



## A PRAGMATIC STUDY ON UNDERSTANDING THE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES DURING AND POST COVID-19

Miss. Meera Nair

Student MBA 2<sup>nd</sup> Year (HR), SSR Institute of Management and Research, Silvassa,  
Permanently Affiliated to SPPU, Pune

### Abstract

**Introduction:** The year 2020 has seen an unpredictable global crisis created due to COVID-19. In this period, many organizations have come up allowing their employees to work from home. Amidst all these, the usual work culture took a major hit and the notion of employee engagement was set on the back foot. But now the workplace scenes will be quite different from before and employers need to rethink their approach on many aspects and one of them is how to keep the employees engaged in the lockdown and post lockdown period.

**Purpose:** The purpose of the study is to understand the concept and best practices of employee engagement along with determining the current employee engagement strategies adopted by the organizations to motivate the employees with example of few companies. The paper also concentrates on the post COVID-19 strategies that the organizations might implement to tackle any further uncertainties.

**Research Methodology:** Descriptive research study has been conducted with the help of secondary data and sources. The study has the scope of understanding the employee engagement strategies adopted by the organization to keep the employees inspired, engaged and motivated with expected redefined engagement strategies post the global pandemic.

**Findings:** The study leads to determine and understand the employee engagement strategies implemented in the selected organizations during the Covid-19 period in which it was found that the organizations are taking initiatives to set down innovative steps to keep their workforce encouraged, stress free, and motivated. The study also helps in highlighting the key employee engagement strategies which can be executed post the lockdown by the organizations.

**Key Words:** COVID-19, Best practices, Employee engagement strategies



[Scholarly Research Journal's](http://www.srjis.com) is licensed Based on a work at [www.srjis.com](http://www.srjis.com)

### Introduction:

**“To win in the marketplace you must first win in the workplace”**

**- Doung Conant**

Organizations universally are in the need to successfully understand and use their employee’s talent, knowledge, skill and vigor. In several countries, increasing workers productivity level is decisive to business growth as employees are the only source that can’t be faked or imitated and are considered to be gems for any organization. While the term Employee engagement may seem pretty straightforward, it is more of complex than it sounds. Employee engagement  
Copyright © 2020, Scholarly Research Journal for Humanity Science & English Language

is required in building a motivated and effective team. An engaged employee looks forward of going to work and have a sense of personal job performance and their role in the team. They work hard to meet the goals and objectives and also seek feedback to explore more effective ways to perform their job tasks. The concept of employee engagement was brought up by **William A. Kahn** in 1990 as a part of his research. According to him engagement is a psychological statement as ‘the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles, in engagement people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performance”. He has also highlighted three aspects of employee engagement as *meaningfulness, safety and availability* and also found that engagement is not static. How employees are being treated in the organization’s created an emotion, which subsequently enjoys a strong relation with employee engagement. Other than this famous other author defined Employee engagement as:

**Gallup defines:** *Engaged employees as those who are involved in, enthusiastic about and committed to their work & workplace. And categorized workers as “engaged” based on their responses to key workplace elements it has found predict important organizational performance outcomes.*

**Macey & Schneider (2008),** *defined employee engagement as a desirable condition as it has an organizational purpose and connotes involvement, commitment, passion, enthusiasm, focused effort, and energy, so it has both attitudinal and behavioral components.*

But, from the past couple of months the world has seen a lot ‘The COVID-19’ is here to stay for a long period of time than we imagine. Both the world at large and our worlds have been upended several times over. In such tremendous times work has been taken into a whole new meaning. Over the times it is been clear that we need to shift our employee engagement to the boarder concept of employee wellbeing and happiness. Meanwhile, employees all over the world continue to work from home, keeping HR’s on their toes looking for best way to keep employee engagement rate high. Since social distancing and prolonged lockdown period had led to all remote working environment, business has shifted into a virtual world.

Working from home often with limited resources and restrictions, the employees are facing hard time balancing the personal and professional time. Many organizations are trying to devise interesting way for employee engagement to virtual platforms and some have redefined the term to incorporate family engagement within. Deloitte India, for example is one of the

organizations that is hosting webinars to help parents by giving tips on keeping children engaged constructively while they focus on their daily work schedule.

