role in IHM because it links individual well-being with organizational performance (Harter et al., 2002; Salanova et al., 2005; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009b). Needless to say, the focus on promoting engagement (amplification) greatly benefits individual employees as well because they are encouraged to realize their full potential and flourish at work.

This chapter summarized 11 individual-based strategies and eight organizational-based strategies to improve work engagement. Although the former are targeted to the individual, they can be promoted by the organization. For example, online training or coaching programs can be offered to employees, for instance, to promote acts of kindness at work, to set personal goals, or to share good news with colleagues. Currently, we are developing and testing such programs. Ideally, these individual-based interventions are integrated into the usual work routine, such as regular team meetings. Also, like the reduction of absenteeism, the promotion of work engagement of employees may be included in leaders' job descriptions.

We believe that because it is an essential, positive element of employee

health and well-being, the enhancement of work engagement may help to create synergy between positive outcomes for individual employees and for organizations. This is eloquently expressed by the slogan "Healthy employees working in healthy organizations".

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