

# A Study on Employee Engagement in Cochin International Airport Limited

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## ABSTRACT

*A successful employee engagement strategy helps create a community at the workplace and not just a workforce. When employees are effectively and positively engaged with their organisation, they form an emotional connection with the company. This affects their attitude towards both their colleagues and the company's clients and improves customer satisfaction and service levels. There's more than one way to improve the level of employee engagement in a company. In fact, there are many different things that companies not only can do, but need to do.*

*The paper aims to make an attempt to understand the extent to which employee engagement is relevant in an International Airport like Cochin International Airport Ltd operating in the commercial capital of God's own country, the State of Kerala. Fifteen Human resource factors have been identified as attributes leading to employee engagement which will be discussed with respect to Cochin International Airport Limited. A five step action plan has also been developed to measure the extent to which employees are engaged in their work in Cochin International Airport limited.*

*Employee engagement can be successful if every employee is treated with respect and dignity; if empowered to take decision in his/her work area; if not punished for making mistake but to be taken as new learnings; if encouragement, support and resources is given to the employee. The analysis also tells us that when trust, values and a purpose-inspired mission do not drive behavior in a company, far fewer of these engagement traits exist. Even worse, extremely low levels of these engagement sources produce a "disconnected" group of employees who work against or even sabotage company objectives. Our existing approach to employee engagement only produces brick-layers: people who perform tasks for money; people who may briefly become more productive in these tasks via one-off awards, bonuses and other motivations (whose positive effects*

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*fade as quickly as sugar highs); and people who feel stuck in unsatisfying, dead-end jobs when they truly desire careers.*

*By misunderstanding, mismanaging and mis-measuring employee engagement, we are failing to provide a signal to our nation's most valuable resource: young workers. These people do not know where to invest their energy, talent, skills, character and creativity. They are looking for careers, but we can barely provide them with jobs. Further, by deploying trust, values and a purpose-driven mission as the primary drivers for all business activities, interactions and decisions, companies can transform a workforce of bricklayers into a highly coordinated and inspired team of cathedral-builders whose inspired work generates both success and significance for our companies and the world.*

**Key Words:** Employee Engagement, Cochin Airport, Empowerment, Talent management

## INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement is the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards their organization and its values. An engaged employee is aware of business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. It is a positive attitude held by the employees towards the organization and its values. The Paper focuses on how employee engagement is an antecedent of job involvement and what should a company like Cochin International Airport Limited do to make the employees engaged.

Engagement at work is essentially conceptualized as harnessing effectiveness of organizational members in their work roles. In engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances. A flow in engagement can be defined as the 'holistic sensation' that, people feel when they act with total involvement. Flow is the state in which there is little distinction between the self and environment. When individuals are in Flow State, little conscious control is necessary for their actions. Employee engagement is the thus the level of commitment and involvement an employee exhibits towards their organization and its values. An engaged employee is aware of business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. The organization must work to develop and nurture engagement, which requires a two-way relationship between

employer and employee.’ Thus Employee engagement is a barometer that determines the association of a person with the organization.

Job involvement is thought to depend on both need saliency and the potential of a job to satisfy these needs. Thus job involvement results form a cognitive judgment about the needs satisfying abilities of the job. Jobs in this view are in fact tied to self-perception. Engagement differs from job in, as it is concerned more with how the individual employee feels during the performance of his or her job. Furthermore engagement entails the active use of emotions.

Finally engagement may be thought of as an antecedent to job involvement in that individuals who experience deep engagement in their roles should come to identify with their jobs. It is believed that the engagement challenge has a lot to do with how employee feels about the about work experience and how he or she is treated in the organization. It has a lot to do with emotions which are fundamentally related to drive bottom line success in a company. There will always be people who never give their best efforts no matter how hard Human Resource and line managers try to engage them. “But for the most part, employees want to commit to companies because doing so satisfies a powerful and a basic need in connect with and contribute to something significant”.

The Paper will now analyze the aspects of employee engagement and then will categorize the employees accordingly.

## **ASPECTS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT**

There are three basic aspects of employee engagement according to the global studies which are discussed below

- The employees and their own unique psychological make-up and experience
- The employers and their ability to create the conditions that promote employee engagement
- Interaction between employees at all levels.

Thus it is largely the organization’s responsibility to create an environment and culture conducive to this partnership, and a win-win equation.

