

# Alternative Method for Assessing the Employee Involvement Level

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## ABSTRACT

The article presents a method developed by the authors for studying the employee involvement level without using traditional questionnaires, since it is possible to get the expected answers in the questionnaires, especially if the polls are conducted quite often. The tool offered by the authors allows you to establish the involvement level based on the analysis of the behavior and speech of employees when performing their routine job duties as well as when communicating with company executives and colleagues. The article describes not only tools themselves but also the results of their approbation in Russian retail companies. To confirm the approbation result accuracy, a comparison was made with the results of a traditional survey using the reliable and well-known Q12 questionnaire developed by Gallup Inc. The comparison showed insignificant deviations characterizing the method offered by the authors as more rigorous while the executives noted the simplicity and ease of use.

**Keywords:** *Personnel involvement, Methods for assessing involvement, Personnel behavior, Human resource management.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Issues related to the study of employees involvement have been actively raised in the scientific research literature since the early 90s of the 20-th century. One of the most influential studies in this area was conducted by Kahn in 1990. W. Kahn conducted a qualitative study of the psychological state of personal inclusion and detachment during a summer camp survey of consultants and employees of an architecture firm. Kahn states that people in each role ask themselves three fundamental questions about the situation:

1. What does it matter to me; what will I get out of participating in this "performance"?
2. How safe is it to do this?
3. In what manner can I do that? [1]

He found that employees were more involved in dealing with situations that offered them more psychological significance and psychological safety, and that were psychologically more accessible.

Another trend in the theorizing of engagement is to get the intuitive and welcomed exchange theory structures involved in the business environment. According to Saks, a powerful theoretical justification for explaining the employee involvement can be found in the social exchange theory (SET) [2]. The basic principle of the social exchange theory is that the relation between the employee and the organization develops over time into trusting, stable mutual obligations as long as the parties comply with certain exchange "rules". Thus, the involvement within the framework of this approach is interpreted as the readiness of the employee to invest his/her cognitive, skills and emotional capital in the activities of the organization, exchanging it for the resources and benefits provided by the company [3].

In practice, the research results conducted by the international association GALLUP are known. The above reports show that companies with a high involvement level are more productive, while the level of staff turnover, the number of accidents at work and the incidence of defects are significantly lower than in similar companies with low employee involvement [4].

Along with the GALLUP Institute, organizations such as Aon Hewitt, Kenexa, Willis Towers Watson research the involvement. Of course, each institute has its own approach to the study of this concept, as a result of which different models of the definition of “involvement” are created.

The starting point in studying employee involvement is to analyze the current staff involvement level. Currently, the main research method is a sociological survey or questionnaire survey of employees of the organization, interviews or focus groups are used less often [5].

The rather reliable and well-known Q12 questionnaire developed by Gallup Inc is the most widespread in practice. In addition, the tools offered by Aon Hewitt (USA), Deloitte (USA), Willis Towers Watson (UK), Hay Group (USA), Ecopy and Business Result Group (Russia) have proven their effectiveness [6]. All of the above organizations make penetrating research of involvement issues. Of course, everyone has their own approach to measuring the involvement level and indicators of its manifestation.

The main differences lie in the formation of the questionnaire used in the Gallup Inc study. It includes 12 questions and Hay Group extends it to 49 ones. A review and study of modern research devoted to the involvement level analysis methods offer modified approaches that are also based on already existing analysis tools [7].

It is important to note that a single tool for each of these approaches is the main method viz. questionnaires or surveys.

At the same time, working in practice with this tool, the heads of structural divisions or the entire organization are faced with the following issues to deal with:

- extremely high risk of socially expected answers [8]. This is due to the fact that employees, firstly, from the wording of the question perfectly understand how and which question is better to answer. And secondly, even with an anonymously conducted survey, staff are not always ready for sincere answers, expecting a negative reaction from the executives [9];

- often the questions provided in the questionnaires are of a general nature. For example: "Do you know the purpose of the organization?" Employees answer yes, but at the same time the tool does not provide an opportunity to clarify whether the staff knows the true goal;

- in 90% of cases, the HR department of the company is responsible for the study of the involvement level and responsibility for the involvement level indicators also remains within the staff management service [10]. In addition, the research results obtained often remain in the reports of the employees conducting the research while the direct executives of structural units either do not

receive this information at all or such information is purely for informational purposes [11];

- finally, the presented research methodology assumes a long process of preparing the organization, conducting and processing data [12]. This makes this tool expensive and difficult to apply within a small company or separate structural divisions.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Combining all of the above, the authors of the article realized the need to develop such a tool for analyzing the current level of staff involvement, which would allow solving the following tasks:

- reduce the impact of the possibility of falsifying the obtained data (when the employees participating in the study give deliberately socially expected answers);

- get data based on the analysis of real actions and results of employees;

- make this tool available for practical use for managers of any level, and not just for employees of the HR department;

- and finally, the use of this tool should not take additional time and material (financial) resources to prepare and conduct a study of the employee involvement level.

Such a methodology has been developed for 2 years on the basis of several structural divisions of retail trade enterprises. The main tool for creating such a tool was the analysis of the behavior and speech of employees when performing immediate work tasks that are part of the employee's job responsibilities as well as when communicating with colleagues and company leaders.

The offered tool is a table that reflects the main parameters by evaluating which the executive can most likely determine the involvement level of the employees he/she manages. Table 1 presents the main block aimed at assessing the behavioral model of staff.