Keeping employees engaged throughout in lockdown, especially confusing official guidance has been a regular challenge for business. An increased focus on mental health and wellbeing for remote workers indicate an accurate awareness of the importance of happy and healthy employee to a successful company and successful economy.

**Objectives of Employee engagement:**

- To improve the relationship between employees and employer.
- To boost the health and productivity of the workforce.
- To receive and provide feedback.
- To attract and retain employees.
- To enhance job performances.
- To improve goal and job alignment.
- To prevent work absence and leaves.

**Best practices of Employee engagement:**

Employee engagement best practices are essential to making sure that organization is running effectively and productively as a whole. While some companies choose to precisely focus on other human resources like leadership, culture, and development, other organization create a broader HR strategy focusing on employee engagement as whole.



**Figure no: 1 Best practices of employee engagement**

*The organization has to be best and the employees should have to be brightest.*

*Copyright © 2020, Scholarly Research Journal for Humanity Science & English Language*

### **Literature review:**

Today, millions of people around the world are working from home as cities remain under lockdown to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and what we are facing today is an unprecedented human disaster. As per the need of the hour, individual businesses have shifted some or most of their processes online and initiated a Work-From-Home (WFH) regime. (Stratfix, 2020)

Remote working has been a growing trend in recent years as it helps employees focus on delivering time-bound projects with minimal distractions. However, according to a recent study, 20% of remote workers feel that connecting and collaborating with the colleagues is a challenge while working from dispersed locations. Organizations are evolving and introducing new engagement initiatives as also figuring ways out to measure their engagement effectiveness. (singh, Employee Engagememt, 29)

Employee engagement stands for any approach resulting in the right condition for all the members of an organization to give of their best each day. (stange, 2020) It is actually the level of enthusiasm and employee feel towards his or her job. To those engaged it is more than a pay-cheque it is the eagerness towards their task that makes them passionate in their work, and this passion is often reflected in their individual outcomes. (Heryati, n.d.)

As the world continues to stay indoor to fight any further spread of the novel coronavirus, employers need to innovate to inspire, encourage, and engage their workforce. From communicating regularly through virtual townhalls to introducing programs focusing on the wellbeing of employees, companies are leveraging all possible ways to keep the employees socially connected as they work from home. They are finding innovative ways to use technology to connect people even when they are physically distanced many companies are organizing contests, challenges and hackathons to share real-time actionable ideas for business to battle and recover from the after effects of COVID-19, with the help of tech collaboration tools. Such ingenuity helps in bringing employees together and promote innovation. To make a sense of purpose, connection and impact for employees with the larger community, companies are also encouraging employees to participate in virtual volunteering programs. (singh, Article, 2020)

Furthermore, a tried and tested 3R approach- **Reset, Relearn and Renew** may help set a new course of employee engagement in the upcoming times under which the organization can reboot the pre working condition before this crises and can create a completely new world

with newer interfaces with support of creating a space to transform the current work from home to learn from home. By resetting and relearning organization can reduce professional risks that staffs undergo, however as HR's need to emphasise on the personal risk, this is where renewing comes to play. Companies could introduce a wide range of programs to facilitate this need by including not only the employees but their loved family members as well and encourage the staff to showcase their hidden talent and share with the organization. (Chakraborty, 27)

Abraham Maslow proposed in his theory "*Maslow's hierarchy of needs*" **A theory of Human Motivation** in psychological review. The sequence in which needs are classified has its own significance. According to Maslow, physiological needs must be met first before safety needs of an individual.

Maslow further argues that when people fail to meet the needs at the various stages of the hierarchy, they suffer from mental health issues and it takes a toll on their overall wellbeing. The exact way when employees' hierarchical needs are not met, they show a low altitude of employee engagement and it impacts employee morale, productivity and retention severely. (VANTAGE CIRCLE, n.d.)

Now it has become very important for organizations to prioritize the health and safety of the employees. Uber has been ahead of the curve on remote working and given that they are a global technology company and they have been working in virtual environment from the very first. Some initiatives that they have seen to improve employee engagement during extended periods of remote work are:

- Share all the possible information with employees.
- Leverage communication and social media channels.
- Ask employees what they need and enforce policies that reflect those needs.
- Encourage employees to find work-life balance.
- Remind employees they have resources available.
- Crowdfund ideas to achieve a common goal.
- Organise regular activities. (Mathur, 2020)

Employees are adjusting their seats to adapt to remote work culture, the intriguing fact is that the leaders and managers always emphasis on these needs of their employees and create favourable moments that can help them stay satisfied and engaged. (VANTAGE CIRCLE, n.d.)