## Categories of Employee Engagement

For the purpose of the Paper, we can classify people in an organization as follows:-

- **Engaged--**“Engaged” employees are builders. They want to know the desired expectations for their role so they can meet and exceed them. They’re naturally curious about their company and their place in it. They perform at consistently high levels. They want to use their talents and strengths at work every day. They work with passion and they drive innovation and move their organization forward.
- **Not Engaged---***Not-engaged* employees tend to concentrate on tasks rather than the goals and outcomes they are expected to accomplish. They want to be told what to do just so they can do it and say they have finished. They focus on accomplishing tasks vs. achieving an outcome. Employees who are *not-engaged* tend to feel their contributions are being overlooked, and their potential is not being tapped. They often feel this way because they don’t have productive relationships with their managers or with their coworkers.
- **Actively Disengaged--**The “*actively disengaged*” employees are the “cave dwellers. “They are “Consistently against Virtually Everything.” They’re not just unhappy at work; they’re busy acting out their unhappiness .They sow seeds of negativity at every opportunity. Every day, actively disengaged workers undermine what their engaged coworkers accomplish. The problems and tensions that are fostered by *actively disengaged* workers can cause great damage to an organization’s functioning.

## IMPORTANCE OF ENGAGEMENT

Engagement is important for managers to cultivate given that disengagement or alienation is central to the problem of workers’ lack of commitment and motivation. Meaningless work is often associated with apathy and detachment from one’s work. In such conditions, individuals are thought to be estranged from their selves. Other Research using a different resource of engagement like involvement and enthusiasm has linked it to such variables as employee turnover, customer satisfaction – loyalty, safety and to a lesser degree, productivity and profitability criteria. An organization’s capacity to manage employee engagement is closely related to its ability

to achieve high performance levels and superior business results. Some of the advantages of engaged employees are depicted below.

- Engaged employees will stay with the company, be an advocate of the company and contribute to the bottom line business success.
- They will normally perform better and are more motivated.
- There is a significant link between employee engagement and profitability.
- They form an emotional connection with the company.
- It builds passion, commitment and alignment with the organization's strategies and goals.
- Increases employees' trust in the organization.
- Creates a sense of loyalty in a competitive environment.
- Provides a high-energy working environment.
- Makes the employees effective brand ambassadors for the company.

A highly engaged employee will consistently deliver beyond expectations. The employees should be encouraged to ask 'whether they have the opportunity to do what they do best everyday'. Thus employee engagement is critical to any organization that seeks to retain valued employees.

### **Scope of the Study**

Cochin International Airport is the First Greenfield Airport in India, built under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. True to the PPP Concept, the Airport Users along with Airport Service Providers joined hands with Govt. of Kerala, for development of Cochin International Airport. Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL) was incorporated as a Public Limited Company under the Companies Act, 1956 on 30 March 1994. With equity participation from the Government of Kerala, Industrialists, NRIs, Financial Institutions, Airport Service Providers and the Public, the Cochin International Airport Limited has come to be a model enterprise with the first International Airport in India outside the ambit of the Government of India, the first of its kind in the history of civil aviation in India.

His Excellency, Shri. K.R. Narayanan, President of India, inaugurated the airport on 25 May 1999. Cochin International Airport Limited is managed by the Government representatives, industrialists, NRI's and

representatives of financial institutions. The ground handling at the airport is operated and maintained by Air India; fuel supply to the airport is by Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. Both hold interest free security deposits. The project was completed under the leadership of Mr. V J. Kurian, IAS, the current Principal Secretary to the Government of Kerala.

It was the success of this path-breaking venture, which triggered the privatisation and modernization of Civil Aviation Infrastructure in India. Cochin International Airport Limited has been hailed for its low cost model construction to provide world-class passenger amenities, declared dividend to its shareholders in the fifth year of its operation.

Cochin International Airport Limited ranks fourth largest in India, in terms of international passenger traffic. Equipped with state of the art terminal infrastructure facilities comprising of fully furnished and centrally air-conditioned Terminals with six lakh square feet area Cochin International Airport has a peak hour capacity of one thousand six hundred arriving and one thousand six hundred departing passengers in peak hour. The total cost of the airport project was \$3.15 billion financed through a paid up equity capital of Rs. 2.18 billion. The total construction cost was worked out to be Rs. 2.3 billion which is very low compared to the cost of other similar airports. The Kerala government's contribution was Rs. 280 million.

Cochin International Airport Limited went for long term component of Rs.140 million from Federal bank, SBT and HUDCO. The remaining financial part was met by the NRIs and the equity coming from airport service providers and financial institutions. There are nearly ten thousand shareholders from about thirty countries that include Australia, Canada, Egypt, Germany, Hong- Kong, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, India, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Singapore, United Kingdom etc. It's amazing that NRIs working in the remote places of world evinced keen interest in the airport project.

