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Managing engagement: the role of purpose, autonomy, and professional identity

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Abstract. The article examines the impact of management practices on employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment. A comparative analysis of roles in the information technology (IT) and retail sectors reveals different work patterns and varying levels of employee turnover. It is shown that factors such as meaningful work, autonomy, and job satisfaction significantly influence employees' decisions to remain with an organization or change workplaces. The study focuses on positions characterized by high levels of turnover and professional burnout.

Various methods were applied for comparison. In retail, a charitable fundraising campaign and a short survey were conducted to determine whether employees perceive



their activities as meaningful and aligned with their personal values. In the IT sector, personnel engagement practices were analyzed in both startups and large corporations, focusing on decision-making autonomy, recognition of professional expertise, psychological safety, learning opportunities, workload intensity, and work-life balance. Both emerging and established IT companies were considered, without emphasis on a single managerial strategy.

The results indicate that engagement factors vary significantly depending on the type of work and industry. In retail, socially meaningful initiatives foster a sense of personal contribution and strengthen employees' connection to the organization, but they do not always automatically increase satisfaction, attendance, or service quality. In IT companies, engagement increases substantially when autonomy, learning opportunities, psychological safety, and recognition of professional capabilities are provided. Excessive managerial control in large corporations reduces engagement, while overloading in startups can hinder creativity and increase turnover.

The study concludes that sustaining employee satisfaction and retention requires a differentiated management approach. Universal managerial solutions are insufficient. In the retail sector, initiatives based on meaningful work should be combined with clear role design and operational support. In the IT sector, managers should support decision-making freedom, recognition of expertise, psychological safety, and long-term skill relevance while controlling workload and limiting micromanagement. Such approaches contribute to improved employee retention and long-term organizational performance.

Keywords: workforce engagement, job satisfaction, employee retention, organizational commitment, decision latitude, people management, business performance.



Управління залученістю: роль цілі, автономії та професійної ідентичності

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Анотація. У статті досліджується вплив управлінських практик на задоволеність роботою та організаційну прихильність працівників. Порівняльний аналіз ролей у сфері інформаційних технологій і роздрібної торгівлі виявляє різні трудові моделі та відмінні рівні плинності кадрів. Показано, що такі чинники, як змістовність праці, автономія та задоволеність роботою, суттєво впливають на рішення працівників залишатися в організації або змінювати місце роботи. Об'єктом дослідження є посади, для яких характерні високі рівні плинності та професійного виснаження.

Для порівняння було застосовано різні методи. У роздрібній торгівлі проведено благодійну кампанію зі збору пожертв і коротке опитування з метою з'ясування, чи сприймають працівники свою діяльність як значущу та узгоджену з власними цінностями. В ІТ-секторі проаналізовано практики залучення персоналу в стартапах і великих корпораціях з фокусом на автономію в прийнятті рішень, визнання професійної експертності, психологічну безпеку, можливості навчання, інтенсивність навантаження та баланс між роботою і



приватним життям. Розглянуто як молоді, так і зрілі ІТ-компанії, без зосередження на єдиній управлінській стратегії.

Отримані результати свідчать, що чинники залученості істотно варіюються залежно від типу роботи та галузі. У роздрібній торгівлі соціально значущі ініціативи формують відчуття особистого внеску й посилюють зв'язок працівника з організацією, однак не завжди автоматично призводять до зростання задоволеності, відвідуваності чи якості обслуговування. В ІТ-компаніях залученість істотно зростає за умов надання автономії, можливостей для навчання, психологічної безпеки та визнання професійних здібностей. Надмірний управлінський контроль у великих корпораціях знижує рівень залученості, тоді як перевантаження в стартапах може стримувати креативність і посилювати плинність кадрів.

Зроблено висновок, що забезпечення стійкої задоволеності та утримання персоналу потребує диференційованого підходу до управління. Універсальні управлінські рішення є недостатніми. У роздрібному секторі ініціативи, засновані на змістовності праці, мають поєднуватися з чітким проєктуванням ролей і операційною підтримкою. В ІТ-секторі управлінцям доцільно підтримувати свободу прийняття рішень, визнання експертності, психологічну безпеку та довгострокову релевантність навичок, водночас контролюючи навантаження та обмежуючи мікроменеджмент. Такі підходи сприяють підвищенню утримання працівників і довгостроковій результативності організацій.

