Impact of Social Networking on Employee Engagement at Workplace: An Empirical Study Based on IT Industry in India

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Abstract

We're aware about organizations across the globe struggling with how best to introduce social networking tools - blogs, micro blogs like Twitter, Collaboration platforms like Facebook to internal audiences. Social networking has always been stated for distracting employees but with its proper and regulated use, it can have the obverse effect. Whether it's Facebook or Twitter or any other social networking channel, these networks help in improving communication between an employer and the employees, as well as employees and their colleagues. Social networking provides a medium of receiving immediate feedbacks in forms of appreciation and criticism which can help employees engage with fellow team-mates and even customers.

Keywords: *Social Networking, Employee Engagement*

Introduction

William A Kahn (Kahn, 1990, pg 692, Academy of Management Journal) while explaining engagement and disengagement at work and the psychological conditions involved explains that "people can use varying degrees of their selves physically, cognitively, and emotionally in work role performances, which has implications for both their work and performances." Employee engagement is harnessing the organization member selves' to their work roles.

The psychical, emotional dimension deals with the credence as well as perception of employees about their workplace, its leaders and the work culture. It also takes into account that whether the employees have a positive or a negative proclivity towards the organization and its leaders. The physical dimension of employee engagement relates to the consistency of work and effort maintained by the employees to perform their roles.

Although it has been acknowledged that "employee engagement is a multi-faceted construct", as previously suggested by (Kahn 1990), (Truss et al 2006) define "employee engagement simply as 'passion for work', a psychological state which encompasses the three dimensions of engagement discussed by (Kahn 1990), and captures the common theme running through all the definitions" (CIPD report-Working Life: Employee Attitudes and Engagement, (Truss et al 2006)).

We're familiar to the fact that man is a social animal and with the coming of age, the social networking going online and virtual instead of the traditional and actual face to face communication, had a huge impact on the

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temperament of those working and particularly of those working under stress.

Social networking involves the use of an online platform or website that helps people to communicate, for a social or organizational purpose, through a variety of services, most of which are web-based. As this is a relatively new phenomenon and there is no common international regulatory body, it is difficult to find an official or universally agreed definition (Broughton, Higgins, Hicks and Cox, 2009).

However, Boyd and Ellison's overview (Boyd and Ellison, 2007) of the comments on the particular communication opportunities provided by social network sites:

"A form of real-time direct text-based communication between two or more people using personal computers or other devices (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Instant_messaging).

We define social network sites as web-based services that allow Individuals to:
1. construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system,
2. articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and
3. View and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. (Ellison N.B. & Boyd D, 2013 (Chapter 8: Sociality through Social Network Sites, Pg 1))

The nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site (Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship (Boyd and Ellison, Dec 2007), Pg 211). What makes social network sites unique is not that they allow individuals to meet strangers, but rather that they enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks (Social Networking Site For Self Portfolio: N. Sampath Kumar, Chandran, Kumar, Karnavel, March 2013, Pg 2). While social networking has implemented a wide variety of technical features, their backbone consists of visible profiles that display an articulated list of friends who are also users of the system (A Proof-Carrying Code Based Framework for Social Networking, Sorren C. Hanvey). The public display of connections is an important component of Social networking. Beyond profiles, Social networking varies greatly in their features and user base. Some have

photo sharing or video-sharing capabilities; others have built-in blogging and instant messaging technology (Hybrid-Context instructional Model. The Internet and the Classrooms: The Way Teachers Experience It, Udeme T Ndon, Dec 2006, Pg 27)."

Review of Literature

Social networking establishes an open dialogue with employees, solicits feedback and criticism, invites interactions and discussions, and has a noticeable, active senior leadership presence (Unleashing the Power of Social Media Within Your Organization, 3rd Employee Engagement Study, Dec 2011, Page 3).

"Social media is defined as a web service that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a system with definite boundaries, articulate a list of other participants in the system whom they share a connection and, view and explore their list of connections and of those made by others in the system. The nature and connection rules may vary from one service to the other." (Boyd DM, Ellison NB; 2007, page 2, Social Network Sites: A De?nition)

Social networks are information-allied tools and technologies that are used to share information and expedite communications with internal and external audiences. Some commonly used social networking channels are Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, but social networking can also be done in other varied forms which may include online forums or communities, online profiles, pictures and video uploads, E-mail. Social networking also includes applications known as "Web 2.0," a term encircling social mediums such as blogs, texting, and other applications like Google Docs, Google Blogs (BlogSpot).

Groups of interest in media that is predominantly social in nature are found to facilitate efficient formation of communities around a common interest such as career, culture or politics. This involves "the interaction between people, creating, sharing, exchanging and commenting in virtual communities and networks (Toivonen S, 2007)".

Various researches have advertised the benefits offered by social networking at work place such as, effective communication channels, efficient information and

knowledge sharing across the hierarchy, channels for informal learning, development and improvement of soft skills, job performance and satisfaction.

