



Employee engagement driving program: Efforts to optimize employee performance

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ABSTRACT

A company that is undergoing a transition period, often faces employee work behavior that does not support the achievement of company goals. In this service partner, employees show minimal work behavior, lack of innovation, lack of energy and lack of initiative. These emerging behaviors illustrate disengagement behavior that affects company performance. This condition makes it difficult for companies to carry out existing business strategies. The company needs a way to increase employee engagement in the process of implementing company strategies that support the achievement of company goals/performance. To overcome these problems, the service team uses the "Employee Engagement Driving Program" as an effort to optimize employee performance. The purpose of this service is to help companies to be able to encourage their employees to have high engagement, so as to improve company performance. There are three methods in this program, namely, engagement training, group coaching, and individual counseling. This service is attended by supervisors who will encourage their team to be more engaged at work and the company. The result of this program is the supervisor's ability to create goals and action plans to advance his team and correlate with the work behavior shown. Outputs in the service are articles in the mass media, video highlights, and scientific articles.

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1. INTRODUCTION

A company is like an organism that has value in producing something and has a symbiotic relationship with the people involved in it. The company and human resources (HR) have a mutually dependent relationship. HR in the company creates value in the industrial world, while the company, for HR, can provide compensation, recognition, and self-development (Manopo, 2011).

In order to create the expected value, the company certainly expects HR with good performance. Employee performance is essentially the results achieved and the achievements held in the workplace (Mathis & Jackson, 2022). Employees with potential, ability, and good motivation will be able to carry out their tasks and strive to achieve set goals, even in the face of many difficulties or challenges (Mangkunegara, 2005). One factor that can encourage good employee performance is behavior that shows engagement, as revealed by several studies, including Macey & Schneider (2008).

In another study, it is stated that employee engagement significantly influences employee performance [Mayanastasia et al. \(2017\)](#). Similarly, research by [Pratiwi et al., \(2021\)](#) declares that engagement has a positive impact on employee performance. This indicates that the more engaged employees are with their work and company, the higher their performance will be. Conversely, if employees display less engaged behavior towards their work and company, it will negatively impact their performance. Engagement has been developed in various concepts that explain the activities, behaviors, and psychological states of employees. This refers to the involvement and enthusiasm of individuals in their work [Kim et al. \(2019\)](#). In [Botha & Mostert \(2014\)](#), Demerouti adds that employees engaged in their work are more committed to the company, exhibit positive behavior by taking personal initiatives, and have motivation for learning.

Santosa Group is a company engaged in three business sectors: automotive, finance, and property, with a presence in the city of Semarang. Currently, the company operates seven business units spread across the Central Java Province. Santosa Group envisions itself as a "Leading and Professional Service Provider, Providing Added Value to Consumers, Employees, and Shareholders." Since its establishment in 1990, the company has experienced significant growth and development in its business endeavors. Challenges have inevitably become part of the growth and development process, along with the pursuit of its vision. One of the business units within Santosa Group currently facing performance challenges is River Walk Semarang. This hospitality-focused unit includes recreational facilities and accommodations. Established in 2002, River Walk has steadily grown, but the unavoidable impact of the 2020-2022 pandemic has shaken its performance. Consequently, Santosa Group decided to acquire River Walk, and it remains under their ownership to date.

The River Walk is currently considered by the HR management to have subpar performance. Over the past period, there has been a lack of improvement in expected productivity and the work behavior of employees, who still adhere to the old culture. Based on the company's identification, it was found that there are behaviors indicating employee disengagement from their work. This begins with negative thinking due to concerns about the new management, being stuck in the old culture, and changing company rules, leading to work being done as a routine simply because of rules and commands. In executing their tasks, employees appear to lack energy, show minimal innovation, and only perform the basic tasks without any initiative to produce more.

Employee engagement can be defined as the level of commitment and involvement that employees have towards the organization and its values ([Anitha, 2014](#)). Employees who possess a positive attitude and emotional connection to their work and company can motivate their colleagues and understand their responsibilities to excel. However, the behavior exhibited by River Walk employees seems to suggest the opposite. The actions of the employees indicate that there is a need to enhance their engagement. These behaviors undoubtedly have an impact on the company. According to the HR presentation, the company is currently operational but lacks in terms of employee performance. Therefore, there is a need for appropriate intervention to boost employee engagement at River Walk. Employees are assets, and employee engagement is the most potent factor for measuring a company's strength. Engagement serves as a valuable tool to help a company gain a competitive edge ([Baumruk, 2004](#)).

