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Managing Retention by Engaging Employees in a Case Company

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Abstract
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The first aim of the research was to find out the possible connection between retention and employee engagement based on a literature review. Secondly, the aim was to find out what the situation is in a case company regarding employees' engagement. Then, good practices in engaging and retaining employees were studied in order to meet the third aim that was providing the case company guidelines on how to address the retention and engagement issues in the company.

In the theoretical part the concepts of employee engagement and retention were studied and the data used was gathered from literature written about the field. Furthermore, the drivers of employee engagement were presented, and the link between retention and engagement was studied. In the empirical part of the thesis, the engagement of the case company's employees was studied. The method of the data collection was a self completed online questionnaire, which was sent to all employees, of whom 72 employees completed the questionnaire.

The results of the questionnaire show that there is a link between employee engagement and retention, even though it could not be stated that engagement alone would help to retain the employees. The results of the employee questionnaire showed that the situation in the case company in quite good, but there were still some areas where further actions were needed. These issues were addressed with suggestions to the company based on the good practices presented in the thesis.

Keywords: employee engagement, employee retention, employee survey

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1 Introduction

In the modern business world, the companies can succeed or fail almost overnight. There are companies starting a business and offering their often almost similar services to the customers, so it seems hard to know beforehand who will make it and who will be out of business after the first year. In the long run, it often comes down to the employees in the company: they are the ones doing the actual work for the customers of the company. If the organization values its employees and the employees value the organization, it is a good base for success. When employees are engaged to their work and also committed to their organization, it would be assumable that the employee turnover rates would be low. This study aims to find out if that really is the case.

Employee engagement is a complex concept. It has been extensively studied during the last decades, and many different definitions of employee engagement have been created by many different authors (e.g. Rutledge, 2005; Cook, 2008; Elegbe, 2010; Hellevig, 2012). No matter how the definitions differ from each other, it is safe to say that almost all authors find employee engagement to be a very important aspect in the profitability of business and the success of human resource management policies (e.g. Vance, 2006; Cook, 2008; MacLeod & Clarke, 2009.). It makes sense: when employees are ready to do the extra effort even when they are not asked to do it, they are also more committed to the customers of the company. This means better customer service, and that means higher turnover and profit for the company. Simply, engaged employees make the organization work smoothly and well.

It would be positive for the business and the well being of the employees that all managers understand the importance of employees to the business, especially in the service organisations where the employees are the ones in direct contact with customers. It is important to remember that carrying out questionnaires and showing the results is not the same as implementing a strategy and in the company.

The topic is especially interesting in the point of view of internationally operating companies. How to engage and retain the employees in order to get better re-

sults in business when the employees come from different nations and cultures? This is always challenging, but especially in small and medium sized companies that do not necessarily have specific human resources policies concerning the engagement and motivation issues.

The case company is used as a source of information in the empirical part and the suggestions for improvement are also made to the company. The case company has requested this study and wants to stay anonymous, so detailed information of the company will not be introduced. The company is a SME that operates in four countries.

1.1 Objectives of the study

The case company has a challenge with short employment times especially in one location, which means that the company is not getting the benefit or results back from putting effort and resources on recruiting and training their employees. The company has not focused on the issue of engagement before, and they do not have a separate HR person or department to take care of it so this study aims to give the management new information and tools to deal with the situation.

The aim of the thesis is first to understand the connection between retention and employee engagement, and secondly to find out the engagement situation in the case company. The final target is to find out the means to be used in the process of engaging and retaining the good employees and to provide the management group of the case company with more information about the situation with engagement in the company, and the tools possibly increasing the level of engagement.

The study goes introduces some previous literature written of the subject, and studies the phenomena through them in order to establish an understanding of the subjects. In addition, the HR policies that aim to improve employee engagement and thereby possibly influence employee retention are studied, and those that are the best for case company are presented and suggestions for implementing them will be made. Information about the current situation in the

company is collected by a questionnaire from the employees in the empirical part of the study.

1.2 Research questions

The research questions of the study have been established according to the needs of the case company and in a way that they support the research in the best possible way. The research questions and the sub questions supporting them are presented below.

- **What is the connection between retention and engagement based on literature?**

- **What is the current situation with engagement in the case company?**

- **How to increase engagement in the case company?**

The first research question will be answered by first defining the employee retention and engagement with the help of literature review and studying the link between engagement and retention.

The second research question is answered with the help of a survey in the empirical part of the study. An employee survey is conducted and the employees are asked how they feel about their own level of engagement. The survey design is explained in the chapter 4 and the results of the survey are introduced in chapter number 5.

The third question will be answered by connecting good practices collected from different sources and the results of the survey. Finally, suggestions for improvement are given to the case company.

1.3 Limitations and delimitations of the study

The main limitation of the study is the response rate. It is a great challenge to get all the employees of the case company to answer the questionnaire. It is impossible to monitor the answering process, so there is a risk that the response rate will be low and therefore the validity and reliability of the answers are in risk.

Another limitation is the honesty of the responses. There is no way to monitor if the responders are giving truthful answers to the questions. The only way to affect this is to try to convince all the responders that the study is completely anonymous and no one will be able to trace the answers back to them.

Even though the cultural differences would seem to be a part of the employees' ability to be engaged and also affecting the reasons why employees might leave the company, the cultural issues are not addressed in this study. The cultural part is left out because addressing it would make the scope of the study too wide. Furthermore, since the aim is to find out what the current situation in the case company is and the phenomena of retention and engagement are studied mainly as the base for the research, it is not necessary to study all the different cultural factors influencing employee engagement.

1.4 Key concepts

The main concepts in this study are presented below. It is important to understand the meaning of these concepts in order to understand the factors behind employee engagement and retention as well as the importance of the research.

Engagement in work

According to Jon Hellevig, employee engagement is about the means to achieve the organization's strategic goals by building the conditions for employees to thrive and for each staff member, manager and executive to be "fully switched on in their jobs so as to deliver their best efforts in the best interest of the business". (Hellevig, 2012, p. 2) Engagement can be defined in other words as the state in which the employee is concentrated on the job, is willing to do

the extra effort to achieve better results and is in line with the strategy and is aware of the values of the organization.

Retention and turnover

Employee retention and turnover are actually the opposites of the same thing. Employee retention means the level of employees staying in the organization, and employee turnover refers to the amount of employees leaving the organization due different reasons. In other words: in most of the organizations the retention of employees is desired and turnover usually inevitable but undesired. (Phillips and Connel, 2003).

Ivanovic (2007, p. 227) presents a definition of retention by The Dictionary of Human Resources and Personnel Management, that retention is "*the process of keeping the loyalty of existing employees and persuading them not to work for another company '…a systematic approach to human resource planning can play a significant part in reducing recruitment and retention*".

Engagement vs. motivation vs. commitment

There is a difference between the concepts of motivation, commitment and engagement, even though they are sometimes considered as the same thing, just with a different name. There are many opinions of these concepts and no absolute truth has been set, but the author presents her own view on the difference between these concepts basing it on her common knowledge about them and also by referring to literature.

Commitment is usually seen as the factor that makes people do their job and stay in the organization: not very different form the idea of engagement. However, engagement is a wider concept, and according to Jon Hellevig (2012, p. 29) engagement is based on the free choice of the employee to have a desire to work for the organization and also in the best interests of the organization whereas commitment is often based on compulsion, by creating the kinds of conditions that the employee feels compelled to work for the organization. He also suggests that commitment comes from the employee rationally weighing the decision and engagement is more of making a personal choice. The employee is engaged because he wants to be and not because he is paid to be or

punished for not being. It has also been suggested that people commit more to their organization, and are engaged in their work, making a further distinction between the two phenomena. (Armstrong, 2006, pp. 272-273)

Motivation means that a person has a reason for doing something – for example employees are being paid for doing their job. According to Hellevig, motivation is a very important driver in employee engagement: it is a base for getting engaged in the work. Motivation and motivating in the traditional sense is about external factors influencing the employee, a carrot and a stick strategy and a kind of bargaining between management and the employees. In the context of employee engagement, motivation is thought as inner motivation and motivating is done by creating the kinds of conditions for the employees and emphasizing the relationships between employees and also the management that help employees get motivated and engaged in their work and in the organization. (Hellevig, 2012, p. 32)

Although the theories of motivation and commitment are overlapping with engagement and they are important factors in creating engagement and the drivers of engagement, the three should not be confused as synonyms to each other. These definitions are provided as the base for the theoretical framework that is presented in Chapter 2. The purpose of the definitions is to create a better understanding about the most important theories in engaging and retaining employees.

2 Theoretical framework of the study

In order to be able to execute the quantitative research in the field of retention and employee engagement in the case company, a theoretical framework needs to be established for the thesis. It is important for the validity of the research that the author has a wider knowledge of the theories behind the issues to be researched. The theoretical framework of this study consists of a literature review about the main theories that are connected to employee retention and engagement. At first, the theories about employee retention are reviewed and the connection between engagement and retention is investigated with the help of literature. After that the theories about employee engagement and the main

drivers behind employee engagement are introduced. Then, since motivation is such an important part of employee engagement, the main motivational theories are discussed. In this chapter the meaning of each motivational theory to employee engagement is also presented.

2.1 Retention

Retention and employee turnover are two terms that are closely linked to each other. Employee turnover means the rate of employees leaving the organization and the employees joining it. The turnover rate is often studied in organizations, and when the turnover rate is high, it creates financial problems. When an employee who has been carefully recruited and fully trained for a job decides to leave the company, it actually creates monetary loss to the company. The company now has to use the same amount of resources to recruit and train a new person for the job without necessarily getting any benefit from the employee who decided to leave. Johnny Taylor and Gary Stern, the authors of Trouble with HR: An Insider's Guide to Finding and Keeping the Best People, explain the cost of losing employees by an example from HR Management magazine article from year 2008. The article noted that replacing an employee would cost on average 100% to 125% of an employee's annual salary (Taylor & Stern, 2009, p. 65). Retaining the employees who have a good person-job fit is the key to making the job profitable to the company.

