

Employee Engagement – Concepts and Experiences

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Lifestyle in the western world is too intensively consuming resources. Experts in sustainable consumption and production agree, that behaviour change and social innovation is as important as better technological solutions. However, today obviously, sustainable lifestyles do not reach all segments of the population and all aspects of life to trigger the necessary effects: Some population segments prove to be more sustainable in some respects and maybe compensating in others. For instance, according to “Umweltverhalten, Umweltbedingungen 2007” (Statistik Austria, 2009) people with well-educated background have a high sustainable performance regarding buying bio products, but account much higher greenhouse gas emissions for their mobility than less-educated parts of the population.

To disseminate sustainable lifestyles the authors believe, that it is essential to address - beside classical educational paths - employees as a new target group. Experiences and routines gained in work life have a great potential to be pursued in private life (Klade et al, Muster). This approach is also in line with CSR mission statements and guidelines which put emphasize on employee trainings and involvement.

The authors will give insight into their existing concepts and experiences, such as the guideline ‚sustainable behaviour at work and in private life‘, ‚CO₂-monitoring‘ as a carbon calculator tool and communication platform for companies (Bußwald et al.), and different learning formats (Course on Personal Changes towards a more Sustainable Lifestyle, reflexive elements in CSR / Stakeholder Management Course, Microtraining Sustainable Lifestyles).

Main focus of the contribution will be the research questions: what are the most important success factors for employee engagement initiatives and programmes? And in which ways can their impact be assessed?

Data of focus groups, feed-back collected after trainings and workshops, participants‘ statistics of the CO₂ monitor tool and evaluation of participants‘ engagement profiles, participants‘ reflection papers, and the authors‘ self evaluation as trainers provide the empirical data base.

The findings provide a better understanding of key success factors and give hints on important aspects concerning design, implementation and transfer phase of employee engagement initiatives. The following figures illustrate a broad possible result range: 2-3% of employees can be reached rather easily, 10% are possible but already need higher efforts, 60% are the maximum share of employees reached by our programmes.

Although this sounds promising, it has to be underlined, that higher participation rates really need targeted action and that participation indicators still do not include guarantee for behavioural change of the same intensity factor. More research will be necessary to shape quick win approaches.

Our contribution refers to the topics ‚Employee behaviour change towards sustainability‘, ‚Education for sustainable development‘, and ‚Approaching sustainability through action research‘, of the CRRC 2013 call.

Due to the inter-active character of our topic we would prefer to discuss our findings and research ideas with the participants in a workshop setting (about 1,5 hours) which could also include transfer to other settings and target groups.

References:

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