Based on the existing issues, the team proposes a program to assist the company in optimizing employee performance. The "Employee Engagement Driving Program" is introduced as an effort to enhance employee performance. This program serves as an intervention aimed at improving employee engagement behaviors that impact the optimization of both individual and company performance. The program includes three main activities: psychoeducation with training, group coaching, and individual counseling. In a study conducted by [Knight et al. \(2017\)](#), four types of employee engagement

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interventions were identified in their meta-analysis: personal resource development, job resource development, leadership training, and health promotion. In this service program, personal resource development and health promotion are addressed through individual counseling, while job resource development and leadership are tackled through training and group coaching activities. It is anticipated that the "Employee Engagement Driving Program," in its efforts to optimize employee performance, will assist the company in achieving better results through the exhibited engagement behaviors of its employees. In other words, the goal of this service is to help the company encourage its employees to have high engagement levels, thereby enhancing overall company performance.

2. METHODS

Implementation Methods

The methods employed in implementing this service include training, group coaching, and individual counseling. According to the Indonesian Psychological Association, psychoeducation is an activity designed to enhance understanding and skills as a preventive measure against psychological disorders within a group, community, or society. It also aims to raise awareness among the community, particularly families, regarding the psychological challenges faced by individuals (Mahanani, 2019). Psychoeducation comes in two main forms: training and non-training. The distinction lies in the fact that non-training psychoeducation aims solely to increase knowledge, whereas training-oriented psychoeducation enhances both knowledge and skills of the participants.

Psychoeducation, as a movement providing psychological services to the community, has multiple meanings. There are six understandings of psychoeducation, encompassing training individuals in various life skills, an academic-experiential approach to teaching psychology, humanistic education, training professionals in counseling skills, a series of community service activities, and providing information about psychology to the public (Supratiknya, 2011). Group dynamics is a method aimed at constructing personal meaning and understanding of human behavior among participants through interaction in group training. This method is often referred to as group intervention with an approach from Leigh (2006). Another method, counseling, involves an interaction between the counselor and the client to collaboratively solve the client's problems. The counselor serves as a facilitator, while the client is seen as an empowered individual capable of setting goals and finding solutions to the issues they are facing.

Evaluation Design

In the training section of this community service program, there are three criteria that will serve as the baseline indicators for the achievement of the training activities. These indicators are assessed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The three criteria are the success of the activities, as seen from participants' assessments of the satisfaction with the program's implementation, the improvement in understanding and knowledge possessed by the participants, and the engagement behavior demonstrated and evaluated by the partner.

Assessment of the program implementation is provided to participants after the training program is completed. Participants will be given a training satisfaction questionnaire covering two crucial aspects: the effectiveness of the facilitator and the training facilities. The collected questionnaire results will be processed to gauge participants' assessments of the training program.

The second assessment aims to measure participants' understanding of the program before and after its implementation. In this assessment, participants will undergo pre- and post-tests containing

questions related to understanding and knowledge about engagement and performance. This assessment goes beyond mere knowledge, as participants are expected to exhibit engaged behaviors in their work, making the partner's evaluation of the observed changes a crucial aspect. Figure 1 illustrates the application of the described methods in addressing the problem.

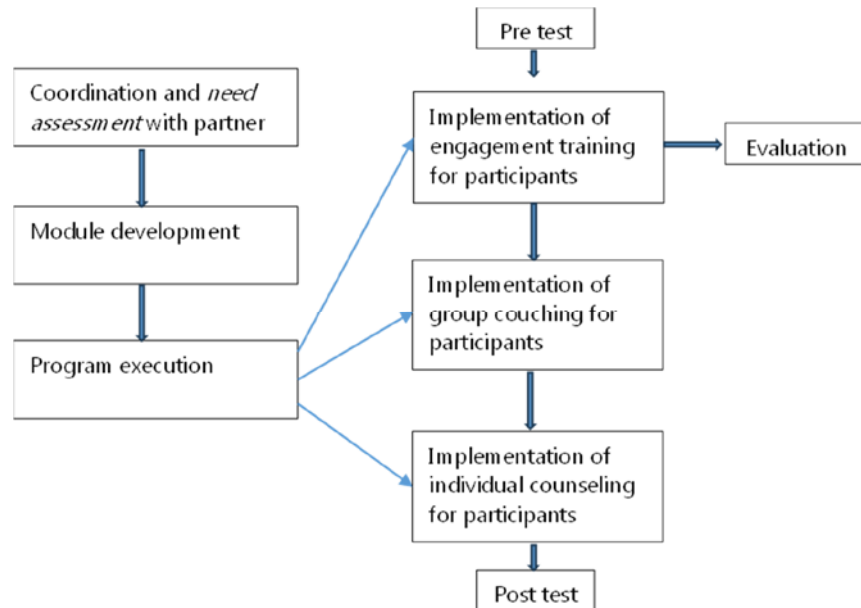


Figure 1. Flowchart of the service method

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This community service is carried out in three stages of activities. Before commencing the activities, all participants are required to fill out an informed consent form, indicating their willingness to participate in the entire community service program from start to finish. The first activity conducted is an engagement training provided to the partner supervisors. The objective of this activity is to ensure that participants understand the importance of work engagement, the impact of employee engagement on their work, and to teach them how to encourage the emergence of engaged behavior in both work and the company. 16 (sixteen) supervisors receive training in the form of material presentations, interactive games, and exercises using SMART GOAL, all of which encompass various aspects of engagement.