The Management Study Guide defines employee retention as the policies, practices and measures in the organization that allow the employees to stay in the company for the maximum period of time. (Management Study Guide: Employee retention)

Stephen Taylor (2002, pp. 10-11) introduces two perspectives on retention. The first one states that reducing the employee turnover rate is desirable for all organizations, and that in fact it should be the aim of initiatives in the employee retention. It also suggests that *improving retention / turnover rates in general is or should be a central objective of human resource management policy.* According to this perspective, high rates of turnover are often seen as evidence of failing in human resource functions. The author introduces also another perspective on the matter: after a "new world of work" has emerged, the retention rates

have raised because of the flexibility of labor market. It is said that this is desirable, and the organizations should actually focus their efforts on the retention of the most outstanding performers, those few people in each section who can actually make a difference in the business. After this, the author states his own perspective, that even though he thinks that both of the perspectives are right in their own way, in his opinion the employee turnover is always damaging the organization, and none of the employees should be seen as non-important. According to him, most of the employees on different levels of organizations are so called average workers, but they in fact ensure that the show goes on and take care of the basic objectives of the organization leaving room for the excellent performers to shine. He reminds that there is a cost in every "departure" of even the below-average performers. (Taylor, 2002, pp. 10-11)

To summarize, the turnover of the employees seems to be inevitable in the modern business world where flexible labor markets allow employees to move more freely from one job to another. In addition, retaining the talented employees saves the company lots of resources and money in the recruiting process, and employers should establish processes to allow employees to stay longer with the company. The average workers are also important to keep in the company in order to make everything work smoothly.

2.2 Engagement

This chapter studies the concept of engagement in more depth and presents a literature review about it. The definitions for employee engagement vary, so no absolute truth can be settled on the theory of engagement. The definitions that are presented in the theoretical framework present only a small number of all definitions, and were chosen by the author as her point of view in this study.

Tim Rutledge (2005, p. 14) defines engagement to be "*the state of being attracted, committed and fascinated.*" In his book Rutledge says that in order for the employee to be truly engaged, they have to be attracted to, and inspired by, their work - *I want to do this*, committed - *I am dedicated to the success of what I am doing*, and fascinated - *I love what I am doing*.

Sarah Cook (2008, p.3) identifies engagement as a psychological contract more than a physical one, and that it is something that the employee has to offer. According to her, the engaged employees are feeling inspired by the work they are doing, they truly care about the future of their company and are also willing to put their own effort to make the company succeed.

She sums up engagement as by how positively the employee *thinks about the organization; feels about the organization; is proactive in relation to achieving organizational goals for customers, colleagues and other stakeholders*.

Cook also divides employee engagement into four categories:

Cognitive engagement: *the degree to which the employee focuses very hard on work. Engaged employees are focused and at one with their work. For example, they are not distracted from what they are doing, they display single-mindedness and high energy.*

Emotional engagement: *the degree to which the employee feels engrossed in the work. Engaged employees are 'in the zone', they are engrossed in what they are doing to the extent that they do not become distracted. They live in the 'here and now' when they are at work.*

Physical engagement: *the degree to which employees are willing to go the extra mile, not just in terms of customer service but also for themselves, for example in taking responsibility for their own learning and development, in finding new ways of doing things and in putting in discretionary effort.*

Advocacy: *the extent to which employees recommend the organization to their family and friends in terms of job opportunities and doing business with the organization. A key determinant is how employees portray the organization to others when they are outside work. Do they show pride in the organization? Do they relate to it and talk as 'we' rather than 'they?'* (Cook, 2008, p. 10).

Jon Hellevig (2012, p. 35) discusses in his research his own view of the central idea behind employee engagement. According to him, the leaders of a company should actively make efforts to create a corporate culture of engagement and

self-discipline, but he also points out the fact that there are individual differences in the capability of people to engage. No matter the amount of effort, the activities may not bring the desired outcome. This should be taken into consideration when thinking about the outcomes of the actions taken for engaging employees.

According to this chapter, engagement can be seen as an psychological contract between the employee and the company (Cook, 2008) and a state of the employee, who is committed, fascinated and attracted to the job and the company (Rutledge, 2005). Furthermore, there are differences in the employees' capabilities to be engaged, and therefore it is not even possible for every employee (Hellevig, 2012).

2.3 The drivers of engagement

Cook (2008, pp. 47-48) introduces a case study that studies BellSouth and the car manufacturer Chrysler Group. Chrysler group has identified that the key factors influencing engagement in its business are:

- *a collaborative work environment where people work well in teams;*
- *challenging work;*
- *input on decision making;*
- *resources to get the job done;*
- *authority to make decisions;*
- *career advancement opportunities;*
- *the company's reputation as a good employer;*
- *evidence that the company is focused on customers;*
- *a clear vision from senior management about future success;*
- *senior managers' interest in employees' well-being.*

According to the study, Chrysler Group sees the four parts of the jigsaw that leads to engagement as company leaders, supervisors, HR practices and policies, and company communications. At Atlanta-based telecommunications company BellSouth drivers of employee engagement are seen as:

- *affiliation with a company that is seen to be a winner;*

- *work content – doing work that is challenging and makes a difference;*
- *having a clear career path;*
- *benefits – the type of benefits offered such as health plans, stock options, pension plans.*

Joel Elegbe (2010, pp. 77-78) suggests in his book that employee engagement is based on a certain philosophy, stating that the employees can only give their best effort if their own needs are met inside the organization. He states these needs to be for example a challenging job, an enabling and social work environment, competitive total rewards and rapid career development. In contrast, he writes that the symptoms of low engagement or disengagement include the following:

- *slow or tardy reaction to challenges*
- *gradual failure to meet deadlines, innovation and effectiveness*
- *lack of drive for creativity,*
- *ceasing to give customers' concerns the priority attention they used to receive or deserve*
- *lack of drive, enthusiasm and low energy – burn-out*
- *consistently only doing enough to get by*
- *reluctance to make discretionary effort due to lack of emotional commitment to the job and the company*
- *lack of cooperation in working with team members*
- *finding fault in virtually every policy, system, procedure, initiative, programme and behaviour in the corporation.*

These symptoms of low engagement can be interpreted as the opposite of the symptoms of high employee engagement.

Motivation and its drivers

Motivation is a crucial part of employee engagement. Without motivation towards the job, it is very difficult to be engaged to the job. Armstrong (2006) defines motivation theory in his book as a theory that examines the process of motivation and explains why people behave at work as they do. He also suggests

that the motivation theory also explains what an organization can do in order to "*encourage people to apply their efforts and abilities in ways that will further the achievement of the organization's goals as well as satisfying their own needs*". This supports the idea that motivation is an important part of engagement. (Armstrong, 2006, p. 251.) Therefore two theories by Maslow and Herzberg, which are considered fundamental and most studied among the many motivational theories, are introduced here to better explain the role of motivation in engagement. The many theories of motivation that have been established by researcher over the decades are not covered in depth since motivation presented only to create a better understanding on the drivers of engagement.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory suggests that the motivation is created in a hierarchical order, so that the basic needs have to be satisfied first, before the next level of motivation can be reached. These levels include physiological needs, safety, social needs (belongingness), esteem and self-actualization. The hierarchical model of the needs is presented in Figure 1 below.
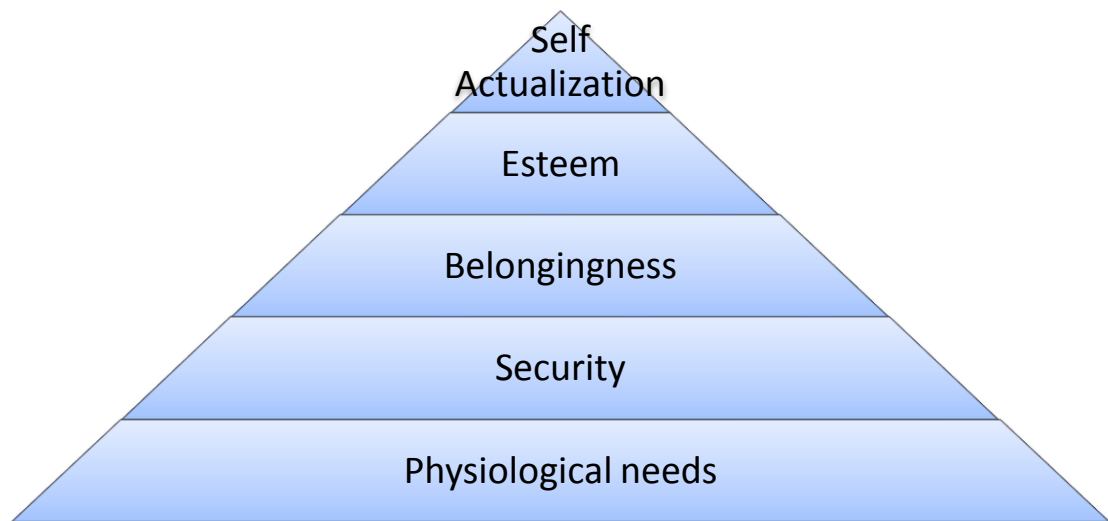

Figure 1. Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

According to Griffin and Moorhead (2010, pp. 86-87) the three needs from the bottom, physiological needs, security and belongingness, are called deficiency needs, since they need to be fulfilled for the person to be fundamentally comfortable. The two needs on the top, self-actualization and esteem, are called growth needs, because they focus on personal growth and development.

Even though there is no actual evidence in the form of empirical research to support Maslow's theory, for which it has been criticized as well as for the fact that different people might have different sets of needs and they might appear in different order, the theory gives a base for understanding the needs driving the motivation in employees.

In the working life, the needs could be categorized as follows:

- Physiological: possibility for eating and refreshments provided in the workplace as well as working hours that give a possibility for resting enough
- Security: economical security i.e. salary, physical security e.g. protection from dangerous working environments and medical support, security for the future e.g. pension plans, psychological security e.g. no sudden changes and no-harassment policy.
- Belongingness: supporting a team spirit at work, social interaction
- Esteem: self-esteem and esteem by others
- Self-actualization: freedom to perform in their own work, development of skills needed

John Miner introduces the original Hygiene-motivation theory by Frederick Hertzberg (Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman 1959) very thoroughly in his book. According to him, Hertzberg's research shows the outcome that "*job satisfaction is viewed as an outgrowth of achievement, recognition (verbal), the work itself (challenging), responsibility, and advancement (promotion). These five factors are considered to be closely related both conceptually and empirically.*" (Miner, 2005, p. 63) He also states that when these factors are present in a certain job, the very basic needs of an individual are satisfied and this will result to both positive feelings and better performance in work. The basic needs mentioned here are the ones that are related to personal growth and self-actualization and he says that these needs are said to be satisfied by the five intrinsic aspects of the work.