### **The Major highlights of Cochin International Airport Limited are as follows**

- First Greenfield Airport outside AAI's Ambit
- First Aviation infrastructure under PPP Concept
- First Airport by Airport users and Airport Service Providers
- First Airport operator in Indian Duty Free Retailing
- Low Cost Airport Construction and Modular expansion

The Cochin International Airport has world-class passenger terminals providing travel-friendly facilities and services to cater to the needs of travellers from world-over.

### **Some of the Unique Features at The Cochin Airport Are**

- 1,25,000 square feet Domestic Terminal.
- 4,78,000 square feet International Terminal.
- India's largest arrival duty free shop (Cochin Duty Free) of 14,000 square feet.
- Dynamically configurable CUTE enabled and fully computerized check-in counter displays.
- Security control system with state-of-the-art closed circuit camera system.
- Integrated Flight Information Display System (FIDS) and Public Address System.
- Fire Detection and Control System.
- Fully computerized prepaid taxi and entry ticketing counters.

Aerotropolis is a dream project of Cochin International Airport Limited. Dreaming big and planning to the minutest detail is an exercise well practiced at Cochin International Airport Limited. This ambitious project plans to develop around 450 acres of land with a view to generate non-aeronautical revenue, to shore-up Cochin International Airport Limited's aeronautical revenue streams. The company envisions developing a full-fledged airport city (Aerotropolis), surrounding the airport with state-of-the-art facilities.

The following are the Proposed City Side Development by Cochin International Airport Limited as part of its Aerotropolis related vision.

### **Aviation Activities**

- MRO (Maintenance/Repair/Overhaul)
- Aviation Academy

### **Leisure Activities**

- Hotel (5 Star & 3 Star)
- Convention / Exhibition Centre
- Golf Course

### Business Activities

Industrial Park encompassing aviation and aerospace related industries with Special Economic Zone (SEZ) status.

### Entertainment, Social & Cultural Activities

- Multiplexes
- Hyper Malls/Shopping Malls
- Food Court
- Family Entertainment Centre and Amusement Parks
- Trade & Cultural Village
- Educational Institutions

**Super Specialty Hospital:** Spread over twenty five acres, the hospital would primarily focus on Potential Growth Segments like Ayurveda, Cardiac Care, Neurology, Orthopedics', Cosmetic Dentistry etc.

Growth of Cochin International Airport Limited during last five years till 2011

The details of last five years Aircraft movement in both Domestic and International sector is given below

**Table 1: Aircraft Movement**

	<i>2006-07</i>	<i>2007-08</i>	<i>2008-09</i>	<i>2009-10</i>	<i>2010-11</i>
Total	30673	39168	41172	41544	41081
Domestic	16501	22833	22125	23476	22600
International	14172	16335	19047	18068	18481

### SOURCE: CIAL RECORDS, 2012

Presently sixteen International Airlines and eight Domestic Airlines are operating from Cochin International Airport. 18,481 international passengers and 22,600 domestic passengers and a total of 41,081 aircraft movement had been registered during the period 2010-2011.

### Table Showing Passenger Movement

The details of last five years passenger movement through both domestic and international terminals are given below. There was a rapid increase in the passenger movement.



	<b>2006-07</b>	<b>2007-08</b>	<b>2008-09</b>	<b>2009-10</b>	<b>2010-11</b>
Total Pax	2561070	3338142	3362801	3946103	4345179
Domestic Pax	131898	567530	352687	713757	985242
International Pax	1429172	1770612	2010114	2232346	2359937

Source: CIAL Records, 2012

### **The Main departments in Cochin International Airport Limited are**

- Airport Operations
  - Operations Department
  - Cargo Department
  - Ground handling
  - Security
  - IT and Communication
  - Fire
- Airport Engineering Services
  - Civil Department
  - Electrical Department
- Finance
  - Finance and Secretarial
  - Duty Free
- Human Resource Department
  - HR Department
  - Land Acquisition
- Commercial

Cochin International Airport Limited has emerged as a pioneer in experiencing the Public Private Participation (PPP) model in the development of an international airport. The Model has proved successful and has evolved the airport as the fourth busiest airport in India having passenger traffic of more than forty five lakh passengers per year. The airport is termed as one of the most consistent profitable airport in India despite the major slow down across the airports in various cities in India. The airport at the time of inception was intended to become a major hub connecting South India to the rest of the world. The airport has the mission of evolving itself into the status of an aerotropolis or an airport city in the near future. As a result, the airport has seen to enter into diversified areas with the establishment of CIAL Golf club, CIAL Aviation

Academy, Entertainment Zone, Convention centre, Maintenance, Repair and Overhauling (MRO) facilities, Aviation museum, Shopping malls and multiplexes etc to name a few.