The outcomes obtained from the implementation of this training are twofold: participant satisfaction with the conducted training activities and participants' understanding of the provided material. Participant satisfaction with the training implementation can be observed in the following table:

Based on the processed results, it can be concluded that participants are satisfied with the implementation of the provided engagement training. On average, participants express satisfaction with the training, evident in aspects such as the theme, timing, refreshments, and the organizing committee. Participants also find the presented material satisfactory.

The second assessment provided is an evaluation of participants' understanding of the material presented during the training. The results of this evaluation of participants' understanding are Table 2.

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Table 1. Satisfaction of the Training

Parameter	Result
Training Implementation	
Theme of the training	Satisfactory
Event rundown accuracy	Satisfactory
Atmosphere	Satisfactory
Material completeness	Satisfactory
Organizing committee	Satisfactory
Refreshments	Satisfactory
Audio-visual aids	Satisfactory
Overall Content Delivery	
Content mastery	Satisfactory
Presentation style	Satisfactory
Benefits	Satisfactory
Interaction with participants	Satisfactory
Usage of tools and materials	Satisfactory

Table 2. Analysis of training material understanding result

	N	Mean	SD	SE	Coefficient of variation
Pre-Test Result	14	4.143	1.027	0.275	0.248
Post Test Result	14	5.714	1.069	0.286	0.187

Table 3. Paired Samples T-Test

Measure 1	Measure 2	t	df	p	Cohen's d	SE Cohen's d
Pre-Test Result	Post-Test Result	-5.078	13	< .001	-1.357	0.409

Note. Student's t-test.

Based on the analysis of participants' understanding before and after the training, it is evident that there is an improvement in scores, as indicated by the mean or average scores obtained by participants. Furthermore, through t-test analysis, it is observed that the significance value is $p < 0.05$, indicating that the employee engagement driving program training significantly enhances participants' knowledge.

During the training, participants were also given assignments through SMART GOAL worksheets. This activity aims to assist participants, especially supervisors, in creating goals for their work. Goals, in this context, serve the purpose of motivating participants to act. Participants' actions are documented in an action plan, and during the process, participants are also required to analyze the benefits and challenges involved in achieving these goals. The results of this activity are utilized in the subsequent stages.

The next stage involves coaching and counseling for supervisors and employees perceived by management to have personal and performance issues. The outcomes of this stage help narrow down the issues within the team and monitor the progress of SMART GOAL implementation. Management conveys that supervisors who set goals understand what they truly want to achieve in each work unit

but face operational challenges at times. However, supervisors are making efforts to implement their action plans.

As for personal counseling, management gains a better understanding of how to handle specific employees who require a different approach. This awareness assists management in formulating policies and approaching their employees. Employees themselves feel more supported in understanding themselves and the purpose of their work.

Implementation Stages

Training

In this stage, the training takes place over a single day, commencing with a presentation delivered by the partner management team. It is followed by introductions from the service team and an explanation of the technical aspects of the service. Subsequently, participants are given the opportunity to fill out informed consent forms beforehand and complete various pretests provided by the organizers.

The next activity involves presenting engagement material based on three main aspects: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement (Shuck et al., 2017). The delivery of this material involves not only lecture methods but also discussions and games. Participants are then asked to gather in groups and receive an explanation related to SMART GOAL. The SMART GOAL worksheet itself consists of goals, purposes, challenges, key steps, and measurements that can assist participants, particularly supervisors, in understanding job objectives and determining the steps to be taken to achieve these goals. The training concludes with each participant committing to the first steps to be taken in their work in line with the goals they have set. The Figure 2 illustrate the training activity.



Figure 2. Training activities

The facilitators in this training activity provided examples of various engagement behaviors that encompass three aspects: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. Additionally, they discussed the impact of employee engagement on both the company and the employees themselves. Factors that can support the occurrence of this engagement were also part of the collective discussion. In the illustration, participants can be seen enthusiastically participating in games. During group assignments and discussions, each group is accompanied by a facilitator who assists in guiding the discussion.

Group coaching

In group coaching, each supervisor and team gather for coaching sessions. Coaching is based on the SMART GOAL worksheet that was previously filled out by supervisors. This activity is separated

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from the training by a two-week interval. During this time frame, it is expected that the action plan in SMART GOAL has already begun implementation. The purpose of this coaching is to follow up on the execution of the action plan. Each group in group coaching is facilitated by a coach specializing in their field. Discussions during coaching revolve around the challenges faced by the team in implementing the action plan and the extent of achievements made.