Miner (2005, p. 63) also writes that job dissatisfaction results from different factors than job satisfaction. The factors mentioned include company policy and administrative practices, supervision (technical quality), interpersonal relations

(especially with supervision), physical working conditions, job security, benefits, and salary. Miner suggests that these dissatisfiers, that are called the hygiene factors, could also remove dissatisfaction and even improve performance when they are appropriately provided, but he also notes that the dissatisfiers are not reliable to generate actually positive feelings or the high levels of performance. If one wishes to accomplish those outcomes, he suggests that the management should provide good hygiene, but that this can only give benefits up to a certain point. He states that the focus should be on the work itself, not on its context.

Armstrong (2006, p. 256) writes that Herzberg's theory is also divided into intrinsic and extrinsic factors that affect job satisfaction. The intrinsic factors are the factors that are self-generated, for example responsibility, achievement, recognition, the nature of the work itself and growth of the employee. He lists pay, promotion, punishment and working conditions as the extrinsic motivators or satisfiers that are done for or to the employees in order to motivate them. Armstrong also writes that the extrinsic factors might have an instant effect, but most likely it will not last as long as the effect of the intrinsic factors that affect more on the quality of working life.

2.4 Retention and engagement

In their research Andrew Ologbo and Sofian Saudah (2012, p. 506) state that their findings from the study, that was conducted on 104 HR officers to find out the individual factors of employee engagement, are consistent with a lot of literature on the subject of employee engagement, and that in fact "*employee engagement could be a strong factor for organizational performance and success, as it seems to have a significant potential to affect employee retention, their loyalty and productivity, and also with some link to customer satisfaction, organizational reputation and the overall stakeholder value.*"

According to a research done by Towers Perrin (2008, p. 5) there is a linkage between engagement and retention. In the research, Towers-Perrin studied 50 multinational companies, and over the period of 12 months the companies with higher employee engagement level outperformed the companies with lower levels of engagement, and these companies also experienced higher levels of retention. However, the study also states that even though engagement has an

impact on retention that alone does not retain employees. In addition, according to Harvard Business School Press (2006, p. 81) engaging the employees is a major element of retention. Due to these findings, it can be said that the employee turnover can be reduced to some extent by engaging the employees of the company.

3 Good practices in retaining and engaging employees

As it has been settled in the previous chapters, retaining the good employees is beneficial for the companies. Creating long-term employment for employees, the company can guarantee a certain level of services to their customers as well as creating a feeling of safety for the employees enabling them to perform even better. This chapter aims to find out some good practices in order to retain the talented employees in the company and engage them with the help of the literature review of the subject.

According to Sarah Cook (2008, p. 27), companies face challenges when they are looking for ways to improve the level of engagement. One of the challenges is to find out what the unique elements of the work experience are that most likely will influence the engagement in the country of their operations. This suggests that the cultural issues are good to take into consideration when establishing a strategy for engaging employees.

Cook (2008, p. 59) also introduces four key elements based on her own experience of the best practices in organizations to drive engagement. These are well-being, information, fairness and involvement.

The HR Counsil, a Canadian organization providing information for non-profit organizations introduces a list of useful HR (Human Resource) activities and the influence the responsibility has to employee engagement, and therefore in retaining the employees in the organization, in their web site. Even though the HR Counsil usually provides information for the use of non-profit organizations, the list of practises is equally helpful to organizations seeking for profit.

Table 1. The HR Responsibility and how it relates to employee engagement. (The HR Counsil)

HR Responsibility	How it relates to employee engagement
Strategic HR Planning	*Strategic HR planning links HR management directly to an organization's strategic plan and that means that staff will have meaningful roles tied to the strategic direction of the organization* *Strategically planning how your organization will meet its current and future HR needs and how people will be supported and nurtured within your organization is critical for success*
Operational HR Planning	*HR management practices to support management and staff in achieving their day-to-day goals. An operational plan ensures that employees are properly supported.* *"Where is our organization going and how will it get there?"*
Compensation and Benefits	*An employee who feels adequately compensated monetarily is more likely to stay with your organization*
Developing HR Policies	*Policies and procedures provide your employees with a process to follow and that knowledge can help them confidently approach situations, particularly difficult situations.*
Employment Legislation and Standards	*Provincial/territorial and federal governments outline the minimum requirements to ensure a safe and equitable work environment for employees.*
Job Descriptions	*A well-written job description sets an employee up for success by outlining their responsibilities and the parameters of their position. Job descriptions also show how an employee's position contributes to the mission, goals and objectives of the organization*
Performance Management	*Performance management is an ongoing process where the manager/supervisor and employee work together to plan, monitor and review an employee's work objectives or goals and overall contribution to the organization* • *Motivates employees to do their best* • *Establishes clear communication between the manager and the employee about what s/he is expected to accomplish* • *Provides on-going, constructive feedback on performance* • *Establishes plans for improving performance, as necessary*

	• *Identifies the skills and abilities of each employee so that work assignments build on and reflect an employee's strengths* • *Identifies individual employees for more challenging work* • *Assists and supports staff in achieving their work and career goals by identifying training needs and development opportunities* • *Contributes to the succession management plan so that employee skills are developed and employers develop the skills they need to fill an potential HR gap in the future*
Learning, Training and Development	*Investing in training programs helps employees develop personally and professionally*
Workplace Diversity	*Creating an environment where people feel welcome and safe from harassment and discrimination motives staff to perform. Absenteeism and performance problems decrease while productivity, morale and employee retention increases*
Work Teams and Group Dynamics	*When you develop and support effective teams, you enhance the power and feeling of satisfaction of individuals working on the team* *When a team works well, it means that staff trust one another and that leads to better sharing of knowledge and understanding*
Conflict Resolution	*In a healthy workplace, there will be conflict. Having a conflict resolution policy and a process will mean that conflict is constructive and not destructive.*
Workplace Wellness Initiatives	*A healthy workplace takes into consideration the physical, spiritual, environmental, intellectual, emotional, occupational and mental health of employees.* *Wellness promotion doesn't just benefit the employee — an organization filled with healthy, balanced and fulfilled employees is a productive workplace that retains its employees*
Employee Recognition	*Giving employees a sense of shared values and purpose by creating a relationship with them is important. When you thank employees you value them and that, in turn, is motivating* *Updating staff on organizational issues through internal communications like e-mail updates and newsletters builds the sense of team and their value to the team*

The practices presented above are later used as the guideline when suggesting how the case company can address the possible items of the empirical research affecting the employee engagement. The most convenient practices are selected based on the results.

Auditing the employee engagement

Any organization can make a questionnaire on how employees feel about the organization and what they think is wrong or could be done better, but making guidelines on improvement and following them into actions is more difficult. That is why it would be beneficial for a company that wants to make an engagement strategy to have a responsible person, a sort of engagement supervisor to see through the selected actions and also a group that could audit the results of the strategy.

4 Empirical part

The case company wishes to keep its information confidential, so the final thesis will not include detailed information about the company. The case company is a consulting company operating in international business. They are situated in five different locations, and they have almost 170 employees.

The objective of the empirical part of the research is to find out whether people in the company are already engaged to their work or not, and on what level the engagement in different locations is.

4.1 Research method

In the empirical part of the thesis the situation in the case company was studied and information was collected from employees. The research was a quantitative research, and questionnaires were sent to employees via Internet. Most of the employees speak Russian, so the questionnaires were made in English and Russian. Open ended questions where people can give their own ideas and comments provide the most beneficial information. However, since the main focus is on Russian speaking employees, the translation of the open answers would require too many resources from the company and therefore most of the

questions were asked in a yes/no form, multiple choices or numerical forms. There was also an open ended question for employees' own suggestions for improvement. This might have given less accurate information since the choices for answers were given beforehand. In order to be able to make the right questions as well as giving good choices for answers the theory was studied carefully. The method requires certain suggestions to be made about the factors influencing engagement.

The research questions are answered based on the previous studies on the subject, the literature that will be studied by the author and the information received from the questionnaires.

The questionnaire-method was chosen because the study aims to find out what the current situation in the company is. The purpose is to ask people for their opinion and personal view on the level of their own engagement in their work. It is important to ask the same questions from all of the employees in the company, so personal interviews could not be used. Furthermore, since the researcher does not speak Russian which would have been necessary in the interviews, the questionnaires are the best choice of method for this research.

According to Gordon Rugg and Marian Petre, the authors of "Gentle Guide to Research Methods" (2006, p.145), it is important to ask oneself two things about the question in the questionnaire when trying to find out whether the question is helpful or not. The questions to be asked are: *What will this question give me?* and *What literature or evidence can I use to justify question?* Based on this guideline, the questions are drawn with relation to the theories of engagement, and the drivers of engagement.

4.2 Questionnaire design

The five-point Likert scale was selected as the response mode for the questionnaire. The reason for selecting this mode was that the company has used it before in their questionnaires and therefore the employees are familiar with the design of the questionnaire and therefore are less likely to get confused with the questions. The Likert scale was first published by Rensis Likert in 1932, who also gave his name to the technique.

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Ian Brace (2008, p. 73) introduces the Likert scale as a technique that gives the respondents a series of attitude dimensions. For each of the dimensions the respondents are asked to tell whether and how strong they agree or disagree with the suggestion that is made. This is done by choosing a number given on a five- point scale. The responses can then be given scores e.g. from 1 to 5 as was done in this research. Then the scores can be summed for each of the respondents in order to give attitudinal score for each individual.

The survey was made completely anonymous, even though some background information was asked in the beginning of the questionnaire. The background information was asked only to be able to compare if there are differences between different locations in order to define the needed actions in each office.

4.2.1 Defining the questions of the employee engagement questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed based on the literature review in order to ensure the validity of the content.

