Commitment is the glue that binds employer and worker

An employee who is emotionally distressed will not only be unproductive but also likely to quit. PHOTO | FOTOSEARCH

By SCOTT BELLOWS

Researchers endeavour to maximise how employees feel committed to their organisation.

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However, many managers woefully misunderstand the emotional bond that employees hold with their employers.

Inasmuch, supervisors fail to illicit commitment from their staff. A disconnect exists between what social science knows and what organisation management actual does that cause the voluminous masses in the labour force to lead unfulfilled work lives.

On the employee side, legions of workers commute to work day in and day out across Kenya. Workers arrive at their offices with a dreary feeling of forced inevitably.

People need to eat, children must get educated, and rent or mortgages must be paid. During the drudgery, millions of workers feel an inner emptiness.

Their employing organisation could collapse today, but as long as they obtain a different job tomorrow, then no problem. In so doing, multitudes of staff work to eat and do not work to thrive and feel whole. Their real life consists of after work time and employment time stands as a necessary evil.

On the other hand, millions of other Kenyans feel a deep sense of joy and fulfilment by working for their employers.

Their commitment does not result from exuberance over holding just any job, but from working for their specific organisation.

While some tasks in every job become repetitive, some meetings boring, and deadlines stressful, numerous labourers feel emotionally bonded to and find great identity in their organisations.

Every worker must strive for workplace scenarios throughout the course of their lives that causes them to feel the most committed.

Sociological researchers who focus on organisational commitment know it represents the psychological state of employees.
Researchers James Lincoln and Arne Kalleberg delineate that organisation commitment encompasses the degree to which an employee feels devotion to a particular entity.

Scientists Natalie Allan and John Meyer concentrate on the links that employees hold between themselves and the organisation that reduce the likelihood that the employee will quit their employer.

Employees can hold three different types of organisational commitment.

First, continuance commitment encompasses the costs that employees associate with leaving their organisation.

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By SCOTT BELLOWS

Posted Wednesday, June 22 2016 at 17:09

If workers view the costs as too high for switching jobs, then they are less likely to jump ship. Costs may come in the form of time, inconvenience, stress, or monetary losses or payouts.

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Second, normative commitment embodies an employee’s feeling that they are obligated to stay with their company.

If a staffer feels guilty for possibly quitting or feels grateful that the employer covered his or her education expenses, for example, then he or she holds high normative commitment.

Third, researchers call the emotional attachment, identification, and involvement with their organisation as affective commitment. Affective commitment measures dedication from a positive perspective, not the avoidance of costs or guilt.

Executives, therefore, should attempt to maximise employee affective commitment as their greatest priority and build loyalty through normative and continuance commitment as secondary.

So gauge your affective commitment to your organisation by asking yourself the following eight statements that represent how much you agree with each proclamation.

Take each declaration and judge it in your mind on the following 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 point scale whereby each number represents your opinion: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Somewhat Disagree (3), Neither Agree nor Disagree (4), Somewhat Agree (5), Agree (6), Strongly Agree (7).

I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organisation. I enjoy discussing my organisation with people outside it. I really feel as if this organisation’s problems are my own. I think that I could not easily become as attached to another organisation as I am to this one.
I feel like 'part of the family' at my organisation. I feel 'emotionally attached' to this organisation. This organisation has a great deal of personal meaning for me. I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organisation.

Now add up the numbers for each of your answers. Take your total and divide it by eight (8) to give you your average response.

If you scored a 5.5 or higher, then you feel deeply committed to your employing organisation and strongly identify with it such that staying with the firm makes logical sense. If you scored your average results between a 3.5 and 5.5, you lack an emotional connection and should start thinking of different organisations or industries for which to work.

Unfortunately, if you rated your organisation commitment on average below 3.5, then you hold deep disdain for your employing entity and the thought of sticking with the firm and continuing your work upsets you to your core.

In such a scenario, a new job would suit you as a matter of necessity.

Mountains of research link high employee affective organisation commitment to positive workplace behaviour such as tasks completed better and more altruism in the workplace, greater intentions, such as lower intention to quit, and better individual performance and organisational profits.

Executives may solicit more commitment from their employees by building greater trust that employees hold in top management which proves even more critical than trust in employees' direct supervisors. Also, offices must operate with strong organisational justice and fairness.

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Read Business Talk next Thursday in the Business Daily for an analysis and self-perception tests about whether your boss, co-workers, and organisation are truly trustworthy and if you should make yourself vulnerable to them and their decisions as the series on whether you should quit or stay with your job continues.

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