In the implementation of group coaching, it is noted that several departments have already started executing the action plan outlined in the SMART GOAL. However, there are still some technical challenges, such as sudden operational issues or limitations in personnel or facilities. Despite these challenges, employees feel more aligned with the team's goals outlined in SMART GOAL. The support needed from management includes monitoring and appreciation for the ongoing process of change among employees. Figure 3 are some pictures of the coaching activities with the partner.



Figure 3. Group coaching activity

Personal counseling

The implementation of this phase involves psychologists from Semarang State University, including both community service team members and non-members. Personal counseling activities are specifically aimed at personnel identified by the management as those having personal issues affecting their performance. The initial stage of this activity comprises introductions and the clarification of counseling objectives. Subsequently, the process continues with a discussion on the challenges employees face during their work and their goals for staying with the company. Recognizing these goals and challenges is pivotal as it serves as a foundation for determining corrective actions. Each counseling session is conducted for 60 minutes per employee. Figure 4 captured during the counseling sessions.



Figure 4. Personal counseling activity

Discussion

The community service program in the form of “Employee Engagement Driving Program” for optimizing employee performance at Santosa Group partner is relevant to the partner’s needs, as they feel their employees need encouragement to optimize their performance. Based on this issue, training and counseling activities are carried out with the aim of providing an understanding of the importance of having engagement in work and the company for employees. [Rozaan & Sagala \(2019\)](#) stated in their research that training significantly influences employee engagement. Moreover, training can also impact employee commitment to the organization. In addition to training, counseling programs also have a significant influence in strengthening work engagement ([Kay & Emily, 2015](#)). Through training, coaching, and counseling, the company gains a better understanding of how policies should be implemented for its employees.

Based on the analysis and unstructured interviews between the implementation team, participants, and management, the community service program conducted by the implementation team from Semarang State University has yielded the following results: (1) The implementation of the community service program has increased and enhanced employees’ knowledge regarding engagement, performance, its impact, and benefits. This is evident from the average participant scores that increased before and after the training; (2) Improved knowledge and skills of employees in setting team goals and how to achieve them. Employees, in this case, learn through the SMART GOAL assignment, which helps guide their work behavior toward a more positive direction with clear goals; (3) Employees in counseling sessions become more self-aware and able to determine improvement steps that can be taken in their work processes; (4) Management also has the opportunity to discuss policies or systems that can help optimize employee performance with the implementation team from Semarang State University. Through training, employees can focus more on developing their skills and help them correct weaknesses in their performance ([Rozaan & Sagala, 2019](#)). It’s not just about solving problems but finding meaning in the work becomes a crucial part of the working process. This helps employees find motivation from within, self-satisfaction, and an increase in self-efficacy that contributes to performance. This is achieved through counseling staff who delve deeper into the personal aspects of each employee, helping them see the meaning and potential within themselves that can be used to achieve valuable work experiences ([Kay & Emily, 2015](#)).



Figure 5. Discussion between the service team and the partner

In the implementation of this community service program, several factors support the successful execution of community service activities: (1) Support provided by the partner, including the venue, availability of time, and participants who are currently working employees. The partner’s management is committed to discussing, accompanying, and following up on each implemented activity; (2) The interest

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and enthusiasm of participants during the activities. This can be seen from the participants' enthusiasm in conducting training to counseling activities. Participants are satisfied with the implemented activities and are committed to completing the assigned tasks; (3) The support from Semarang State University as the funding provider ensures the smooth running of this community service.

The implementation of this program is certainly not perfect; there are still many aspects that can be further developed. One that can be enhanced is the development of a performance evaluation system. This system will assist employees in optimizing their performance as work targets become more objective and measurable. Employees will also have a better understanding of the demands of their job. Management will find it easier to monitor and control employee performance.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This community service program aims to provide understanding and skills for partner's employees to be more deeply engaged in their work and the company, ultimately optimizing their own performance. The community service includes three activities: training, coaching, and counseling. Each activity is provided with an appropriate portion, ensuring that each supervisor, leader, and personnel understand how they need to be more involved in their work. This service activity itself results in employees understand and able to engage in their work and the company by optimizing their potential and clear goals in carrying out their tasks.

There needs to be a follow-up to control and manage employee performance. The company is required to promptly prepare an optimal working system following the changes in work culture. This aims to support operational activities and objective performance assessments. Employees will have a better understanding of work targets, evaluated aspects, and the assessment system. The existence of this system will increase employees' trust in the company and enhance positive engagement in all activities within the company itself.

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