Some of the questions of the employee questionnaire were drafted by the author with the help of the theories of engagement and its drivers presented in Chapter 2, Theoretical framework; other questions were adapted from previous research from a bachelor's thesis studying development of employee engagement survey (Wolf, 2012) and they are marked with the researcher's name after the question. These questions were selected, because they have been tested by the author of the previous study, and therefore can be seen as valid questions.

Since the engagement is a matter of personal interest of the employee as well as the conditions the organization can provide (Hellevig, 2012), both sides of the phenomenon were taken into consideration when drafting the questions that were asked from the employees of the case company. Below, the questions are introduced underneath the each theme that defines the question.

Commitment (Rutledge, 2005; Cook, 2008)

- I want to stay in this company
- I feel committed to this company

- I feel that I have a future in this company (Wolf, 2012)
- I would like to be working for this company still in 2 years time (Wolf, 2012)

Attraction to work (Rutledge, 2005)

- At work, I stay positive even when things don't go as planned (Wolf, 2012)
- When I am at work, I enjoy working intensively (Wolf, 2012)
- When I am at work time usually passes quickly (Wolf, 2012)

Fascinated / inspired by the work (Rutledge, 2005)

- I am inspired by my work (Wolf, 2012)

Care about the future of the company (Cook, 2008)

- It is important to me personally to see this company succeed (Cook, 2008)

How positively one perceives the company (Cook, 2008)

- I believe I am a part of a successful organization (Wolf, 2012)
- I honestly think this is a good company to work for

Cognitive: focus on work, high energy (Cook, 2008)

- At work, I usually feel full of energy (Wolf, 2012)
- When I am at work, I concentrate on the job
- I sometimes use the working time for personal things (e.g. reading own emails, Facebook, Twitter etc.)

Emotional: feeling of being engrossed, here & now (Cook, 2008)

- I get a feeling that I am absorbed in the job
- I have a mindset of "being here and now" when I am at work

Physical: is the employee willing to go the extra mile, e.g. taking responsibility of their own learning, finding new ways of doing things (Cook, 2008)

- I have found new ways to improve my working, even if the ways are very small details
- I sometimes use my own time to learn about things important to my job performance
- I am ok with doing some extra work to get the project done in time and well

Advocacy: do they recommend the company, do they show pride (Cook, 2008)

- I am proud of the work I do (Cook, 2008)
- I have or I would recommend the company to potential customers
- I would recommend the company to potential new employees (Cook, 2008)

Challenging job (Cook, 2008; Elegbe, 2010)

- My job is challenging enough

Enabling work conditions (Elegbe, 2010)
- This company inspires me to give my best job performance (Wolf, 2012)

Competitive total rewards (Armstrong, 2006; Cook, 2008; Elegbe, 2010)

- I am satisfied with the income and benefits I receive (Wolf, 2012)
- Salary is the most important reason I am working here
- I am satisfied with the amount of recognition I receive

Career development (Cook, 2008; Elegbe, 2010)

- I feel that I have a possibility to achieve things in this company

- I feel I have a possibility for a career development in this company

Management (Cook, 2008; Miner, 2005)

- I get along with the manager of this location
- The relationship between me and my manager is a source of stress for me (Wolf, 2012.)

4.2.2 Translation of the questionnaire

Some employees in the company do not speak English and others do not speak Russian, so it was very important to let people answer the questions in a language they know very well in order to get as reliable answers as possible. Since the questionnaire needs to be translated from English to Russian, certain guidelines for designing the questionnaire in a way that it is possible to be translated need to be studied. Smith (2004, p. 444) introduces twelve guidelines by Brislin (1986) in his book on how to make the questionnaires easier to translate. The guidelines are:

1. Use short, simple sentences of less than 16 words. (But items can be of more than one sentence).
2. Employ active rather than passive voice.
3. Repeat nouns instead of using pronouns.
4. Avoid metaphors and colloquialisms.
5. Avoid the subjunctive.
6. Add sentences to provide context to key items. Reword key phrases to provide redundancy.
7. Avoid adverbs and prepositions telling "where" or "when".
8. Avoid possessive forms where possible.
9. Use specific rather than general terms.
10. Avoid words indicating vagueness (e.g. "probably", "maybe", "perhaps").
11. Use wording familiar to the translators.
12. Avoid sentences with two different verbs if the verb suggests different actions.

The questions in the questionnaire were designed with the guidelines presented above to make it possible to translate the questions without changing their meaning to the respondents. The questions were translated from English to Russian by a translator of the company, and a native Russian speaker also read the translations and gave comments on the validity of the expressions used and their meaningfulness to Russian respondents. Also the answers to the open-ended questions were translated from Russian to English, but they were translated as straight as possible from the original language in order to increase the validity of the results.

5 Results of the study

The questionnaire was sent by email to all employees of the company. The email addresses were collected from the company's email address database, and there were many addresses that are not in use anymore. For that reason, even though 230 questionnaires were sent, the actual response percentage was calculated by using 153 employees as 100% since the email list also included many addresses to former employees who do not work in the company any more as well as to the employees who are for example on a maternity leave. 72 respondents out of the 153 answered to the questionnaire, and therefore the actual response rate was (72/153*100) 47.05%. This suggests that the validity of the study is sufficient. The company has made many employee surveys before, and they reported that this has been an average response rate to most of the employee surveys conducted in the company.

As explained before, the questionnaires were done in Russian and English due to different nationalities of employees. This resulted in two sets of data to be gathered from the results. All the results of the Russian study are combined with the results from the English version in order to get an overall result of each question. In addition, the open-ended questions were translated into English in order to make them understandable to the author and the readers of the study.

The results of the study are presented below by using Excel charts and tables of the responses. The Excel charts are used since they are simple to read and give straight forward information. Correlation analysis is not used in the study

since the questions aimed to finding out if the employees feel that the drivers of engagement are present in the company and in themselves. This way it is possible to find out are there possibilities in the company for the employees to be engaged in their work, and also do the employees recognize the factors of engagement in themselves.

The answers to the rated questions are presented as tables, showing the amount of responses to each question, the average grade that the respondents gave to the question and also the number of responses that were given to each grade from 1-5, suggesting the agreement of the respondents to the question. The questions and their answers are divided in categories that were established before, in the chapter 4.3 in order to show the meaning of the question and to make the analyzing the answers more clear. The responses are also explained with words below the tables, and the percentages of the responses are calculated and shown in order to give a better understanding of the distribution of the answers.

The average grade to each question tells the author the points that should be considered in the company in order to possibly increase the level of employee engagement, and these points are discussed in more depth in the chapter 6 where suggestions for improvement are given.

The overall average grade that the company received was 4.01 which is a rather good grade, but there are still a few points that could be addressed. Some of the lowest ranked items were chosen as points for development in the company, and the suggestions for action are presented in chapter 6 based on the average grade of the rated questions as well as some suggestions based on the comments from the open-ended question in the end of the questionnaire. There were questions in the questionnaire, which were presented so that the lower the grade was, the better the result was, i.e. disagreeing strongly would mean that the person was more engaged. The results of these questions were reversed so that the answers given to grade 1 were presented as grade 5 in order to calculate the correct average grade for the company.

Below, the answers to first five questions, concerning the background data of respondents, are presented as a column chart showing the amount of re-

sponses to each option. Also the answers to the open-ended questions are presented.

Respondents' location distribution

Your location?

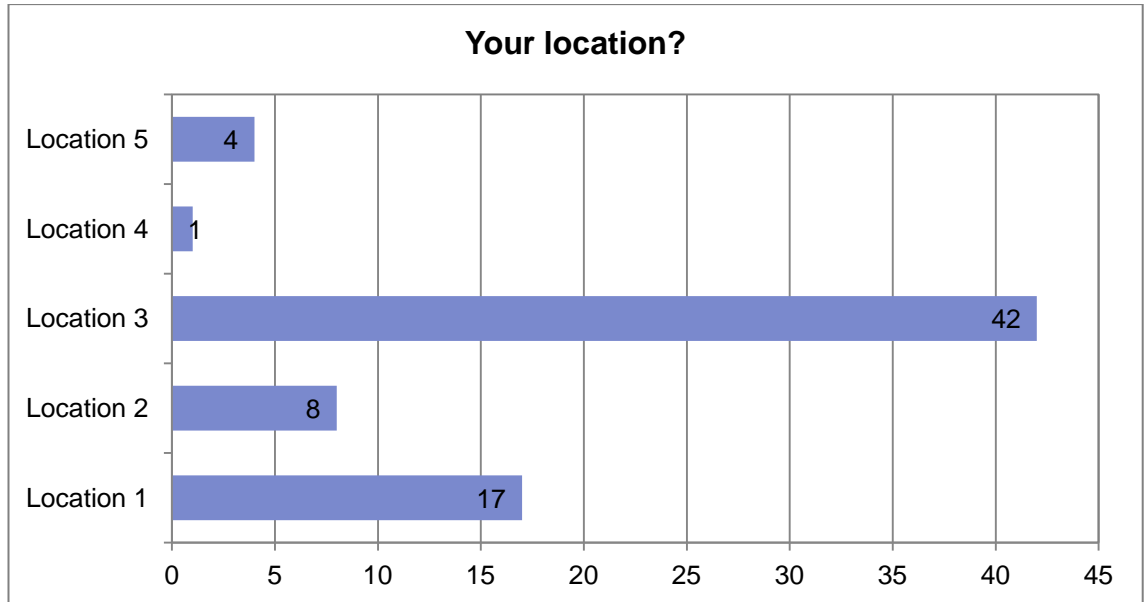| Location	Value
Location 5	4
Location 4	1
Location 3	42
Location 2	8
Location 1	17

Figure 2. Location of the respondent

The number of responses per location are presented in Figure 2. The responses were in line with the percentage of the employees working in each of them. 58% of the respondents were from the biggest location and 23% from the second biggest location.

Time of employment

Time of your employment in Company?