The Vision of Cochin International Airport Limited was conceptualized to a greater extent with the wholehearted efforts of the former Managing Director during his tenure from 2008. CIAL Golf Club, CIAL Academy, MRO etc are among the few which could be materialized to existence during his tenure. The year 2011 witnessed a major change in the political scenario in the State governance that brought in radical changes in the management approaches particularly inflicting the growth path of Cochin International Airport Limited towards Aerotropolis.

### **Some of the Notable Features of the Current Approach of the Management Observable Include**

The CIAL Golf Club is not functioning currently owing to the disinterest from the management, MRO facilities though started functioning with the mishap of Gulf Air flight during August 2011, but it has never seen the light of having it inaugurated by the authorities till now, albeit being scheduled for inauguration many times, for unknown reasons. CIAL Aviation Academy was started in 2009 and was running in full swing as a profit making concern till 2012 is also facing a closure.

The Aviation museum which was near to completion is now almost deserted, for reasons still in dark. All these are some of the symptoms showing the attitude of the present management in Cochin International Airport Limited under the well portrayed image of the present Managing Director who is also the Principal Secretary to the Government of Kerala who was among the pioneers in steering Cochin International Airport Limited to a reality. This will definitely have a reflection on the extent to which employees are engaged in Cochin International Airport Limited towards their work. The management has curtailed its functions further and is currently in the midst of a closure for reasons beyond a common man's logic.

The employees of the Cochin International Airport Limited were literally shell shocked to learn about 'Operation Smoke Out' strategy of the new management through a news break up in channels on a Sunday noon during May 2011. Many employees were de-promoted, transferred to different departments and shifts that adversely affected the work-life balance of employees especially that of female employees.

The employees, who started reacting to the management decisions, were asked either to accept the terms put forth by the management or resign and leave the organization which shows the typical bureaucratic attitude of the management. The in-group employees with the new management started playing power politics cornering other employees. Though the majority of employees were taken aback by the adamant bureaucracy of the management, employees soon began to respond to the change. The result was low morale towards the concern, go slow attitude which witnessed major trauma in Cochin International Airport Limited, including the Gulf Air mishap in August 2011. Battle lines were drawn in Kerala's Cochin International Airport Limited with the top management headed by Principal Secretary cum Managing Director of Cochin International Airport Limited, firing show cause notices to thirteen employees, ahead of a possible termination. The show cause notices were issued on November 16, 2011, with a week's time (November 24) given to them to reply. Out of the thirteen employees falling under managerial cadre, three employees have quit 'under pressure', while one obtained stay from the Kerala High Court and the remaining nine are readying a battery of legal experts to take on Cochin International Airport Limited's Operation Smoke Out. In all about one hundred and sixty one employees are likely to be affected by Cochin International Airport Limited's Operation Smoke Out. This has brought in serious repercussions in the attitude of employees towards their work in Cochin International Airport Limited.

The Paper aims in analyzing the extent to which employees are currently engaged with their work owing to modified the work environment. The employees especially in the management cadre from the middle level management to the senior level management were approached for the purpose of the study. The Paper is limited to the fourteen functional departments in Cochin International Airport Limited encompassing all cadres from Junior Manager Level to Senior Manager Level. Active discussions were made with them regarding their view point about the various HR factors leading to employee engagement which will be detailed below, from career development to cooperation in workplace. The extracts of the opinion collected from listening to the employees are detailed under each of the factors leading to employee engagement in Cochin International Airport Limited.

The Paper aims to clearly indicate the mindset of the employees with respect to the conduciveness of the working environment in Cochin International Airport Limited which makes them engaged with their work. The cumulating frustration in the minds of the employees can have serious

repercussions. When employees get more and more disengaged with their work, the organization may have to face serious consequences including conglomeration of employees against the management. This is something that can be catastrophic to sustainment of a reputed International Airport though under Public Private Participation, but still under the governance of the Government of Kerala. The Government of Kerala had appointed Principal Secretary as the Managing Director of Cochin International Airport Limited as he was instrumental in making it a reality at the time of its inspection. But now, as the principal Secretary to the Government of Kerala, he is not exercising full support for the activities of Cochin International Airport Limited which are leading to serious concerns in Cochin International Airport Limited. The Paper aims to bring out to the concern of the Government and to the public about the pitfalls in the work environment in Cochin International Airport Limited owing to mismanagement.