Direct and Indirect online and Direct and Indirect offline network groups and the ties developed in that manner have an impact on idea sharing and strengthening the engagement of an employee at workplace and related works.

However it is not identified how managerial evaluation of job performance is affected by employee's apprehension about

• The use of social networking.
• Social networking as a platform for exchanging information on personal levels.
• Regulated use of social networks at workplace.
• The affect of social networking on the behavioral aspects of an individual at workplace.

Therefore, the use of social networking at workplace poses similar risks to the reputation of individual as well as the organization permitting the official use of social networking.

Development Dimensions International (DDI, 2005, Pg 27) states "that a manager must do five things to create a highly engaged workforce. They are:
1. Align efforts with strategy
2. Empower
3. Promote and encourage teamwork and collaboration
4. Help people grow and develop
5. Provide support and recognition where appropriate"

Adam Wootton, director of social media and games at a New York City based global professional services company Towers Watson, says "social media can drive engagement and productivity. If companies want to communicate with their employees effectively, they need to meet the employees on the same street they're on. If employees use these tools and techniques to communicate, they're going to react well to this media." (Social media: A tool to boost employee engagement, productivity, Amanda McGrory-Dixon, April 19, 2013, Pg 1)

Communicating using the various forms of social networking is not a new concept at the personal level. The

channels, mediums and ways with which people virtually connect with each other are rapidly increasing. The pace of communication has elevated to enormous proportions and numbers. People find social networking as an easy and a fine medium to keep track and pace with each other's lives. The use of social networking at workplace among professionals has introduced a contemporary way of communication which has led to efficient and effective professional as well as personal information sharing. At the corporate level, it's necessary for businesses to be agile to face the competition. And since communicating and sharing information with people is fundamental to the success of any business, businesses now days are taking measures to employ tools that can provide that competitive advantage.

This research paper will analyze the effects of use of social networking at workplace and its ability to impact the performance of an individual at workplace. It aims at finding the overall relationship between the average time spend by a person on any of the social networking sites during working hours and their performance at the workplace.

Objectives

1. To understand the relationship between Social Networking and Employee Engagement in IT industry.
2. To find out the impact of Social Networking on Employee Engagement at Workplace in IT industry.
3. To provide suggestions for improving Employee Engagement in IT industry.

Hypothesis

I. **Null Hypothesis:**
   H_{01}**:** The use of social networking at workplace does not drives employee engagement.

II. **Null Hypothesis:**
   H_{02}**:** There is no difference in perception regarding relationship between employee engagement and use of social networking at various levels of management.

III. **Null Hypothesis:**
   H_{03}**:** There is no difference in perception regarding

relationship between employee engagement and use of social networking at various work specializations in an organization.

Research Methodology

A descriptive research design is used for the study, which is a process of collecting data from the members of a population in order to understand the status of the subject under study with respect to one or more variables to determine the frequency of occurrence or the extent to which variables are related. Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The analysis uses random sampling and can be considered a representative of IT professionals working across India.

The questionnaire consisted of 15 questions being close-ended to enhance validity of response. A 1-5 type Likert scale was used to measure respondents' agreement with the concepts under investigation. Given below is a brief description of the variables considered as dependent and independent.

Dependent variable or the Y-variable as Employee Engagement
Employee Engagement is defined by five variables that are: Frequency of better ideas for work (IDEA), Knowledge-sharing and training (SHARE), Effective communication (COMM), Effectiveness in completion of the task assigned (TASK), improved work related decision making (WORK_DECISION).

Employee Engagement = ƒ (Social Networking)

Independent or the X-variable as Social Networking
Coded as OFFICIAL, Social networking is defined and analyzed on the basis of its frequency of use for official purpose at workplace.

To assess the degree of correctness of the results produced by the research tool i.e. the questionnaire Reliability Analysis is done. Cronbach's alpha is a measure of reliability. That determines the reliability of the scale formed by multiple Likert questions.

For testing of Null Hypothesis I, Regression Analysis is done. Regression Analysis is done to understand the dependency of employee engagement on use of social

networking at workplace. The results will be interpreted through the values of R squared (Coefficient of determination), coefficients and the p-value obtained from regression analysis.

For testing of Null Hypothesis II and Null Hypothesis III, analysis is done by Single factor ANOVA which signifies that the means of several populations is equal.

Single factor ANOVA is done to understand the perceptions of relationship between social networking and employee engagement at different levels of hierarchy (Top Level, Middle Level, and Lower Level).

Also Single Factor ANOVA is used to understand the relationship between Employee Engagement and use of Social Networking at various work specializations in an organization (Technical , Managerial).The Administrative position is not taken into consideration due to lack of responses from employees related to administration.

Results & Findings

The analysis is based on the data collected by a sample of 112 IT professionals working across India. The analysis is done to assess the impact of use of social networking at workplace on employee engagement.

Reliability Test Results
Table (1) shows the reliability statistics of the scale.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha
.740

A Cronbach's alpha (a) value greater than 0.6 is acceptable which means that the scale is reliable. Therefore from the value of cronbach alpha obtained above i.e. 0.740, it can be inferred that the scale so formed is reliable.