According to a new research, just over half of the employees strongly agree that they are well prepared to do their job considering the impact of COVID-19 is having. Employees around the world seems to be adapting quite well to the normal. ([Employee benefits, 2020](#))

Bringing employees together through contests and activities conducted virtually is the best way out to keep the employees on their toes. Conducting a companywide and team wise workout challenge is possible using the ideabox tool on group. The group can also have a tool that announces various events and activities, and broadcast it to the whole organisation.

Dr. Jeo Caine, Director of Data science at Peakon a platform which conducts employee engagement surveys to feedback to managers has notified a significant change in the data gathered from the employee's surveys since the onset of COVID-19. While Caine says that it's been "heartening to see leaders prioritize connectedness" while their staff work remotely, he also notes that "in March, the number of employee comments recommending wellbeing shot up by 51% compared with February, [and] employees have noted a pressure to work harder and longer hours during lockdown to prove to managers that they're not 'slacking off.'" ([clark, 2020](#))

Engagement at MC Donald's has relevant policy for its restaurant management teams and the frontline crew at the west and south of the country. The organisation has modified its LMS (existing learning management system) to suit the learning and engagement needs of its employees at all the levels. ([Goswami, 2020](#))

Circle care corporate wellness app is another platform where companies can motivate their employees via: positive reinforcements and rewards to establish and maintain healthy lifestyle choices. The app the organizations own private social app to promote employee engagement and to increase job satisfaction also, it helps to foster interactions between employees through custom challenges and engaging activities. Moreover, the organization can use circle care's feature to promote employee recognition, peer appreciation, birthday, work anniversary and real-life acknowledgements to promote greater job satisfaction. ([Circlecare, 2020](#))

A substantial comparison of pre- and post- survey data identified changes in employee perception of company culture. From team members to managers and senior leaders, the engage study revealed cross-the-board increases in culture driver scores since COVID-19 shelter-in-orders took effect in March 2020. ([Claffey, 2020](#))

**Objective of the study:**

The researcher has considered the following objectives for the study

- ✓ To understand the concept and best practices of employee engagement.
- ✓ To determine the employee engagement strategies during and post COVID-19 Pandemic in selected organizations.

**Research Methodology:**

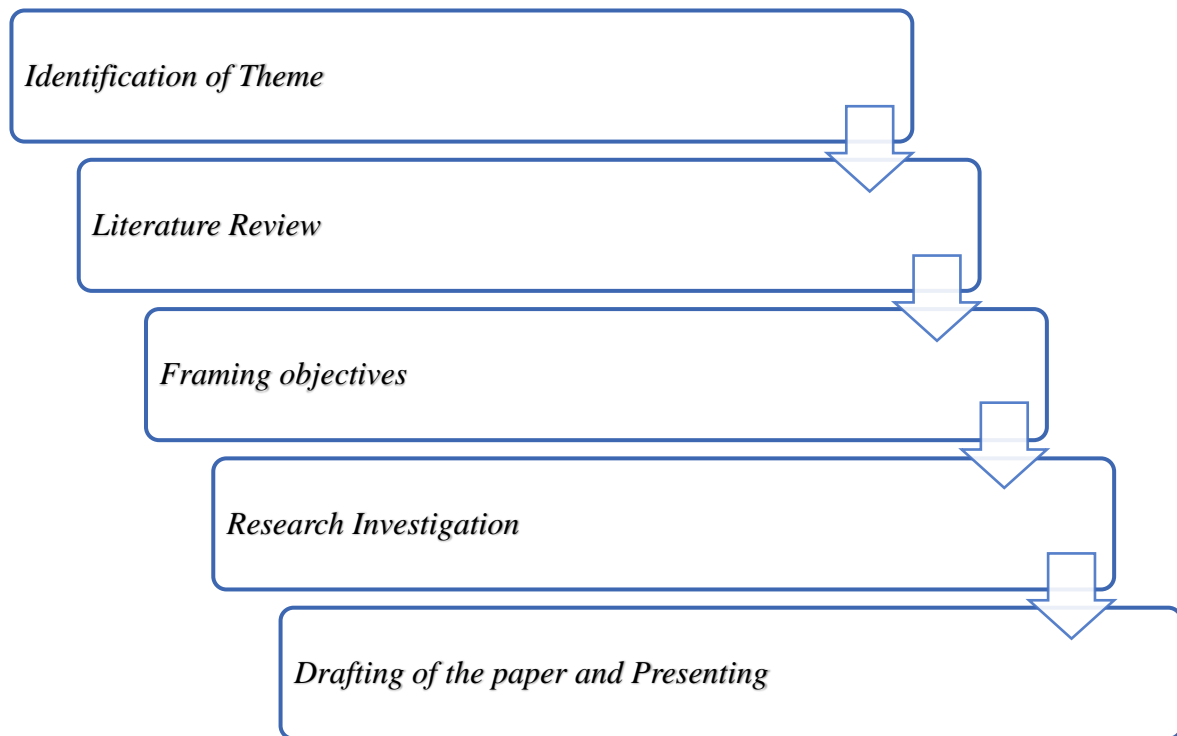
Research Design	Descriptive Research Design
Data Collection	Secondary source of data (Websites & Blogs, articles)