Time	Value
More than 6 years	16
4-6 years	14
1-3 years	26
Less than a year	16
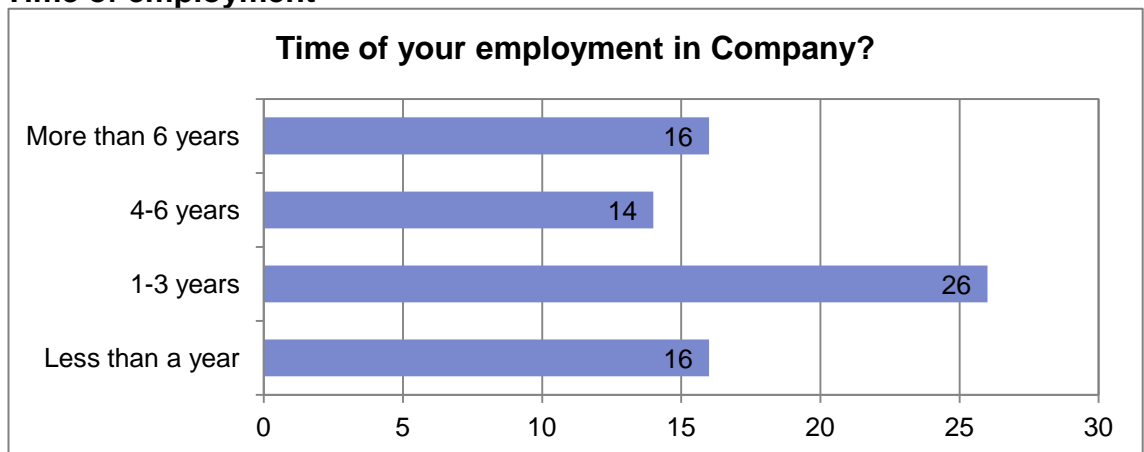
Figure 3. Time of employment

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Figure 3 presents the answers to the question about time of employment. The majority of the respondents, 36% have been working for the company for 1-3 years. This is in line with the fact that there has been a challenge with rather short employment times and it also suggests that actions are needed in order to improve the situation with the turnover rate. There was equal amount, 22.2%, of respondents who had been working in the company for less than a year and for over 6 years. Only 19.4% answered that they had been working in the company for 4-6 years.

Intentions to leave the company

Have you ever seriously considered leaving from Company?

Answer	Value
Yes, sometime during the past three years	12
Yes, sometime during the past year	9
Yes, during the past six months	25
No, never	26

Figure 4. Intentions for leaving the company

When asked the question "Have you ever considered leaving from Company", 36.1% answered that they had never considered it and 63.9% answered that they had considered leaving at some point during the past three years. 34.7% of the respondents answered that they had considered leaving the company during the past six months. This suggests that there are many people who are either happy with the job or do not want to change a company but that the majority of the people have considered leaving at some point for some reason. However, it also tells that there are reasonably many people thinking about leaving the company so actions are needed rather fast, especially since the majority of respondents answering yes, had considered leaving during the past six months. This could be due to recent announcement of a change in the management of the company. The answers are presented in figure 4.

Reasons for considering leaving the company
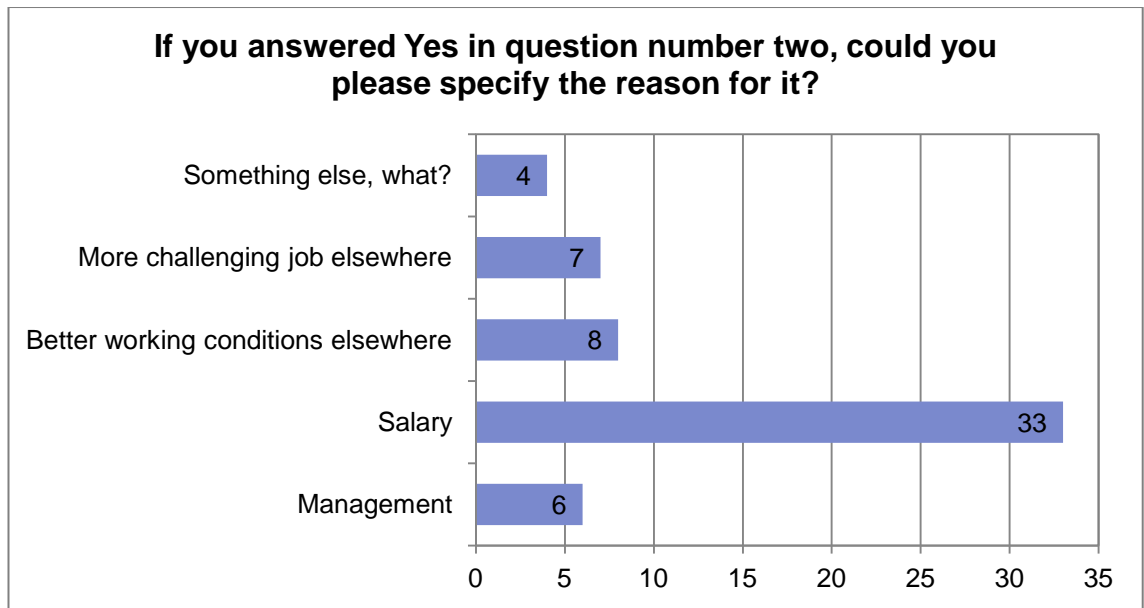
Figure 5. Reasons for considering leaving the company

Figure 5 shows the responses to the question about the reasons for considering leaving the company. When asked to specify the reason for considering leaving the company, 72% of the 46 respondents said that the reason was their salary. 17.4% of the respondents told that they would have better working conditions elsewhere and 15.2% answered that they would have a more challenging job somewhere else. This tells that people would like more challenges and maybe even wider job descriptions. 13% of the respondents answered that the reason was the management of the company. There was also a possibility to answer to an open ended question to define another reason, and there were altogether 4 answers to this. They are presented below.

- *new job is situated near the house*
- *overtime work is not paid for*
- *workload*
- *changes in the company*

Reasons to stay in the company

If you answered No in question number two, could you please specify the reasons keeping you in Company?

Category	Value
Something else, what?	6
Challenging work	9
Salary	3
Working environment (colleagues)	15
Management	11
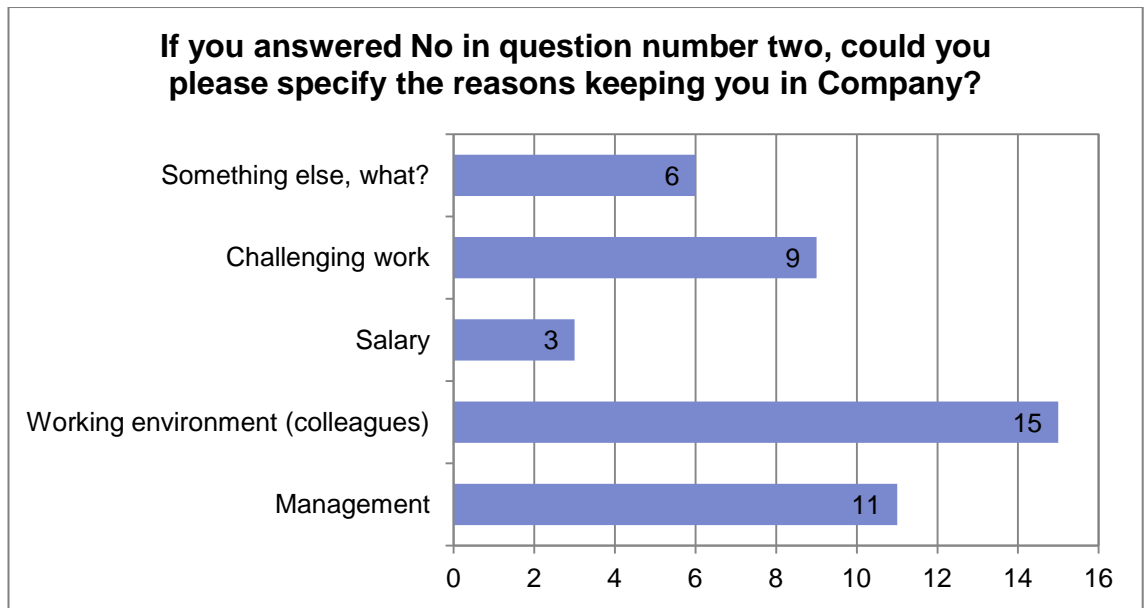
Figure 6. Reasons for staying in the company

The reasons for not considering leaving the company are presented in figure 6. 57% of the 26 respondents answering that they had never considered leaving the company chose the option that the working environment, meaning the colleagues, was the reason they had not considered it. 42.3% answered that the management was the reason keeping them in the company, and 34.6% answered that the challenging work was the reason they had not looked for another job. Only three respondents out of 26 answered that the salary was the reason they were happy where they were. 6 respondents, 23%, chose the option "Something else, what?" and decided to give their own comments, but one of them did not write anything, and for some reason one wrote that he/she had not answered "No" to the question even though the question was routed so that this question was shown only to those who answered "No", so this has most likely been an error in answering. The given comments are presented below.

- *did not answer*
- *I'm a new employee, I find it interesting to work here*
- *Professionalism and rational approach to work*
- *convenient to travel*

- *interesting job*

Below the results of the rated questions are introduced and discussed. The answers are based on a five-point Likert scale, 1 meaning that the respondent does not agree at all with the statement and 5 meaning that the respondent agrees completely with the statement and 3 for not agreeing nor disagreeing to the statement.

Commitment

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average
I see myself working for this company still in 2 years time	4	2	23	22	21	72	**3,75**
I feel committed to this company	0	1	5	16	50	72	**4,60**
I feel that I have a future in this company	6	8	18	24	16	72	**3,50**

Table 2. Commitment to the company

The responses categorised under commitment are shown in the table 2. Of the respondents, 8.3% did not see themselves working in the company in 2 years time, and 29% answered that they definitely see themselves staying in the company. 31.9% chose that they are not sure whether they will leave or stay, or they had not considered it. Since 36% of all the respondents answered earlier that they had not considered leaving the company, this seems to be in line with the previous answers.

When the respondents were asked about their commitment to the company, 69.4% answered that they strongly agree, suggesting that they feel strongly committed, and nobody answered that they strongly disagree with the statement.

Answers to the statement "I feel I have a future in this company" were mostly in line with the answers to the previous statement "I see myself working for this company still in 2 years time" for which the answers were presented above. The answers to the question about future in the company, 22.3% of the respondents answered that they strongly agree and 33.3% answered that they agree with the statement. 19.5% answered that they either disagree or strongly disagree with

the statement and 25% answered that they neither disagree nor agree with the statement.