### **Factors Leading to Employee Engagement**

Studies have shown that there are some critical factors which lead to Employee engagement. The following Human Resource factors have been identified as leading to employee engagement which will be discussed with respect to Cochin International Airport Limited. The theoretical aspect and its impact on the employees will also be detailed subsequently.

#### **1. Opportunities for personal development**

Organizations intending high levels of engagement provide employees with opportunities to develop their abilities, learn new skills, acquire new knowledge and realise their potential. Thus personal development opportunities are embedded in plans of companies with respect to the career paths of their employees and invest in them. The aerotropolis vision had envisaged its employees with much scope for their professional and personal development. The top management had earlier given critical importance to the training and development of the employees. But with the change in the management scenario, the training and development aspects are not much in limelight as the new management stresses more on routine airport activities then giving more importance to training and development. The employees now feel that they are more involved in routine activities without gaining much opportunity for their career development.

## 2. Effective management of talent

Career development influences engagement for employees and retaining the most talented employees and providing opportunities for personal development. Talent management emphasizing on competency mapping plays a leading role in enhancing the brand image of any concern, especially that of an international airport. The employee selection must be made on effective mapping of their competencies as against the skills required to carry out a particular job. Cochin International Airport Limited is having a strong resource pool of employees competent in their respective fields. The opportunities provided for personal and professional development of employees had helped retain the talent in the concern. However changing political scenario has resulted in falling out of talents owing to the mismanagement of talents.

## 3. Clarity of Company Values

Employees need to feel that the core values for which their organization stand are unambiguous and clear. This will help both the management as well as the employees to combine together in achieving the strategic objectives of the organization. Cochin International Airport Limited was upholding core values which were visualized by visionaries and top management leading to its development from being an international airport to that of an airport city. The management and the employees were singing the same tune of action until the change in political scenario leading to change in the management of Cochin International Airport Limited. The growth phase of Cochin International Airport Limited earlier had witnessed a participative kind of leadership as against the authoritative leadership style as exhibited in recent times by the top management. The participative leadership style had ensured that the employees and the management were together visualizing the future development of Cochin International Airport Limited as an airport city and were focused for the same. But the authoritative leadership has moved away from this vision and the employees are being forced to be hooked down to their routine airport activities. The employees are now lacking clarity in the core company values of Cochin International Airport Limited.

## 4. Respectful Treatment of Employees

Successful organizations show respect for each employee's qualities and contribution, regardless of their job level. This will help in enhancing the morale of the employees towards the concern. With the leadership style being participative earlier in Cochin International Airport Limited, the

employees were treated well and the management have always encouraged for employee contributions. The core culture changed drastically when the new management have started treating employees as mere workers and not as knowledge employees and the management is expecting them to fulfill only their routine tasks and not any contributions from their side.

#### 5. Company's standard of ethical behavior

A company's ethical standards also lead to engagement of an individual. The employees feel engaged to their concern owing to the standards of ethical behavior exercised by the management. The employees expect that they will be treated fairly and equally being free from bias and undue favoritism. Present scenario in Cochin International Airport Limited is, with top management exercising undue favoritism and the power is getting concentrated among few which results in mental harassment for other employees. The majority of employees now lack confidence in the management as they experience hardships due to power politics in Cochin International Airport Limited.

#### 6. Empowerment

Employees want to be involved in decisions that affect their work. The leaders of high engagement work places create a trustful and challenging environment, in which employees are encouraged to dissent from the prevailing orthodoxy and to input and innovate to move the organization forward. Empowering the employees will definitely boost up their confidence in their talent and will tend to get engaged with their workplace. It also leads to the emergence of a corporate citizenship behavior in the concern. Cochin International Airport Limited in the recent times is engulfed in orthodox management system with a lot of power politics which hinder the growth and development of employees towards empowerment. This will lead to employee dissent, unsatisfied employee community which will have an impact on the corporate brand image of Cochin International Airport Limited.

#### 7. Image

High levels of employee engagement are inextricably linked with high levels of performance. It will have a direct impact on boosting the corporate image of the firm. Cochin International Airport Limited has succeeded in building a good brand image owing to its growth since 1995. It has been proved as one of the pioneer in Public Private Participation model airport. Many airports have emerged adapting similar model, since

the success story of Cochin International Airport Limited. The employees feel engaged owing to its enhanced brand image. All these apparently are in jeopardy since the takeover by the new management.