**Table no: 1 Research Methodology**

*A pragmatic study on understanding the employee engagement strategies during and post COVID-19* is a description research study massively with the help of secondary data.

The author has presented various objectives and best practices of employee engagement highlighting the first objective of the study. Furthermore, the study aims to determine the engagement strategies during and post COVID-19 period.

**Research Process:**



**Figure no: 2 Research process carried out for the study by the Author**

**Employee engagement strategies during COVID-19 Pandemic:**

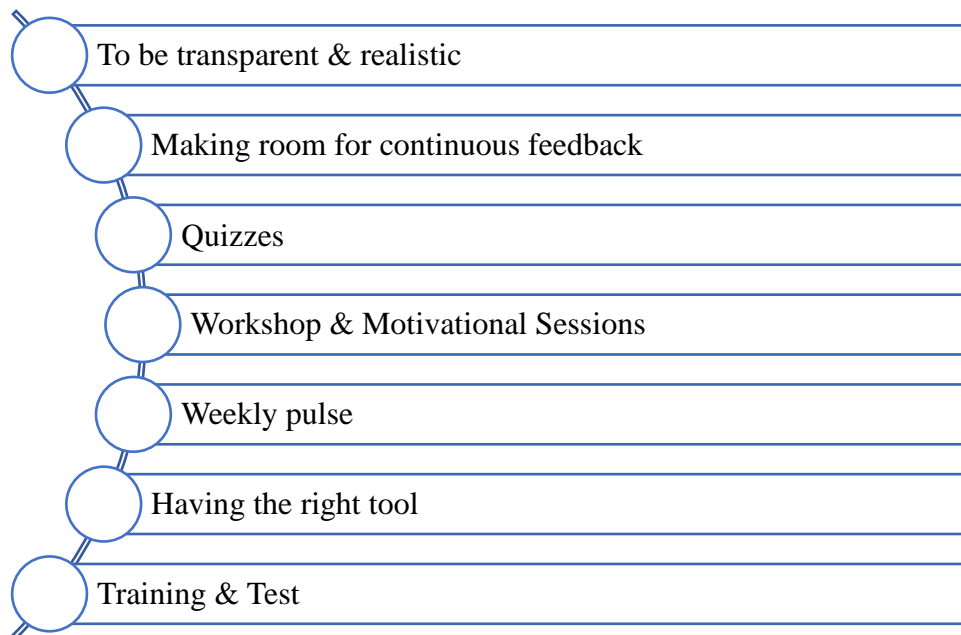
Employee engagement during COVID-19 is crucial. Particularly because neither the organizations nor the employees were prepared for it. For some, it was completely new but even for those who had some exposure to working remotely before this pandemic working from home every single day of the week with no definite end in sight can be lonely and isolating.