Attraction to work

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average
At work, I stay positive even when things don't go as planned	0	6	16	32	18	72	**3,86**
When I am at work time usually passes quickly	1	0	5	26	40	72	**4,44**

Table 3. Attraction to work

In table 3 the responses concerning employees' attraction to their work are pre-sented. When the employees were asked if they stay positive even when things do not go as planned, 69.4% answered that they either strongly agree or agree with the statement. 8.3% of the respondents answered that they disagree, and none of the respondents answered that the strongly disagree. 22.2% answered that they do not agree nor disagree with the statement.

91.7% of the respondents answered that they feel the time passes quickly when they are at work. Only one person answered that he or she disagrees with the statement, suggesting that the respondent might get bored when at work. 6.9% answered that they do not agree or disagree with the statement.

Fascinated / inspired by the work

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average
I am inspired by my work	1	4	19	23	25	72	**3,93**

Table 4. Fascination / inspiration to work

Table 4 presents the answers to the question if the employees are inspired by their work. The majority of the respondents, 66.7% answered that they either agree or strongly agree with the statement "I am inspired by my work". 6.9% answered that they disagree or strongly disagree with the statement, and 26.4% answered that they neither agree nor disagree.

Care about the future of company

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average
It is important to me personally to see this company succeed	0	1	3	22	46	72	**4,57**

Table 5. Care about the future of the company.

The responses to the question if the employees personally care about the future of the company are presented in table 5. The vast majority, 94.4% of the respondents answered that they either agree (30.5%) or strongly agree (63.9%) with the statement about if they care about the future of the company. The result of this question indicates that most of the employees personally care about the success of the company. Only one respondent did not agree with the statement, and 4.2% did not have an opinion.

How positively one perceives the company

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average
I believe I am a part of a successful organization	1	3	12	22	34	72	**4,18**
I honestly think this is a good company to work for	0	4	16	24	28	72	**4,06**

Table 6. Positive perception about the company

The answers in table 6 show how positively the employees perceive the company. When the respondents were asked if they feel that they are a part of a successful company, 47.2% answered that they strongly agree with the statement and 30.55% answered that they agree with the statement. 5.55% answered that they disagree or strongly disagree with the statement and 16.7% answered that they do not agree or disagree with it.

None of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement "I honestly think this is a good company to work for" and the minority, 5.6% of the respondents, answered that they disagree with it. The clear majority, 72.2% answered that they either agree or strongly agree with it.

Cognitive: focus on work, high energy

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average
When I am at work, I concentrate on the job	0	1	2	22	47	72	**4,60**
I sometimes use the working time for personal things (e.g. reading personal emails, Facebook, Twitter etc.)	24	21	9	10	8	72	**2,40**

Table 7. Cognitive engagement

Table 7 presents the answers to the questions concerning the cognitive engagement of employee, meaning the high energy and their focus on work. When asked about their concentration to work, none of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement and only one respondent (1.4%) answered that he/she does not agree with the statement. 30.5% of the respondents answered that they agree, and 65.3% answered that they strongly agree with the statement. This suggests that 95.8% of the respondents feel that they concentrate on the job when they are at work. Only 2.8% answered that they do not agree nor disagree with it.

When the respondents were asked whether they use the working time for personal things, the scale was interpreted so that the more the employee disagreed with the statement, the better it was for the engagement. 62.5% of the respondents answered that they either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement. 12.5% answered that they do not agree or disagree with it, and 25% answered that they either agree or strongly agree with the statement.

Emotional: feeling of being engrossed, here & now

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average
I have a mindset of "being here and now" when I am at work	0	4	9	33	26	72	**4,13**

Table 8. Emotional engagement

Table 8 shows the responses to the question about the emotional engagement. None of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement "*I have a mind-set of "being here and now" when I am at work*" and only 5,6% answered that they disagree with it. 81.9% answered that they agree or strongly agree with the statement, and 12.5% did not agree or disagree with it.

Physical: willingness to go the extra mile e.g. taking responsibility of own learning, finding new ways of doing things

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average
I have found new ways to improve my working, even if those affect on small details	1	4	14	33	20	72	**3,93**
I sometimes use my own time to learn about things that are important to my job performance	0	1	12	23	36	72	**4,31**
I am ok with doing some extra work to get the project done in time and well	1	4	12	21	34	72	**4,15**

Table 9. Physical engagement

The answers to questions concerning the willingness of the employees to "go the extra mile" in their work are presented in the table 9 above. The majority of the respondents, 73.6%, answered that they either agree or strongly agree with the statement asking if they have found new ways to improve their working. 6.9% answered that they disagree or strongly disagree with it and 19.4% did not agree or disagree with the statement.

When respondents were asked to rate the statement "*I sometimes use my own time to learn about things that are important to my job performance*" only one person (1.4% of respondents) answered that he or she did not agree with the statement. 81.9% answered that they agree or strongly agree with the statement and 16.7% did not agree or disagree with it.

Furthermore a majority, 76.4% answered that they are willing to do extra work in order to get the project done in time and well. 6.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, and 16.7% answered that they neither agreed nor disagreed with it.

Advocacy: do the employees recommend the company, do they show pride?

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average
I am proud of the work I do	1	5	14	24	28	**72**	**4,01**
I have or I would recommend the company to potential customers	1	3	6	23	39	**72**	**4,33**
I have or I would recommend the company to potential new employees	4	2	15	19	32	**72**	**4,01**
This company inspires me to give my best job performance	0	3	18	29	22	**72**	**3,97**

Table 10. Advocacy

Table 10 presents the answers to questions in the category of advocacy, meaning if they are proud of the work, and do they recommend the company to others. The majority of the employees, 72.2% answered that they are proud of the work they do. Only 8.3% answered that the either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement and 19.4% answered that they do not agree or disagree with it.

86.1% of the employees have or would recommend the company to potential new customers and 70.8% would or has recommended the company to potential new employees. 8.3% answered that they do not agree or disagree with the statement of recommending the company to new customers and 20.8% answered that they do not agree or disagree with the statement about recommending the company to new employees. The minority of the respondents, 5.6%, answered that they would not recommend the company to new customers, and 8.3% answered that they would not recommend the company to new employees.

When the respondents were asked if the company inspires them to give their best job performance, 70.8% answered that they either agree or strongly agree with the statement. Only 4.2% did not agree with the statement, and 25% answered that they do not agree or disagree with it.

Enabling work conditions and a challenging job

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average
This company inspires me to give my best job performance	0	3	18	29	22	**72**	**3,97**
My job is challenging enough	1	3	20	26	22	**72**	**3,90**

Table 11. Enabling work conditions and a challenging job

The answers to the question concerning the challenge of the work and enabling work conditions are presented in table 11. When asked whether the company inspires the employees to give their best performance, 30.5% answered that they strongly agree and 40.3% answered that they agree with the statement. No one of the respondents chose the option that they strongly disagree with the statement, and 4.2% answered that they disagree with the statement. 25% of the respondents chose the option that they do not agree or disagree with the statement, suggesting that they do not have an opinion about the matter.

When the employees were asked if they feel that their job is challenging enough, 66.7% of the respondents answered that they either agree or strongly agree with the statement. 5.5% answered that they either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement and 27.8% answered that they neither disagree nor agree with the statement.

Competitive total rewards

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average
I am satisfied with the amount of recognition I receive	4	3	21	32	12	72	**3,63**
Salary and benefits are the most important reason I am working here	10	14	24	15	9	72	**2,99**

Table 12. Competitive total rewards

Table 12 presents the answers to the questions about the level of competitive-ness of the rewards and the meaning of the salary and benefits to the em-

ployee's decision to stay with the company. 16.6% of the respondents were completely satisfied and 44.4% were quite satisfied with the amount of recognition they receive at the moment. 29.2% were neither unhappy nor happy about the recognition they receive, and 9.8% were unhappy.

When asked if the salary and benefits are the sole reason for staying in the company, the scale was interpreted so that the more respondents disagreed with the statement, the more positive the result was. The responses were very equal. 33.3% of the respondents either agreed strongly or agreed with the statement and the same amount of respondents answered that they either disagree or disagree strongly. Furthermore, 33.3% of the respondents did not agree nor disagree with the statement.

Career development

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average
I feel I have a possibility for career development in this company	5	10	17	20	20	72	**3,56**

Table 13. Career development

Answers to the question about career development in the company are presented in Table 13. A little over half of the respondents, 55.6%, answered that they agree or strongly agree with the statement "I feel I have a possibility of career development in the company". 20.8% answered that they do not feel they have a possibility for career development inside the company, and 23.6% answered that they do not agree nor disagree with the statement.

Management

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average
I get along with the manager of this location	1	3	8	21	39	72	**4,31**
The relationship between me and my manager is a source of stress for me	47	13	6	6	0	72	**1,60**

Table 14. Management of the company

Table 14 shows the responses to the questions about the management of the company. The majority of the respondents, 83.3%, chose that they either agree or strongly agree with the statement "I get along with the manager of this location". 5.5% of the respondents answered that they disagree or strongly disagree with the statement, suggesting that they do not get along with the manager of the location. 11.1% chose the grade 3, suggesting that they do not agree nor disagree with the statement.

In the question about the relationship between the employee and their manager, the scale was suggesting that the lower grade there was, the lower level of stress the relationship creates, i.e. the lower grade was positive in this question. Accordingly to the previous question, 8.33% of the respondents answered that the relationship with their manager was a source of stress to them and 83.33% answered that they either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement. In addition, 8.33% answered that they neither agree nor disagree with the statement.

Open ended question "Please give your own comments on how the management of Company could make this company a better place for you".

The author has left out some responses that were similar, and presents the answers under different categories to show evidence of the suggestions.

Majority of the comments on the open ended question "Please give your comment on how the management of Company could make this company a better place for you" were about the salary raise, bonuses and training, and the answers have been grouped under headings that were identified from the theory of engagement and the good practices in chapter 3.