Ключові слова: залучення робочої сили; задоволеність роботою; утримання працівників; організаційна прихильність; прийняття рішень; управління людьми; результативність бізнесу.

Problem statement. A unique challenge unfolds in the technology sector. Creativity problem-solving and collaboration are often required by tech professionals. Despite the attractive salaries and adaptable schedules boredom and fatigue lead many



employees in tech firms to leave their positions. Large corporations may restrict autonomy hindering employees' motivation to improve. Workers often feel fatigued and less committed when excessive workload and frequent changes are experienced in new businesses. Managing individuals without considering purpose freedom and job identity poses a challenge (issues). People often have similar methods for participation. Variations between jobs are frequently overlooked. Maintaining employee satisfaction proves challenging for businesses. Employee happiness is often difficult to achieve. Many organizations struggle to create a fulfilling work environment. Significance is present in this issue for both researchers and managers (importance). Understanding factors that drive employee engagement is essential in research. Advice on fostering employee involvement is not something that managers can overlook. Workers can be retained productivity can be enhanced and company performance can be improved through this approach. Maintaining employees and fostering positive work environments should not be underestimated. Enhancements to the workplace and satisfaction levels among staff are crucial for overall success.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Research examines the levels of happiness and commitment among employees in various professions. In the study conducted by H. Ryk it is noted that IT workers exhibiting a sense of connection to their roles and perceiving fairness from their employer tend to have higher retention rates. Insight gained is beneficial for comprehending IT-related careers, but it does not encompass all job types [1, p. 124]. G. Abdryakhimov investigates the qualities that contribute to the effectiveness of IT professionals [2, p. 81]. Key factors identified include a sense of control effective self-management and a desire for success. Working independently is not depicted as unimportant. No conclusion is provided by the study on whether these factors contribute to increased happiness or reduce the likelihood of employee turnover. It's unclear how these aspects influence worker morale. Understanding if these elements lead to greater satisfaction is essential for organizations. Research indicates that employee satisfaction and job retention are influenced by workplace conditions. Job satisfaction is favoured when a positive



atmosphere is provided particularly within online retail businesses [3, p. 10]. The study lacks focus on employees' perspectives regarding their roles. Various research examines job satisfaction and the desire to resign. Happiness in the workplace is valued while job autonomy enhances this experience [4, p. 9]. Evidence highlights the significance of freedom within the analysis. Variations in jobs and industries can occur. Distinct differences are often observed among them. Not all sectors are identical in nature. Contentment in one's role enhances workplace engagement. Levels of involvement are influenced by clear guidelines and support systems. Valuable insights exist for managers yet variations in involvement across different occupations are not reflected [5, p. 160]. Effective human resources are important. Workers are more likely to be retained when support is provided by HR to foster happiness and engagement [6, p. 8]. Empowerment is supported in management approaches even when focus on worker identity is absent. An examination of technology's influence on human resources in various sectors was conducted. Improvements in work processes and training using AI are recognized [7, p. 320]. Feelings regarding job satisfaction personal objectives or self-perception were not included in the analysis. Understanding the reasons behind individuals choosing to stay or depart remains challenging [8, p. 5]. Clarity on this issue often eludes us. Many struggles with identifying those motivations. Research indicates that employees who find joy in their work tend to have greater job longevity. In the hospitality sector a correlation exists where satisfied workers display a higher tendency for retention. It is not uncommon however for some workers to be unhappy and leave their positions. Evidence supports the notion that satisfied employees tend to remain in their positions although it focuses solely on a specific kind of job [9, p. 9]. Different forms of work were not considered in this analysis. Happy workers may not always be retained in every role. Supporting employee development plays a crucial role in retention (retaining staff). Improvement in job skills leads to enhanced performance for both employees and the organization. It is not true that growth in capability does not benefit the overall success of the business [10, p. 6]. Examining how employees feel or the reason for their longevity is overlooked by this