According to an article covered by the Economic Times, the number of cases citing stress, anxiety, fear and depression among working professionals has increased 3 times post the lockdown. While remittance is always a good impulse to engage workers, it isn't the "Be-all and End-all" for driving employee engagement.

Organizations have to make a lot of adjustments to their business plans and how they work during this outbreak. The employees want to feel a sense of belonging and that they're contributing in a meaningful way.

***Few of the ways to tackle and keep the employees inspired, motivated and stress free in this global pandemic.***





**Figure no: 3 Engagement strategies during COVID-19 Pandemic**

**Companies which have adopted unique strategies during lockdown to encourage their workforce:**

**1. Tata Teleservices:**

In an endeavour to ensure that employees are able to continue working uninterrupted, telecom company, Tata Teleservices has rolled out various initiatives to ensure employees safety and enable them to work from home in a seamless manner.

The company has come up with an Employee Assistance Programme, **SABAL**, in partnership with *Itohelp*, an online counselling platform, to keep a check on its employees' health and wellbeing, and ensure their safety during this critical time. The initiative aims to support its employees in addressing their concerns related to work, health as well as mental and emotional wellbeing. However, participation in SABAL is voluntary.

Other initiatives and actions taken by Tata Teleservices also include a "Doctor on Call" facility, which is extended to all employees and their families. Moreover, the wellbeing of an employee is checked and verified digitally through self-declaration form.

**2. Capgemini:**

Capgemini India has set up desktops at employee's homes and had shared laptops along with stepwise instructions to configure and connect remotely to the Capgemini network in a secure manner, via: VPN

The company also have said to continue their culture of engaging with the employees and had introduced innovative virtual employee engagement initiatives, to boost their morale and keep their spirits up during this lockdown period. The Capgemini has launched “Bigg Boss Challenge” where employees along with their families and friends can participate by taking on an exciting series of tasks and contests. Also, the company has come up with Re-vive in Five where teams engage with a topic such as- wellbeing, productivity improvement, team bonding.

### 3. **CARS24:**

The HR team at CARS24 is taking multiple initiatives such as virtual fitness programs and online group challenges to boost employee morale and engagement. One of the first activities was called #FlauntYourDesk which urged everyone to share a picture of their home office setups. Various other activities followed, including challenges like sharing a picture with your pet, a selfie with the family and know your leaders where the employees were quizzed about their general knowledge of the leaders.

Keeping in mind their employee’s positive response there are several other initiatives in the room, including virtual karaoke challenge, virtual campfire, # what’s cooking segment for employees to flaunt their cooking.

### 4. **Flipkart:**

During these COVID-19 times, when remote working has drastically reduced the face time between employees, the role of employee-engagement initiatives has become all the more vital now. Understanding this the Flipkart has come up with initiatives to engage their employees which are:

- ✓ Dance Flipkart Dance
- ✓ Chef Diaries
- ✓ Organic farming classes
- ✓ Digital pet party
- ✓ Big online family quiz night
- ✓ Arty Crafty Time for younger ones in the family

**Employee engagement strategies proposed post COVID-19 pandemic:**

As soon as we enter the post- COVID-19 world of employee engagement, it's become clear that tomorrow will bring a new set of challenges and hurdles to overcome. Though it's been a time of constant change, a unique opportunity to reset employee engagement strategies and approaches. Here, the author will explain few ways through which the organization can keep up the employee engagement level after they return to work.

**Learning**

The author got the following insights and learning from the research conducted:



**Figure no: 3 Engagement strategies post COVID-19 Pandemic**

**Table No. 2 Learning from the study by the author**

Company Name	Employee engagement strategies
Tata Teleservice	The Tata Teleservices came up with the Employee Assistance program SABAL, & Doctor on call as their engaging strategy to motivate, inspire and support their employees with health & safety, mental & emotional wellbeing during COVID-19 pandemic.
Capgemini	The Capgemini company enforced Big Boss Challenge, setting up of desktops at employees' home, & Re-vive in five as their employee engagement strategy to energize their staffs with stress free activities and fun games.
CARS24	FlauntYourdesk, Selfie with family, Quizzes, & Know your leader were the strategies implemented by the CARS24 company to bring positivity among the employees to engage well during the global pandemic
Flipkart	Flipkart came up with the most innovative approach to engage its workforce in the pandemic the initiatives were: Dance flipkart dance, Chef diaries, Family quiz, Digital pet party, Organic farming, Arty crafty which included the employees as well as the family members.