Salary:

"Annual salary increase, payment of bonuses every six months, funding training courses in English, Finnish, special courses for the raising of qualification"

"Acknowledgment, benefits"

Training in language skills and professional matters:

"Trainings on professional matters (currently this is not done); English language courses, material stimulation of the employees"

"It may be worth concentrating on the area of process automation, work with PC to the same extent as we now concentrate on the increasing of knowledge in law and consideration of matters related to accounting"

A bonus system for implementing big projects and also on bringing in new business:

"While executing a large project for a client I suggest that to all the employees participating in the project is given a bonus (a small percentage of the invoice). It would be a fair stimulation of an employee to work even better in the future projects."

"Possibility to implement bonus system for the employees who get new clients."

Some of the answers addressed the usefulness of different surveys in the organization for gathering information:

"I find that the fact, that there are such surveys already helps to improve the organization to a large extent"

"Carrying out some surveys for the clients, which would be really useful for the foreigners, who are not yet familiar with "Russia" and its particularities"

Working conditions:

To organize noise isolation in the office with large quantity of employees".

Communication in the company, in the organizational and also in the departmental level:

"To have meetings in the departments in order to know about existing problems and course of work for the coordination of activities in the department. This helps to unify and understand internal processes"

"Communication, better organization, full cooperation and more dynamic interaction between the Group, better explanation to accountants and lawyers on Company business, that allows to generate a multi active plan of sales of services accordingly to client's needs and for future potential clients"

Improving the services to the customers:

"It's possible to bring in more marketing services (studies, analyses tec.) on the level, that the clients would also know that Company is not about accounting and legal services only, it's possible to expand the range of services and thanks to that engage employees in new projects. For instance: not only consulting on the phone but organizing proper training – individual education of the client's employees. "

"Organization of certain services for our clients (business trips, removals, post, transport) etc."

Workload of the employees:

"More personnel to take care of employees and their matters, reducing the work overload of some employees."
"To define the adequate amount of work for the employees and everyone will be happy"
"To be rightful what comes to the amount of work of the employees"

Reducing the unwanted turnover of employees:

"To stop the turnover of the competent employees, who know and execute their work obligations adequately. The clients get used to their competent accountants and it is pleasant to hear for them that "We've got along with you so well, a good mutual understanding has been established on an excellent level, doing mistakes has nearly stopped. Keep that and we will stay with you still for another year and will recommend you our friends." But when another "green" newlycomer employee makes the most silliest mistakes the image and reputation of the company earned during years is lost in a few moment".

Relationship with employees (most likely meaning the relationship between the management and the employees):

"Reconsider the relationship with the employees and also some work processes"

Current changes in the management of the company:

"I hope the way of management will continue like now also in future in Company Group. I do not mean the way of management in the whole Group. Good Spirit and motivation should be number one and after that come excellent results with excellent people."

6 Suggestions for improvement in the case company

In this chapter the lowest scoring items, meaning the items that scored less than the overall average grade of 4.01, concerning the organizational engagement in the questionnaire are studied more deeply. In addition, suggestions are made based on the drivers of engagement from chapter 2.3, the good practises presented in Chapter 3 (see Table 1, p. 19) and the reasoning of the author. The lower scoring items that were linked to the personal engagement are not taken into consideration in this chapter, since the personal engagement is fun-

damentally connected to employees' personalities and own feelings, and there is very little what the organization can do to affect those levels.

When looking at the grades of the questions asked in the questionnaire, a few seem to have lower overall grading than others. These are presented in the table 15 below.

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average
I see myself working for this company still in 2 years time	4	2	23	22	21	72	**3,75**
I feel that I have a future in this company	6	8	18	24	16	72	**3,50**
I feel I have a possibility for career development in this company	5	10	17	20	20	72	**3,56**
My job is challenging enough	1	3	20	26	22	72	**3,90**
I am satisfied with the amount of recognition I receive	4	3	21	32	12	72	**3,63**
This company inspires me to give my best job performance	0	3	18	29	22	72	**3,97**

Table 15. Lowest grades in the organizational engagement

Future in the company

The questions concerning the feeling for a future in the company scored low, under 4 in the study, meaning that there are quite many people in the company who do not see a future in the company or do not have an opinion. This could be due the changes in the company or the feeling that the employees do not have a possibility to career development and therefore promotion and new challenges in the company and that they simply do not know the different possibilities for the career path in the organization. The career advancement opportunities and a clear career path were suggested to be drivers of engagement (Cook, 2008), and therefore they should be addressed in the case company. The best action to address these feelings in the employees would be strategic HR planning, a "career plan" for the employees that is tied together with the goals of the organization. Furthermore, professional training could make employees feel that they have a possible future in the company, and that the work could meet their expectations and talent also in the future (HR Counsil, Table 1, p. 19).

Career development

The possibility for career development has the same ratings as the feeling for a future in the company, and it could be due to the same reasons. If people do not feel that the company cares about their personal growth and therefore their future, this can easily lower the engagement. However, when the company helps the employee to develop personally and professionally, they also create a feeling of support and future for the employee. Establishing the needed training also requires the career plan mentioned above, which further creates a feeling of belonging for the employee. There were also six comments made concerning the need for further training and development of skills in the open question, suggesting a real need for training and support for career development.

Training and communication

One comment was also made on language skills training, professional matters and computer skills. It is suggested that training helps the employees to develop both personally and professionally (HR Counsil, Table 1, p. 19). Personal growth is suggested to be a motivating factor (Griffin & Moorhead, 2010 according to Maslow; Figure 1, p. 12) and therefore a part of engaging the employees.

The language courses, English language was requested in the comment, are very important in an international company where many customers speak English and the employees are in different countries. This affects both internal and external communication, and promotes a feeling of cooperation and organizational belonging that are quite important factors in engagement and retention as stated in chapter 2.3. According to Silverthorne (2005, p. 217) problems in communication can also have direct effect on the success of the company especially when the communication is between different subsidiaries of the company. The quality of information exchange and therefore relationships and performance are affected by communication.

Communication was also addressed in the comments given by the employees in the questionnaire. Meetings were suggested to bring the feeling of belonging and to enhance the information flow within the department as well as the whole organization. Communication and meetings are also important in order to know

about current issues and problems in the company, in order to be able to address the issues as soon as they arise. With the current changes in the management of the case company, open communication is especially important so that employees feel more secure about their jobs and the future of the company.

Challenging job

The question about the challenges of the job, received a low score in comparison to others. This could be a sign of a need for considering wider job descriptions to employees who feel this way. It would give the employees a possibility to use their talent and a feeling of greater importance to the company thus creating a feeling of belongingness and security for future. Challenging work was stated as a driver of engagement (Cook, 2008) and assessing the employees to a more challenging job as a good practice in engaging the employees (HR Council, Table 1, p. 19).

Total rewards

The item concerning the satisfaction about total rewards scored lower than average and it was also the subject of majority of the open comments. In addition, 72% of the respondents who had considered leaving the company at some point specified the reason to be salary. This suggests that a part of the employees feel that the salary they receive is not at the level that they wish it would be. The total rewards also include the bonuses and other benefits that the employees receive, and they are an important driver of the engagement (HR council, Table 1; Cook, 2008) as well as a motivational factor (Miner, 2005 according to Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman 1959). Some comments were made on the bonus policy, suggesting that there could be a bonus for employees who participate in large projects that require a lot of extra effort, and also a bonus for bringing in some new business. There is a bonus system for at least the employees in sales department who bring in new business, but this could be implemented and communicated to the whole company in order to make the employees care even more about the success of the company and therefore influencing the level of engagement and retention.

Inspiration for job performance

The statement "this company inspires me to give my best job performance" also scored less than the overall average grade. This suggests that the employees disagreeing with the statement do not want or are not able to give their maximum job performance for the company and might not be feeling that the enabling work conditions are not present in the company, and therefore they do not fill the description of an engaged employee (Elegbe, 2010; Hellevig, 2012). This matter could be addressed by creating more meaningfulness to the job by creating a feeling of being a part of a bigger picture in the company. This could be done by communicating the importance of the projects and every task to the employees as well as acknowledging the successes of the employees more.

Distribution of the workload

Some comments were made about reducing the workload of employees. This could be a good issue to investigate, since overwhelming workloads can eventually lower the well-being of the employees which is one of the driver of engagement (Cook, 2008), and therefore lower the engagement of the employees. Joel Elegbe (2010, pp. 77-78) also suggested that one of the symptoms of low engagement level is low energy and eventually a burn-out, so preventing this is a way of increasing engagement in the company. This could be also connected with the communication improvement mentioned before, in a way that the distribution of work and the well-being of employees is discussed and addressed in departmental and/or team meetings.

Equality in the workplaces

There was a distribution in the questions about the relationship between employees and the management, and 5.5 % of the respondents answered that they do not get along with the manager of the location. In addition, another, 8.33% answered that the relationship between them and their managers is a source of stress to them. This could be a possible threat to retaining the employees, and it could also be considered if the equality in treating the employees is met in tall the locations of the company. Even though the number of respon-

dents answering this way is not large, these issues are always important in the company and should be addressed carefully.

7 Conclusions

The first objective of this thesis and research question of the study was to understand the link between employee retention and engagement, and to understand the both concepts. According to literature review about the subject in chapter 2, it was stated that it is possible to affect retention by engaging employees, even though engagement alone does not retain employees. It was also stated that engaging employees can have a significant effect on the profit of the company. There was a distinction made between commitment, motivation and engagement in order to clarify the concept of engagement better. The researcher also identified the main drivers of engagement based on literature review, and these drivers were used as a base for designing the questions in the questionnaire later on.

The second objective and research question was to find out what the current situation in the case company with engagement is. This objective was met with the help of a questionnaire, and the results were presented in chapter 4, and analysed more in chapter 5. The response rate was 47.05% which is quite a sufficient rate, but the case company commented that it was approximately the same with the previous employee studies made in the company.

The author was also able to answer to the third research question " How to increase employee engagement in the case company?" and identify some good practices in engaging and retaining employees based on literature as well as a website that aims to provide knowledge about Human Resource issues to organizations. The author has considered these sources to be reliable and capable to provide correct knowledge about the good practises in retaining and engaging employees. There could have been more information about the good practises in retaining and engaging employees, but the author used the materials that were available and relevant for the research. These drivers are presented in Chapter 3. After the results were received from the questionnaires, the author was able to analyse the issues that need to be addressed in the

company. These were the items of the questionnaire that were given the lowest average grade. The issues were the feeling of a future in the company, feeling of a possibility for a career development, challenging job, satisfaction with the amount of recognition and the inspiration to give the best job performance. Furthermore, issues that the respondents mentioned in the open question were considered, such as salary, training in communicational and professional skills and work load. Suggestions on what issues should be addressed in order to improve the engagement in the company, and how this could be done, were given in chapter 6.