concept. Insights into worker sentiments and their motivations are not considered. Understanding these factors can be crucial for a more holistic view. Studies indicate that financial incentives skill development and positive feedback encourage employee retention [11, p. 4]. Attention has mostly been directed toward monetary rewards and company policies rather than identifying the factors that contribute to job satisfaction. Satisfaction with work is often overlooked in these analyses. Research on banking reveals factors influencing job attrition. High workloads combined with limited career advancement opportunities lead individuals to consider resignation. Many do not desire to leave their positions under ideal conditions suggesting that improvements could enhance retention [12, p. 228]. Many professionals do not seem to perceive that engagement impacts their decisions to stay in their positions. Effective practices at work can enhance employees' engagement and satisfaction. Participation in activities and skill development is valued. Employees do not feel disconnected due to a lack of opportunities [13, p. 1078]. Happy workers contribute positively to workplace culture. Research focuses solely on specific job categories. Various job types are not taken into account in these studies. A comprehensive understanding of different roles is essential. Government positions reflect a similar situation. Increased involvement and job retention often result from management support. Individuals generally do not feel disengaged due to a lack of encouragement from their supervisors [14, p. 6].

Research indicates that content and engaged employees tend to remain in their positions for extended periods. Many studies have focused on a limited job type or a few factors influencing workers. Insights regarding the combined effects of feeling valued having autonomy and enjoying one's job are lacking. Understanding various job types is essential. Knowledge about different roles should be acquired. It's not enough to be unaware of job diversity. Employment opportunities vary greatly and merit attention. An examination of stores and tech firms is provided in this article. The concept of feeling that one's work is important is highlighted. Workers are not guaranteed greater happiness or retention simply because they enjoy their roles or have the freedom to make selections.



Identification of previously unresolved aspects of the general problem.

Certain aspects of ensuring worker satisfaction and loyalty remain ambiguous. Factors influencing job contentment are often assessed through numerous studies. The examination typically neglects other elements that may contribute such as workplace environment or autonomy in decision-making. How these elements function in unison is not illustrated. For bosses utilizing the findings becomes challenging. Understanding the connection between feeling valued having freedom and experiencing pride in one's work is often unclear. (context unclear) Research typically focuses on freedom or support while purpose tends to be overlooked. A sense of significance is not perceived as crucial. Pride in one's work is often discussed; however, its connection to job satisfaction and retention remains vague. Key factors are researched independently lacking a clear correlation with overall happiness in employment. Several reasons create gaps. Research is frequently confined to examining a single business type. It is not the case that multiple surveys provide various figures reflecting people's engagement levels. Assistance in math is provided yet little is gained regarding the occupation or the individual's identity. Measuring purpose is considered more challenging than assessing compensation. Comparing purpose across various jobs remains a complicated task. Adding meaningful work to our understanding of engagement proves to be challenging. Engagement is often overlooked in this context. Many people do not find it easy to integrate substantial tasks into their current views. An exploration of unknown aspects is presented in this writing. Goals freedom and job satisfaction are linked to happiness and work retention. Two distinct settings are not examined: stores and computer-related positions such as startups and large corporations. Four questions are targeted by the study. In stores curiosity and concern can be heightened by goals. Changes in freedom and feelings of being valued do not lessen the level of care individuals exhibit in computer jobs. Caring in retail varies from that in computer jobs. Differences are noted in how employees feel supported. Companies should focus on fostering strong connections with their staff. Motivation and appreciation should not be overlooked as they significantly impact performance in



both sectors. Encouraging open communication can also enhance workplace morale. Employees in all fields deserve acknowledgment for their efforts.

Formulation of the article's objectives. An exploration is conducted regarding the impact of perceived importance autonomy and professional self-image on employee satisfaction job performance and retention. Various workplace environments are examined for this purpose. It is not the case that all factors contribute to worker happiness consistently across different jobs such as roles focused on customer interaction versus those requiring specialized expertise. Recent discoveries regarding employee satisfaction and retention are presented in the article. Common perceptions on these topics are highlighted as flawed. The article does not endorse old ideas about worker contentment and loyalty. Meaningful work positively influences workers' attachment to their jobs. The connection between helping the community and employee engagement is examined. Workers do not feel disinterested in their roles when they perceive their contributions as impactful and aligned with company values. A strong desire to exert effort often emerges from this sense of belonging. Exploring the impact of feeling in control acquiring new knowledge and receiving respect on individuals' performance in tech is our goal.