**Conclusion:**

In today's era, the workforce is massively driven by employee engagement activities and strategies. To make the organization successful in the market place it is very important to make the employees happy at the initial stage. During this COVID-19 pandemic the organizations are initiating different techniques to foster a healthy and motivated workplace. On the other hand, in this crisis the engagement strategies and expectation have shifted. Prior to COVID-19 employee's expectation included promotion, better pay, and recognition as a key factor to join an organization. However, flexible timing, health insurance, remote working has gained more prominence during lockdown. The organizations may have to reinforce their

engagement strategies post the pandemic to tackle with the future uncertainties and keep the employees engaged in terms of personal and professional growth.

### **Future scope:**

The study is descriptive in nature and the inferences are collected with the help of secondary data. The study was primarily attempted to understand and determine the employee engagement strategies during and post COVID-19. The future scope of the study can be to analyse the engagement strategies post the COVID-19 across the Indian organizations.

### **Acknowledgement:**

I acknowledge the support of SSR Institute of Management & Research (IMR), Silvassa on motivating me to undertake the literary exercise. I thank & appreciate the guidance received from Mrs. Diksha Swaroop, Asst. Professor, SSR IMR, Silvassa.

### **References**

- Alexandra. (2020, april). Retrieved from harver: [harver.com](http://harver.com)
- bharadwaj, d. (2020). Retrieved from CARS24: [www-cars24-com.cdn.ampproject.org](http://www-cars24-com.cdn.ampproject.org)
- Blog: NASSCOM Official Blog. (2020, may 26). Retrieved from Business process incubator: <https://www.businessprocessincubator.com/content/the-lockdown-effect-changing-face-of-employee-engagement-satisfaction/>
- bose, r. (2020, april 15). features. Retrieved from HRKatha: [www.hrkatha.com](http://www.hrkatha.com)
- Chakraborty, K. (27, april 2020). The 3R approach. Retrieved from peplematters: From [peplemattersglobal.com](http://peplemattersglobal.com)
- Circlecare. (2020). Increase employee engagement and wellbeing. Retrieved from Circlecare: <https://www.mycirclecare.com>
- Claffey, D. (2020, june 25). Retrieved from energage: [www.energage.com](http://www.energage.com)
- clark, C. t. (2020, may 28). Retrieved from Forbes: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/charlestowersclark/2020/05/28/employee-feedback-platforms-how-to-keep-employees-engaged-and-happy-during-lockdown/#6f7b77b97636>
- Employee benefits. (2020, april 17). BENEFEX. Retrieved from employee benefits: <https://employeebenefits.co.uk/employee-engagement-during-covid-19/>
- Goswami, A. (2020, april 13). features. Retrieved from HR Katha: <https://www.hrkatha.com/employee-engagement/how-mcdonalds-is-keeping-its-crew-engaged-during-lockdown/>
- Heryati. (n.d.). Employee feedback. Retrieved from 6Q Blog: <https://inside.6q.io/the-definition-of-employee-engagement/#:~:text=Employee%20engagement%20is%20a%20property,Wikipedia>
- Mathur, N. (2020, april 28). Life @ Work. Retrieved from peplematters: From [peplemattersglobal.com](http://peplemattersglobal.com)
- possibleworks. (n.d.). Blog. Retrieved from possible works: [possibleworks.com](http://possibleworks.com)
- singh, p. (2020, april 6). Article. Retrieved from BW People: [bwpeople.businessworld.in](http://bwpeople.businessworld.in)
- singh, p. (29, april 2020). Employee Engagemnt. Retrieved from Peplematters.
- stange, j. (2020, january 20). Employee engagement. Retrieved from The Qwork future: <https://www.quantumworkplace.com/future-of-work/what-is-employee-engagement-definition>
- Stratfix. (2020, july 31). consulting. Retrieved from Stratfix: <https://stratfix.com/ways-to-increase-employee-engagement-during-lockdown/>
- VANTAGE CIRCLE. (n.d.). Retrieved from vantage circle: [ecircle-com.cdn.ampproject.org](http://ecircle-com.cdn.ampproject.org)