Regression Analysis for Hypothesis I
R square depicts how well the regression line approximates the data points. Higher the R squared value, better the model fits the data. The coefficient values depict the strength and type of relationship the independent variable has to the dependent variable.

Table (2a) and Table (2b) show the regression statistics obtained from the regression analysis.

From the results obtained in Table (2a) it can be seen that R squared value is approximately 0.39 or 39 percent. This explains approximately 39 percent of variation in the dependent variable i.e. Employee Engagement.

Table 2(a): Regression Statistics

Multiple R	0.630556818
R Square	0.397601901
Adjusted R Square	0.392125555
Standard Error	0.612331437
Observations	112

Table 3(b): Regression Statistics

	Coefficient	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	1.497349	0.173302	8.640101	4.9956E-14	1.1539043	1.840793	1.153904	1.840793
Official	0.461234	0.054131	8.520769	9.299E-14	0.35395963	0.568508	0.35396	0.568508

From the results obtained in Table (2b) it can be seen that value of coefficients is positive and p- value is 4.9956E-14 (less than 0.05) which signifies a statistically significant relationship between independent and the dependent variable which is positive. Therefore it can be concluded that use of social networking at workplace drives employee engagement in an organization.

Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is rejected.

Single Factor Anova for Hypothesis II
Table (3a) shows the summary of results for single factor anova to understand the perception of relationship between employee engagement and use of social networking at various levels of management. In single factor anova if value of F is greater than the value of F-crit (F>F-crit) the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 3(a): Anova Statistics

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	1.322666667	2	0.661333333	0.905844156	0.416134056	3.354131
Within Groups	19.712	27	0.730074074			
Total	21.03466667	29				

From the results obtained above,

$$0.905844156(F) < 3.354131(F\text{-crit})$$

Hence, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) is accepted. This confirms that there is no difference in perception of relationship between employee engagement and use of social

networking across the hierarchy (Top Level, Middle Level, and Lower Level).

Single Factor Anova for Hypothesis III
Table (3b) shows the summary of results of single factor anova to understand the perception of relationship between employee engagement and use of social networking at various work specializations in an organization.

Table 3(b): Anova Statistics

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	0.0288	1	0.0288	0.042604	0.837347	4.042652
Within Groups	32.448	48	0.676			
Total	32.4768	49				

From the results obtained above,

$$0.042604 \text{ (F)} < 4.042652 \text{ (F-crit)}$$

Hence, the null hypothesis (H_{03}) is accepted. This confirms that there is no difference in perception of relationship between employee engagement and use of social networking at different work specializations (Technical, Managerial) in an organization.

Thus, the objectives of finding the impact of use social networking on employee engagement at workplace and understanding the relationship between them is attained by the above analysis and its result.

Suggestions

The third objective of our research is to provide suggestions to improve employee engagement. Social networking has become a significant part of our lives: with an estimated 60% of all Internet users accessing some form of social networking. In just 10 years Facebook has grown from a few hundred users, to over 1.15 billion active monthly users. (http://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/research/harnessing-social-media.aspx, CIPD, 2012). Social networking is an indispensable part of today's communication and collaborative technologies. They can be effectively used for increasing employee engagement, thereby making them more productive at their workplace. Allowing employee to use social networking at workplace can eventually benefit an organization.

Given below are some suggestions which can help in improving employee engagement with effective use of social networking at workplace.

- Having an active social media presence allows employees to "connect with customers and let them find out what's being said in the public domain," says Brian Platz, chief operating officer of Silk Road Organizations. Through an effective usage of the social networking, the internal social groups can be connected. This gives a platform for sharing ideas, suggestions and getting feedbacks which can be put to a good use thereby increasing the accuracy of targets to be accomplished.
- Use of Contemporary social communication tools can help a lot in staffing where there are immediate requirements.
- Being a custodian to employee communication, the HR department should devise strategies wherein they can apply social networking technologies in an integrated way to give them a real meaning. Also embedding the concept of social networking as an integral part of the employee engagement strategy is the next big thing.
- For effective use of social networking, organizations should have social networking policies. The policies should conform to the privacy, freedom of speech and employment laws.
- The employment contracts can be incorporated with clauses related to confidentiality, privacy, authentication of usage and non solicitation covenants.

Conclusion

This research seeks to advance understanding of the impact of social networking on employees at workplace in IT industry across India.

Drawing from the fact, that with rapid advancement in technology and the pace of life, the very concept of social networking has obtained all together a different dimension. From being offline in the past, the online form of social networking has a relationship with employee engagement; its impact on employee job performance is a matter of concern.

This paper examines, explores and gains a quantitative insight of the same in detail and establishes that employee engagement is a function of use of social networking at workplace. People often make use of social networking to gain work related ideas, enhance accuracy in decision making and as a medium of knowledge and information sharing. It is also an efficient and useful means of communication amongst people working in the same place, at same or different levels of management.

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