The author believes that the research will benefit the case company by providing information about the engagement situation in the company as well as providing actual suggestions for improvement. Therefore the study can be considered successful. The author also found it surprising and very positive that so many open comments were given to the survey, since these are always the most honest answers in the surveys where people can express their thoughts freely, instead of choosing from options that have been given. Often there are issues that are not addressed in the questionnaires but that are important to the respondents and to the company.

In the future it would be beneficial for the company to address someone within the company as responsible for the engagement issues and retaining the employees, since currently there is no one doing this. In addition, exit interviews could be a good source of information about why the employees have decided to leave, and what could be done in the future to prevent similar decisions.

As a suggestion for future research the author would like to recommend a further and more detailed research about the influence of employee engagement to retaining employees. It would be interesting to see how much effect engagement can have on retaining the employees, and maybe the monetary results from engaging the employees.

Figures

Tables

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Appendices

Appendix 1 The questionnaire in English

Hello,

My name is Riikka Lindholm and I am a student of Saimaa University of Applied Sciences in Finland, Lappeenranta. For my final thesis I am studying the level of employee engagement and commitment in Company since they both are connected to employees' wellbeing and company's performance.

The questionnaire is sent to every employee of Company and all the responses will be handled with full privacy and confidentiality. The responses cannot and will not be traced to any individual nor is there any reason for doing that. The study is done only to provide the management a better view of how you as an employee feel about your job at Company.

The questionnaire will ask some basic information for background, and this is only done for statistical reasons and finding out if there are differences between locations. After the background information, you will be asked to rate the questions from 1 (meaning you completely disagree) to 5 (meaning you completely agree). Please read every question carefully and consider what rating you want to give as an answer; that is the only way to get honest information about what you feel and what you would like to be better in Company in order for you to feel better about your work. Every response is truly important.

Answering to the questionnaire will take you approximately 10 minutes. Please answer by 30.04.2013

Please find the link to the survey at the bottom of this email.

Best regards,
Riikka Lindholm

Employee engagement survey

1. Your location? *

○
○
○
○
○
○

2. Time of your employment in   .? *

○ Less than a year
○ 1-3 years
○ 4-6 years
○ More than 6 years

3. Have you ever seriously considered leaving from   ? *

○ No, never
○ Yes, during the past six months
○ Yes, sometime during the past year
○ Yes, sometime during the past three years

4. If you answered **No** in question number two, could you please specify the reasons keeping you in   *

☐ Management
☐ Working environment (colleagues)
☐ Salary
☐ Challenging work
☐ Something else, what? [_____]

5. If you answered **Yes** in question number two, could you plese specify the reason for it? *

☐ Management
☐ Salary
☐ Better working conditions elsewhere
☐ More challenging job elsewhere
☐ Something else, what? [_____]

6. Please rate following statements so that 1 means that you completely disagree with the statement and 5 means that you completely agree with the statement. *

	1	2	3	4	5
I see myself working for this company still in 2 years time	○	○	○	○	○
I feel committed to this company	○	○	○	○	○
I feel that I have a future in this company	○	○	○	○	○
I feel I have a possibility for career development in this company	○	○	○	○	○

https://www.webropolsurveys.com/Preview/PreviewQuestions.aspx?nocache=6745&printa...   15.5.2013

55

It is important to me personally to see this company succeed

I believe I am a part of a successful organization

I honestly think this is a good company to work for

7. Please rate following statements so that 1 means that you completely disagree with the statement and 5 means that you completely agree with the statement. *

	1	2	3	4	5
At work, I stay positive even when things don't go as planned					
When I am at work time usually passes quickly					
I am inspired by my work					
When I am at work, I concentrate on the job					
I sometimes use the working time for personal things (e.g. reading personal emails, Facebook, Twitter etc.)					
I have a mindset of "being here and now" when I am at work					

8. Please rate following statements so that 1 means that you completely disagree with the statement and 5 means that you completely agree with the statement. *

	1	2	3	4	5
I have found new ways to improve my working, even if those affect on small details					
I sometimes use my own time to learn about things that are important to my job performance					
I am ok with doing some extra work to get the project done in time and well					
I am proud of the work I do					
I have or I would recommend the company to potential customers					
I have or I would recommend the company to potential new employees					

9. Please rate following statements so that 1 means that you completely disagree with the statement and 5 means that you completely agree with the statement. *

	1	2	3	4	5
My job is challenging enough					
This company inspires me to give my best job performance					
Salary and benefits are the most important reason I am working here					
I am satisfied with the amount of recognition I receive					
I get along with the manager of this location					
The relationship between me and my manager is a source of stress for me					

10. Please give your own comments on how the management of   could make this company a better place for you.

Appendix 2: The questionnaire in Russian

Меня зовут Риикка Линдхолм Я учусь в Сайменском Университете Прикладных Наук в г. Лаппеенранта, Финляндия. Для своей дипломной работы я изучаю степень вовлечённости и профессионального интереса сотрудников в Company, так как данные факторы влияют на благополучие сотрудников и результат деятельности компании.

Опросный лист посылается всем сотрудникам Company, при обработке ответовбудет обеспечена полная конфиденциальность. Ответы никоим образом не будут связаны с отдельными респондентами, поскольку не это является целью опроса.
Цель дипломной работы – дать руководству лучшее представление о том, что вы как сотрудник думаете о своей работе в Company.

Опросный лист содержит несколько общих вопросов для статистических целей и выявления различий между офисами компании, если таковые имеют место. После блока общих вопросов Вас просят дать оценку по шкале от 1 (полностью не согласен) до 5 (вполне согласен). Пожалуйста, внимательно прочитайте вопросы и решите, какую оценку следует привести в качестве ответа – это единственный способ получить достоверную информацию о том, что Вы думаете и что, по Вашему мнению, следовало бы изменить в Company для более позитивного отношения к работе. Каждый ответ действительно важен.

Опрос займет около 10 минут Вашего времени. Просьба дать Ваши ответы до 30.04.2013 г.
Чтобы ответить, пожалуйста, перейдите по ссылке внизу данного электронного письма.

С уважением,
Риикка Линдхолм

Опрос о вовлечённости и профессиональном интересе сотрудников

1. Ваш офис? *

○
○
○
○
○

2. Стаж работы в   ' *

○ Меньше года
○ 1-3 года
○ 4-6 лет
○ Больше чем 6 лет

3. Вы когда-то думали о том, чтобы уйти из   ? *

○ Нет, никогда
○ Да, за последние 6 месяцев
○ Да, иногда в прошлом году
○ Да, иногда за последние три года

4. Если Вы ответили «Нет» на вопрос №3, пожалуйста, определите причину, по которой Вы остались в   *

☐ Руководство
☐ Условия труда (коллеги)
☐ Зарплата
☐ Стимулирующая работа
☐ Другое: _____

5. Если Вы ответили «Да» на вопрос №3, пожалуйста, определите причину: *

☐ Руководство
☐ Зарплата
☐ Лучшие условия труда в другом месте
☐ более интересная работа в другом месте
☐ Другое: _____

6. Просьба дать Вашу оценку нижеприведенным высказываниям1 = Полностью не согласен и 5= Впольне согласен. *

	1	2	3	4	5
Я вижу себя сотрудником данной компании еще через два года	○	○	○	○	○
Я ощущаю, что работаю с полной отдачей в данной компании	○	○	○	○	○
Я ощущаю, что у меня есть будущее в данной компании	○	○	○	○	○
Я ощущаю, что у меня есть возможность для профессионального роста в данной компании	○	○	○	○	○

Для меня лично важно увидеть, что компания имеет успех ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Я верю, что я являюсь частью успешной организации ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Я искренне верю, что это хорошее место работы ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

7. Просьба дать Вашу оценку нижеприведенным высказываниям1 = Полностью не согласен и 5= Впольне согласен. *

	1	2	3	4	5
На работе я сохраняю позитивность, хотя все не идет по плану	○	○	○	○	○
На работе время обычно идет быстро	○	○	○	○	○
Я воодушевлен(а) своей работой	○	○	○	○	○
На работе я сконцентрирован(а)	○	○	○	○	○
Иногда использую рабочее время для личных вещей (например чтобы читать личные имейлы, Facebook, Twitter и.т.д.)	○	○	○	○	○
На работе я придерживаюсь подхода «здесь и сейчас»	○	○	○	○	○

8. Просьба дать Вашу оценку нижеприведенным высказываниям1 = Полностью не согласен и 5= Впольне согласен. *

	1	2	3	4	5
Я нашел/нашла новые методы усовершенствования системы работы, даже если они касаются незначительных деталей	○	○	○	○	○
Иногда использую свободное время, чтобы изучить вопросы, которые являются важными для выполнения моей работы	○	○	○	○	○
Я не против того, что иногда приходится делать дополнительную работу, чтобы хорошо и вовремя выполнить проект	○	○	○	○	○
Я горжусь своей работой	○	○	○	○	○
Я порекомендовал(а), либо порекомендовал(а) бы компанию потенциальным клиентам	○	○	○	○	○
Я порекомендовал(а), либо порекомендовал(а) бы компанию потенциальным новым сотрудникам	○	○	○	○	○

9. Просьба дать Вашу оценку нижеприведенным высказываниям1 = Полностью не согласен и 5= Впольне согласен. *

	1	2	3	4	5
Моя работа воодушевляет	○	○	○	○	○
Эта компания воодушевляет меня делать все возможное на работе	○	○	○	○	○
Зарплата и компенсационные выплаты – это самая важная причина того, что я работаю здесь	○	○	○	○	○
Я удовлетворен(а) объемом полученного здесь признания	○	○	○	○	○
Я в хороших отношениях с руководителем данного офиса	○	○	○	○	○
Мои отношения с руководителем являются источником стресса для меня	○	○	○	○	○

10. Просьба дать Ваши комментарии о том, что руководство могло бы сделать, чтобы данная компания стала лучшим местом работы для Вас.