#### 8. Equal Opportunities and Fair Treatment

The employee engagement levels would be high if their bosses (superiors) provide equal opportunities for growth and advancement to all the employees. Every employee in the concern would expect them to be treated equally and fairly by the management and that the management will treat them without any bias. A concern like a Cochin International Airport Limited should exercise effective management of employees as they are instrumental in enhancing Cochin International Airport Limited from being an international airport to that of an airport city. The management should ensure that all the employees are given equal opportunities and are treated fairly so that they can become more engaged with Cochin International Airport Limited. The top management must attempt to weed out all possibilities of power politics in Cochin International Airport Limited and should provide a pivotal platform for the employees to excel.

#### 9. Pay and Benefits

The company should have a proper pay system so that the employees are motivated to work in the organization. In order to boost his engagement levels the employees should also be provided with certain benefits and compensations. The compensation management system in Cochin International Airport Limited is at par with industry standards. The employees are entitled to bonus and other benefits from time to time. The employees in Cochin International Airport Limited are benefitted and satisfied with the pay system prevailing.

#### 10. Performance Appraisal

Fair evaluation of an employee's performance is an important criterion for determining the level of employee engagement. The company which follows an appropriate performance appraisal technique which is transparent and not biased will have high levels of employee engagement. The appraisal system in Cochin International Airport Limited should be transparent. Though Cochin International Airport Limited is having an effective system for appraisal of its employees, it is often complained that the system is not free from bias. This hinders the productive efforts of the employees in Cochin International Airport Limited. The management should ensure that the system is effective and free from bias.



### 11. Health and Safety

Research indicates that the engagement levels are low if the employee does not feel secure while working. Therefore every organization should adopt appropriate methods and systems for the health and safety of their employees. Cochin International Airport Limited ensures about the health and safety of its employees. The employees and their family are entitled to insurance and medical benefits which are taken care of by Cochin International Airport Limited. This is another area which ensures that the employee's feels engaged with Cochin International Airport Limited.

### 12. Family Friendliness

A person's family life influences his work life. When an employee realizes that the organization is considering his family's benefits also, he will have an emotional attachment with the organization which leads to engagement. Work life balance is an essential criterion which makes an employee engaged with its concern. The work culture in an international airport is unique. The nature of job is of critical importance. The employees feel that they could possibly exercise a balance in their personal and professional life while working in Cochin International Airport Limited. It is imperative that the management takes necessary initiatives in ensuring work life balance of its employees.

### 13. Job Satisfaction

Only a satisfied employee can become an engaged employee. Therefore it is very essential for an organization to see to it that the job given to the employee matches his career goals which will make him enjoy his work and he would ultimately be satisfied with his job. The employees in Cochin International Airport Limited in recent times have shown dissent towards their job satisfaction. They feel that there is a gap in the training and development programmes offered in Cochin International Airport Limited. The authoritative nature of top management is also becoming a reason for dissatisfaction of job among the employees. The uncertainty generating from time to time owing to political changes and top management changes also adds up to the lack in satisfaction towards the job. This is a serious issue which requires immediate action as lack of satisfaction towards job will lead to disengaged employee community in Cochin International Airport Limited.

### 14. Communication

The company should follow the open door policy. There should be



both upward and downward communication with the use of appropriate communication channels in the organisation. If the employee is given a say in the decision making and has the right to be heard by his boss; then the engagement levels are likely to be high. Cochin International Airport Limited has always encouraged an open door policy for communication. However in recent times, the top management though having an open door policy seems not much effective owing to the emergence of power politics in Cochin International Airport Limited. The negative side of informal communication channels have also emerged generating flow of rumors and unauthenticated messages across Cochin International Airport Limited which leads to confusions and agony among employees. The management must ensure that the informal communication channels are effectively curtailed which will prevent unnecessary stress being building up among the employees in Cochin International Airport Limited.

#### 15. Cooperation

If the entire organization works together by helping each other i.e. all the employees as well as the supervisors coordinate well than the employees will be engaged. Working in cooperation is of critical importance as all departments work in coordination to attain desired results. This emphasizes the need for better interpersonal relationships in the concern. Cochin International Airport Limited had a conducive work environment and the employees were treated fairly and equally. But with the change in the management scenario, power politics has started showing its ugly face which is harming the interpersonal relationships in Cochin International Airport Limited. This requires immediate action from the top management as lack of appropriate cooperation among employees will have significant negative impact on the productivity and brand image of Cochin International Airport Limited.

