

# The Disengaged Employee



According to the [2014 Global Workforce Study](#) conducted by Towers Watson, which covers responses from over 32,000 employees across a range of industries in 26 markets around the world, only four in 10 employees are highly engaged and **24% (almost a quarter) of employees are disengaged.**

While highly engaged employees are passionate about their work and feel connected to the workplace, disengaged employees, even those who do actually show up to work, are uninterested in what they do and will just go through the motions at best and at worst, will “act out” in ways that undermine the workplace.

The Towers Watson survey findings indicate that effective leadership and management are critical for sound employee engagement, with the key characteristics of effective leadership being the ability to inspire and motivate and the key characteristic of an effective manager being the ability to “walk the talk”. The survey found that other characteristics of an effective manager include: the effective removal of obstacles to employee success, treating employees with respect, clearly communicating goals and encouraging innovation.

One of the most common reasons for employee disengagement is the feeling that the organization does not value him/her. If an organization fails to acknowledge and recognize an employee’s efforts and contribution, this can leave the employee feeling empty and undervalued. In turn, this can cause a previously loyal and engaged employee to become disinterested and disengaged. Failure to suitably acknowledge and recognize an employee’s efforts can include ignoring the employee, not giving the employee a salary increase or giving the employee a nominal increase, measuring the employee’s contributions based on unrealistic goals and refusing to consider the employee for a promotion.

Disengaged employees can and do hurt an organization’s “bottom line” because they are less productive than those who are connected to the workplace and who feel that they are an integral part of the organization. Worse still, some disengaged employees will actively undermine the workplace by engaging in negative behaviours such as taking excessive sick leave, being tardy, spreading gossip and generally working against management.

The bottom line is that employees need to feel valued in order to be fully engaged in the workplace. If they are not heard, not recognized and often overlooked, they will not be engaged.