Presentation of the main research findings. Job satisfaction and engagement in the IT sector often hinge on factors beyond financial incentives (work factors). Other influences are derived from autonomy pride in tasks and the visible impact of one's efforts. It is not solely about financial rewards. Insights gained from analysing both small startups and larger corporations coupled with feedback from employees and leaders support our previous assumptions. The importance of IT involvement has been recognized. Engaging deeply in this field does not revolve around constant supervision or immediate gratification. Involvement factors shift based on company size. Larger firms are known to generate different workplace dynamics. Smaller organizations may not lead to excessive stress or burnout. A sense of freedom and purpose often feels stronger in new ventures, yet challenges can arise from high demands. Large corporations often provide security, yet they may limit individual decision-making



resulting in decreased engagement among employees. Job satisfaction among IT professionals is influenced by the kind of organization in which they find themselves.

Table 1

Key determinants of job satisfaction and engagement in the IT sector

Determinant	Startup companies	Enterprise companies	Observed impact on engagement
Decision-making autonomy	High, informal	Limited, hierarchical	Strong positive effect in startups; reduced engagement in enterprises
Workload intensity	High, variable	Moderate, regulated	Burnout risk in startups; stability in enterprises
Learning and skill development	Rapid, informal	Structured, formalized	Positive in both contexts, higher perceived value in startups
Recognition of expertise	Peer-based	Position-based	Stronger professional identity in peer-recognition models
Psychological safety	Team-dependent	Policy-dependent	Higher innovation where safety is explicit
Work – life balance	Often unstable	More predictable	Direct effect on long-term retention

According to Table 1 having the liberty to make decisions and being recognized for competence are the most significant factors influencing job commitment. Both large corporations and startups exhibit this trend. In startups a high level of autonomy leads to positive feelings about work, yet stress is also experienced. Rules in large corporations can be beneficial, yet they may hinder the development of innovative concepts. Increased engagement in workplace learning is valuable for individuals in various settings. However, many individuals do not prefer self-directed learning as it does not foster personal growth. Factors influencing employees' concern for their jobs are linked to the entire workplace environment. Aspects of the workplace are often considered by individuals. People do not solely focus on a single element when it comes to work. Figure 1 demonstrates that IT job satisfaction is derived from three factors: personal decision-making recognizing your contributions and aligning values with the organization's goals. The components of satisfaction are often not



acknowledged. Experiencing a sense of autonomy having your talents recognized and effectively addressing genuine issues are essential for feeling fulfilled. Increased pay or higher oversight does not significantly enhance job satisfaction if those three elements are absent. A sense of security in the workplace is essential. Freedom and learning are enhanced when safety is prioritized and the likelihood of resignation decreases.