#### **Extract from the Study**

Among the fifteen aspects analysed, the study revealed that power politics tactics by a certain in-group employees belonging to the top management in Cochin International Airport Limited is a major concern for the employees. The majority of employees feel that they are not treated fairly and equally mostly with the impact of Cochin International Airport Limited's Operation Smoke Out policy which has resulted in accumulation of dissatisfaction and grievance among employees.

Due to power politics tactics, some employees feel being cornered and they are not getting enough cooperation from their peer group due to fear of getting noticed by the top management. The change in shifts and departments have affected the work-life balance of many of the employees especially the female employees in Cochin International Airport Limited who were forced to work in different shifts and not in general shifts. The family friendliness of the concern is getting diminished which is a cause of concern for the employees in Cochin International Airport Limited. The performance appraisal system in Cochin International Airport Limited is not transparent to the employees as the concern stresses more on Confidential Reports by the superiors which could be biased due to the power politics in Cochin International Airport Limited. Thus employees feel that their performance is also not appraised effectively which will hinder their personal as well as professional growth in Cochin International Airport Limited.

With the Cochin International Airport Limited's Operation Smoke Out strategy, employees are currently facing a state of uncertainty and agony which leads to stress in the workplace. The work environment is generating the symptoms of employees getting disengaged with their work. The result may be not be attrition directly, but lack of morale towards the work by the employees which in turn will devastate the brand image of Cochin International Airport Limited in the long run.

The Paper Analysing employee engagement in Cochin International Airport Limited put forth five steps to measure employee engagement.

## STEP I

### **Listen to Your Employees**

The Management in Cochin International Airport Limited should engage in productive discussions with its employees from time to time to identify their specific concerns if any. When the management listens, employees respond by becoming more engaged. The result will be increased productivity and talent retention in Cochin International Airport Limited.

## STEP II

### **Measure Current Level of Employee Engagement**

Employee engagement needs to be measured at regular intervals in order to track its contribution to the success of the organisation. But measuring

the engagement using feedback through surveys without planning how to handle the result can lead employees to disengage. It is therefore not enough to feel the pulse; the action plan is just as essential. The employees should be encouraged to ask themselves the following queries which will help in effectively measuring the extent to which they feel they are engaged with their work.

This will help the management to gain an understanding about the heart of the employees.

- i. Do you know what is expected of you at work?
- ii. At work, do you have the opportunity to do what you do best every day?
- iii. In the last seven days, have you received recognition or praise for doing good work?
- iv. Does your management seem to care about you as a person?
- v. Is there someone at work who encourages your development?
- vi. At work, do your opinions seem to count?
- vii. Does the mission/purpose of your company make you feel your job is important?
- viii. Are your associates (fellow employees) committed to doing quality work?
- ix. In the last six months, has someone at work talked to you about your progress?
- x. In the last year, have you had opportunities at work to learn and grow?

The interpretation of the ten questions as part of a survey will help the management in measuring the employee level of engagement in Cochin International Airport Limited.

### **STEP III**

#### **Identify the Problem Areas**

Identify the problem areas to find out which are the exact areas, which lead to disengaged employees in Cochin International Airport Limited. The management must make efforts to identify the bottlenecks if any which makes employees disengaged with their work. Conducting customized employee surveys and the feedback generated will help the management in pinpointing problem areas as identified by the employees which makes them disengaged.

## STEP IV

### **Taking Action to Improve Employee Engagement by Acting Upon the Problem Areas**

Nothing is more discouraging to employees than to be asked for their feedback and see no movement toward resolution of their issues. Even the smallest actions taken to address concerns will let the staff know how their input is valued. Feeling valued will boost morale, motivate and encourage future input. Taking action starts with listening to employee feedback and a definitive action plan will need to be put in place finally.

## STEP V

Introduce a 360- degree appraisal system for all employees in Cochin International Airport Limited

The employees in Cochin International Airport Limited feel that they are not appraised effectively as they feel that personal bias often acts as a hindrance to the transparency of the whole process. Cochin International Airport Limited still relies on Confidential Reports. This system gets biased due to the existence of power politics and in-group members of the top management. A 360-degree feedback process ensures transparency and employee-friendliness and it helps in breaking the traditional mould and inverts the organizational pyramid ensuring reverse accountability where management will also be accountable to the employees. Of all the numerous advantages that come with implementing this feedback process, employees can often express their contentment over the fact that there is a decline in power politics because of the new system intact. It will make a lot more difference in the employee engagement with the implementation of a 360- degree feedback appraisal system in Cochin International Airport Limited.