Analyzing the behavior and reaction of an employee at different moments of work, the executive chooses the version of the table that is as close as possible in description to each specific employee. The total number of points received allows us to conclude about the employee involvement level.

To interpret the obtained data, the following gradation of values was developed based on the Gallup Inc-offered concept:

**Table 1.** Analyzing the employee behavior when diagnosing the involvement level by means of methods

Parameter	Reaction, behavior of the employee during the work process		
	1 point	2 points	3 points
An employee's response to a delegated task	Covertly defends the right to non-fulfillment of the task, using the phrase "I will try to do it", or takes an accusatory position asking the question "how do I know how to do this?"	Takes on the task and promises to complete it on time and possibly even faster	Immediately takes on the task while he/she finds "bottlenecks" on her/his own beforehand and finds ways to solve problems that arise during the task
Employee behavior during changes and innovations	Mooches around retaining the right not to know about the changes. Unconstructive criticism by spreading rumors	With the help of constructive criticism, he/she checks how much changes can be ignored	Takes active part in the creation of new rules and changes, helps with implementation in order to improve the organization's performance
The employee's reaction when the rules of the organization are not followed	Protects the non-binding nature or demonstratively violates the rules and regulations without explaining and inciting others to do so	Follows the rules exactly the way it should be done without going beyond	In his/her work, he/she strictly adheres to the rules and regulations while helping others to follow the established rules. Or is ready to break the rules, preliminary agree with the management in order to achieve better results
Reaction to control	Turns a blind eye. Actively shirks control. Withholds reliable information	Tries to postpone control points	Provides all the data for control in advance. Makes his/her area of responsibility completely transparent both for executives and for colleagues
Attitude towards the corporate management	Secretly criticizes the executive behind his/her back. Does everything to demote his/her authority	In private, he/she is ready to give constructive feedback about the weaknesses of his/her executive, or he/she treats it the way it is usually accepted to treat a higher-rank executive	Treats with respect and gratitude or considers the executive as "the first among equals", treats him/her as a partner
Attitude towards the organization itself	This is a dangerous place where everyone defends his/her own interests or where everything is constantly in the stage of loose ends and disorder	This is a place where you can work hard, earn money and standing	This is a place where you can realize your professional potential, earn good money, gain prestige and recognition

- Employees involved who work with passion - from 14 to 18 points (over 66% according to the results of the Q12 questionnaire);

- Employees uninvolved who do the work that is expected of them and do not put in the extra effort - 10 to 13 points (33% - 66% according to the results of the Q12 questionnaire);

- Employees uninvolved actively who negatively influence the rest of the team - from 6 to 9 points (less

than 33 according to the results of the Q12 questionnaire).

### 3. RESEARCH RESULTS

The approbation of this method made it possible to obtain the following results: direct heads of structural divisions had the opportunity to quickly assess the employee involvement level, analyzing specific actions and reactions of personnel to various working situations. Moreover, this tool did not require the involvement of additional resources (time and material), which greatly

**Table 2.** Comparative analysis of determining the involvement level by different methods

Involvement level	Share of employees according to the Q12 Gallup Inc.	Share of employees according to the analysis of behavioral indicators	Match percentage
Involved	31%	26%	96%
Not involved	51%	54%	94%
Actively not involved	18%	24%	91%

facilitated the implementation and application of this method of analysis. Thus, the heads of those structural units where this approach was applied received a tool for prompt response and making management decisions without waiting for the processing and interpretation of data from the HR department.

In addition, heads were not getting the data of the so-called "average temperature in the hospital" but the results of the involvement level of each individual employee. This makes it possible to work with each specific member of the team in a targeted manner, which, of course, increases the management efficiency.

To confirm the objectivity of the data obtained in the course of the study, the authors carried out a comparative analysis of the results of the involvement level study by two methods: through the Q12 questionnaire and a tool using the questionnaire and analysis of behavioral indicators. The results of this analysis are presented in table 2.

The comparative result of the results obtained by the questionnaire method and the offered tool allows us to consider this method to be working. At the same time, slight downward deviations in the results indicate that the "analysis of behavioral indicators" is a more rigorous tool for measuring the involvement level. Moreover, it makes it possible to partially compensate for the artificially overestimated results obtained during the polls due to the socially expected answers of the respondents.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

When assessing the importance of implementing this method of analyzing the involvement level, it is important to note the following:

- Direct active participation of the executive in staff involvement matters has a very positive effect on the work on this indicator for sure and helps to solve the problem when the employee involvement is only the responsibility of the HR department of the company.

- This method is significantly more economical in terms of time and financial resources.

- The head of a structural unit (with a properly planned organizational structure (i.e. with a management coefficient equal to 5 to 7) does not receive data in the

form of an average value of the involvement level but understands to what extent each of his/her employees is involved in the work. In this case, making managerial decisions in the field of personnel management gets more accurate.

Thus, the method developed by the authors for analyzing the involvement level has shown its reliability and confirmed the feasibility of its use. Of course, the offered tool for quickly diagnosing the involvement level can be touched up and improved. So it will be extremely effective to analyze not only behavioral indicators but also speech ones as well as analyze the results of work (implementation of the plan, KPI indicators, taking into account reprimands, disciplinary sanctions or, on the contrary, received awards and premiums). These parameters also make it possible to make the diagnosis of the employee involvement level even more accurate and objective.

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