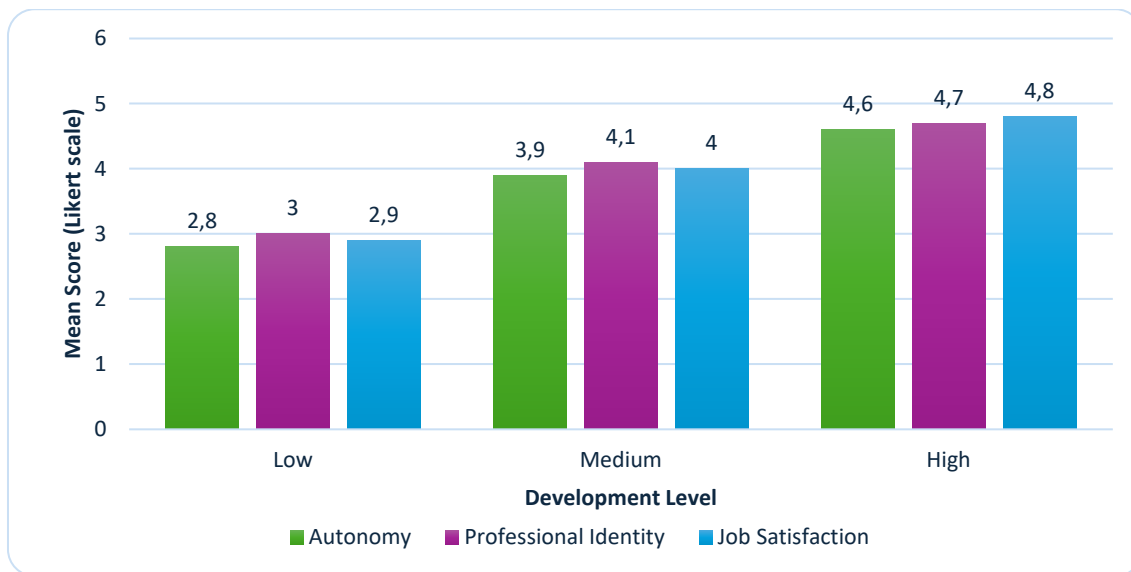


Fig. 1. Relationship between autonomy, professional identity, and job satisfaction in the IT sector

In Figure 1 connections between feeling empowered to choose in the workplace job satisfaction and job enjoyment are clearly illustrated (positive links). Greater autonomy in work tasks leads to an improved self-image and enhances overall job perception. Liking your job does not necessarily depend on just having freedom. Enjoyment of your job peaks when ample freedom is present and satisfaction with your tasks is felt. Mutual assistance is provided by both parties involved. Limited freedom at work can hinder job satisfaction. Trust should be extended by managers allowing choices and acknowledging skills. Working independently is not considered unimportant as many studies suggest. Having a positive outlook on your job fosters a desire to remain in that position. A sense of fulfilment is encouraged through engaging



work. Experiencing dissatisfaction is not conducive to motivation or a lasting commitment.

Results demonstrate that applying uniform regulations fails to motivate IT workers. Factors influencing their engagement are tied to the specific company team dynamics and nature of their tasks. A personalized approach is essential for effectively addressing their needs. A sense of competence in their role can be fostered by this plan. Individuals should have the freedom to make choices while their talents need acknowledgment and appreciation. The significance of their contributions to the success of the company should not be disregarded. Assistance can enable individuals to acquire fresh knowledge for maintaining their skills. Growth opportunities and exposure to new technology should be demonstrated. A study indicates that ensuring worker safety is crucial not insignificant. Preventing burnout and maintaining interest is aided when work becomes difficult. Research indicates that engaged and satisfied employees tend to remain with a company for an extended period. Approaches to retain employees should not be a one-size-fits-all strategy; rather they must be customized for each organization.

Employee participation in retail community campaigns led to reduced absenteeism, improved customer service, more open employee – customer interactions, and higher motivation, resulting in greater job satisfaction and engagement. Survey results confirmed this impact, with 80–90% of retail employees feeling their contribution was meaningful, directly influenced campaign success, and strengthened their alignment with the company's mission.

Conclusions. The research examined the influence of purpose, freedom, and work identity on job satisfaction, engagement, and retention across multiple employment sectors, including IT and retail. The findings confirmed that the study approach was effective and that happiness at work cannot be explained by financial wealth alone: employees' perceptions of meaning, respect, and emotional well-being shape satisfaction and long-term engagement, and when these factors are neglected, workplace satisfaction and performance are likely to deteriorate. In IT, autonomy in



decision-making is especially critical because knowledge work depends on ownership of solutions and professional recognition; when choices are constrained or undervalued, motivation decreases even in otherwise well-paid roles. Continuous learning strengthens engagement and capability, yet it does not automatically ensure retention if employees do not experience purpose, trust, and a clear sense of impact. Company size also moderates these relationships: startups often generate a lively atmosphere through rapid learning, experimentation, and informal “fun,” but demanding workloads can increase fatigue and burnout risks, whereas larger corporations provide stability and procedural safety while sometimes reducing enjoyment due to limited freedom, slower feedback, or lower perceived trust. In retail, the mechanisms of purpose and identity are expressed differently because frontline work is directly tied to human interaction and immediate service outcomes: employees’ sense of helpfulness and connection to the organization increases when they see that their everyday actions support customers and socially meaningful store initiatives, even when the positive impact is not instantly visible. As a result, retail engagement is reinforced not only through culture but through fair and predictable scheduling, supportive line management, recognition of effort, and clear links between daily tasks and customer/community value. Overall, the study suggests that effective retention strategies should align sector-specific drivers – autonomy, learning, and professional identity in IT, and visible social usefulness, fairness, and supportive supervision in retail – while treating emotional well-being as a core organizational condition rather than an optional benefit.

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