### **Best Practices for Employee Engagement in CIAL**

The study has generated some approaches that could possibly help Cochin International Airport Limited in making their employees engaged in their place of work. Some good practices that Cochin International Airport Limited could follow up with new recruitments are suggested as follows:

- i. Recruiting the right person and giving them a realistic job preview
- ii. A strong induction and orientation programme
- ii. Rigorous training and development, from technical to soft skills to leadership development programmes.
- iv. Regular technical/soft-skill updates.

Beyond initial recruitment and induction, employee engagement activities can be broken into a number of groups. These include:

- A. Communications activities
- B. Reward schemes
- C. Activities to build the culture of the organization
- D. Team building activities
- E. Leadership development activities

## COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITIES

These help employees find out what is going on within the company outside of their immediate team. They also help to create an environment of trust and openness within the organization where they are able to talk openly. Employees who feel they are listened to are able to express dissatisfaction and work together to resolve their causes, without it affecting their performance.

Some good communications approaches that could be practiced in CIAL include:

1. Communication forums to provide regular feedback to all people, including team meetings, conferences and “away days”.
2. In-house magazines
3. On-line communications, including discussion boards and blogs by company personnel including senior management
4. Monthly updates on corporate goals and directions
5. Regular employee opinion and satisfaction surveys
6. Active soliciting of employee feedback, including opinions and pet peeves

## REWARD SCHEMES

Reward schemes are an important part of a company’s overall employee engagement programme. Studies have long shown that, while money in itself is not a motivating factor, the absence of financial reward can be

a significant demotivator. Thus the role of reward schemes in boosting employee engagement is:

- a. To remove barriers to satisfaction in the organization;
- b. To provide a framework for rewarding everyone in the organization for their performance;
- c. To give those who are motivated by financial gain an opportunity to achieve this.

Typical approaches include:

1. Compensation and benefit programmes
2. Stock ownership and profit sharing
3. Recognition programmes
4. Idea collection schemes linked to rewards for idea generation
5. Long service and good performance awards

## **ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP THE CULTURE OF THE ORGANIZATION**

Giving employees a feeling of belonging is crucial in creating a thriving organization that people feel committed to and others want to join. Common approaches that could be used include:

1. Clear and humane HR policies
2. Pro-social corporate objectives and Corporate Social 1.
3. Equal opportunities policies and practices
4. Initiatives to maintain the quality of work life and a balance between personal/professional lives
5. Developing a safe, clean and inspiring work environment
6. Demonstrating a commitment to employees' well being

## **TEAM BUILDING ACTIVITIES**

Culture-building activities are great for generating a feeling of belonging, but all organizations are build out of smaller teams who can get on and work together.

## **LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES**

A great organization needs not just a great leader, but people with leadership skills. This stimulates good performance, boosts creativity and eases succession planning.

Good practices include:

- a. Effective Leadership
- b. Effective Performance Management
- c. Fair evaluation of performance
- d. Empowerment through effective delegation
- e. Coaching and mentoring activities to give honest feedback by supervisors and peers
- f. An open and transparent culture to empower people and develop entrepreneurs

## CONCLUSION

Employee Engagement is the buzz word in modern management towards high performance. It is a positive attitude held by the employees towards the organization and its values. It is rapidly gaining popularity, use and importance in the workplace and impacts organizations in many ways. An organization should thus recognize employees, more than any other variable, as powerful contributors to a company's competitive position. Therefore employee engagement should be a continuous process of learning, improvement, measurement and action.

Employees should know exactly what is expected of them. If expectations are unclear, employees will inevitably face frustration, and will be open for other opportunities where they do know what's expected of them, and where their contributions are measured and recognized. Knowing the critical demands for every role is a key to ensuring that talents fit those demands. Managers must spend most of their time with their most productive talent. Many managers give their greatest degree of attention to employees who are falling behind. Talented, productive people crave time and attention from their managers, and will leave your company if they have a weak relationship or no relationship with their manager. The Company should create an environment that encourages employees to drive towards innovation or to create better systems for more productive results. Engagement is a positive emotional connection to the work. There are several engagement tools including organization climate survey, speak out, open house etc covering the entire work force of the organization to capture the spirit of listening to the voice at the bottom of the pyramid. These will help the employees to voice their concerns and will prevent the employee frustration to accumulate in the minds of the employees which might at a later stage, generate an attitude of conglomerating against the

management. These will bear serious repercussions in the long run and will affect the brand image of a well reputed, well recognized International airport like Cochin International Airport Limited.

The research would hence conclude that raising and maintaining employee engagement lies in the hands of Cochin International Airport Limited and requires a perfect blend of time, effort, commitment and investment to craft a successful endeavor.

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