

# *Driving Company Performance Through Employee Engagement*



# THE HIGH PERFORMANCE ORGANIZATION: MOVING FROM ENGAGEMENT TO ENTANGLEMENT

“To capture the hearts of our employees, it is essential that we tell them what we stand for and where we are going,” according to author Jim Harris in his book *Getting Employees to Fall in Love With Your Company*. For many who strive to obtain a better organizational culture, employee engagement has become a priority. Yet, few organizations are able to achieve this essential goal. Recent research conducted by the Gallup organization reveals that most organizations do not have enough engaged employees to ensure continued success. Their findings reveal that only 11% of employees worldwide are engaged in their work.

The responsibility for this dismal statistic lies primarily with the highest senior leaders within the organization. While HR departments have a responsibility to find the right candidates for positions, it is up to the senior leadership to define and guide the culture of the organization. Somehow, there is a tremendous gap in this important aspect of leading a company. There is strong evidence that shows an organization’s culture takes precedence over strategy and policies in determining individual and organizational performance. What needs to be central to the organization’s culture is the set of core values that defines that culture and the appropriate behaviors that define its identity and strengthen its reputation. What does this actually mean for leaders in today’s marketplace? Simply put, it means that leadership within every level of an organization needs to pay close attention to the culture of that organization.

However, is striving to produce employee engagement within a culture enough to transform the culture into a high performance organization? Perhaps there is more to this situation than we previously thought. There’s a new buzzword being used to describe true employee engagement within a High Performance organization. That word is entanglement. For the culture of an organization to transform into a High Performance model, employees must move from engagement to entanglement.



# ENGAGEMENT VS. ENTANGLEMENT

Isn't engagement a good thing? What in the world is entanglement? These were the first questions that popped into my head when I first began to study this concept of entanglement. My first thoughts of entanglement were negative, as I thought of being caught up in some type of web that could keep me bound or suppressed within a complex culture. However, this is not the case. Let me explain.

Engaged employees make a conscious decision to have an emotional attachment to their work. It could be due to many things. They could be a great match for their position. They could actually love the type of work they do and perform it well. They could possess a strong drive to perform to the very best of their ability. They could be engaged because they are happy in their personal circumstances, and their positive outlook on life can extend into their workplace. However, simply being engaged does not necessarily convert to sustainable organizational results.

The entangled employee has moved beyond engagement. This individual possesses the drive and determination necessary to achieve positive employee-organization dedication and commitment. "Unlike engagement, entanglement exists at both the individual and organization levels and results in a sustainable competitive advantage that no competitor can imitate because each entangled culture is unique," according to authors Benedetto and Thompson.

Entangled employees are able to look beyond themselves and appreciate the organization from a much broader perspective. They rely on others rather than their own achievement. They seek collaborative decisions that benefit the organization as a whole. They understand synergy is dynamic. In short, they understand that the culture of the organization does not exist for or revolve around them; they are a part of a much greater whole. This type of outward focused thinking results in their ability to work toward developing solutions to organizational issues and challenges. When an organization develops a collective entangled mentality, it is able to solve problems proactively, becomes more innovative and develop a greater understanding of team performance and individual responsibility resulting in greater organizational success.

*"ON WHAT HIGH PERFORMING COMPANIES SHOULD BE STRIVING TO CREATE:  
A GREAT PLACE FOR GREAT PEOPLE TO DO GREAT WORK."  
- MARILYN CARLSON*

# ELEMENTS OF AN ENTANGLED CULTURE

## ENTANGLED CULTURES HAVE LEADERS WHO PLACE A STRONG EMPHASIS ON CHARACTER

Leaders within this culture are visionaries who seek to shape a character-based, High Performance culture. This transformational mode is important because it acknowledges that the character of each employee contributes to the broader character of the organization. This carries over into defining the branding and reputation of the organization.

## ENTANGLED CULTURES BUILD UPON AN ETHICAL FOUNDATION

Core values such as trust, respect, ethical conduct and compassion permeate the atmosphere of an entangled culture. A recent study cited in *Employment Relations Today, Winter 2013* revealed that each of the eight companies studied were comprised of entangled employees who consistently use core values as a meaningful pronouncement of what the company employees truly value.

## ENTANGLED EMPLOYEES OPERATE FREELY AND RESPONSIBLY WITHIN A CULTURE OF DISCIPLINE

Leaders of entangled employees see them as equal contributors to the success of the organization. They encourage employees to operate freely within their sphere of responsibility and authority. In an entangled culture, everyone is encouraged and expected to provide feedback or input, especially when blind spots become apparent. This practice is found in High Performance cultures where collaboration and shared leadership exists.

## LEADERS OF HIGH PERFORMANCE ORGANIZATIONS GUIDE THE PROCESS OF BECOMING AN ENTANGLED CULTURE BY USING A WELL-DEFINED CHANGE MODEL

Moving from high potential to high performance requires a major shift in organizational thinking and required a significant amount of mental effort. Therefore, organizational transformation must be led as well as managed. Leaders who commit to this model must continually monitor the process along the journey to excellence.

**“TURNED ON” PEOPLE FIGURE OUT HOW TO BEAT THE COMPETITION,  
“TURNED OFF” PEOPLE ONLY COMPLAIN ABOUT BEING BEATEN BY THE COMPETITION.”  
-BEN SIMONTON**

# HOW TO CREATE ENTANGLEMENT

Leaders must be intentional in creating and developing a culture that encourages an entangled philosophy. Employees must be empowered to act on their knowledge and understanding of the organization. Entangled cultures generate employee retention and invest in training and development programs that will further empower and motivate their employees. Everyone in the organization benefits when an organization places a greater emphasis on training and development than it does on hiring, selecting and terminating employees.

Research conducted by *Thompson, K.R., Benedetto, R.L.* shows that creating an entangled culture requires leaders to be purposeful in their commitment to this model. There are now clear examples of these entangled cultures and none of them occurred by accident. They occurred when senior leaders remained committed to reaching a level of excellence in performance on a daily basis.



# ENTANGLED CULTURES DELIVER GREATER RESULTS

While it is important to ensure a company has the right people in the right positions at the right time, this is not enough to produce a successful culture where optimal results in the workplace can be achieved. Unfortunately, statistics reveal that the majority of organizations fall short in being able to produce a healthy culture for their employees.

However, when a culture is conducive to creating and developing entangled employees, the overall performance of the company improves in measurable ways. Studies are showing that entangled companies have done well despite a slow economy. Both customers and suppliers prefer to work with companies they can rely upon. Companies who have entangled cultures represent top performers that instill confidence at all levels. Furthermore, most of these companies studied have added staff or at least maintained pre-2009 staffing levels and have continually sustained market growth. A large amount of the organizational sustainability comes from the synergy and positive atmosphere which stems from a flow of positive energy within the culture of these organizations.

Leaders within entangled organizations realize they are continually working to improve their culture and using the transformational model to help them experience greater results. They are committed to achieving optimal performance. This results in not only a greater working environment; it results in greater output at all levels of the organization.



## Works Cited:

Thompson, K.R., Benedetto, R.L., (2013, Feb), "Creating and Optimal Culture: The Emergence of the Entangled Organization", *Employment Relations Today*, Winter 2013, Vol.39 Issue 4, pp.13-19. Print.



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