Survey Shows Importance of Supervisors in Worker Engagement



Whether your workplace has a strong safety culture and an effective OHS program depends in large part in the degree to which workers are engaged. If they're disengaged, the safety culture will be weak and the OHS program won't be very effective.

According to a survey by Dale Carnegie Training, workers' relationships with their direct supervisors are a key element in their engagement, which is demonstrated by how personally connected and committed workers feel to their organization.

The survey of 1,500 workers found that the level of workers' engagement increases dramatically with the number of key positive emotions they feel, such as feeling inspired, enthusiastic, empowered, confident or valued. Of those surveyed, 70% felt at least one of these five key positive emotions, but only 12% felt three of them.

There's also a direct relationship between negative emotions and a worker's level of engagement.

Workers who feel negative emotions are disengaged *nearly ten times* more than those who feel positive emotions. And almost three in ten workers feel at least one of twelve significant negative emotions, including irritation, disinterest and discomfort, as a result of their interaction with their

immediate supervisor.

The study says that being insulted by an immediate supervisor ensures a worker's emotional disconnect and disengagement. In simple terms, a good supervisor makes people feel valued and confident; a poor one irritates people and makes them feel uncomfortable.

Workers personalize their job through emotions felt about the organization's actions as a whole and about their own supervisors in particular. In fact, it's the immediate supervisor who's the chief emotional driver in the workplace, with reactions to supervisors explaining 84% of how workers feel about their organization.

Immediate supervisors produce a polarizing emotional response:

- Managers who induce positive emotions foster a stronger sense of satisfaction, receiving the highest satisfaction ratings when they make workers feel inspired, enthusiastic, happy and excited.
- Immediate supervisors whose direct reports feel insulted, upset or irritated by them receive the lowest levels of satisfaction.

Bottom line: Satisfaction with supervisors affects the overall level of satisfaction with the organization, which is linked to worker engagement.

For more on improving your company's worker engagement and safety culture, see:

- Transformational learning and your OHS program
- A study that validates the importance of safety culture
- A recorded webinar on getting worker interest and buy-in for the OHS program and workplace safety in general, including proactively engaging workers.

The OHS Insider's Supervisor Compliance Centre has many

resources on supervisors, including:

- Information on who in your workplace could be liable as a supervisor for an OHS offence
- Seven lessons on supervisors and due diligence
- A supervisor competency checklist
- Special supervisor training requirements.

And our sister site, SafetySmart, has many tools to make your supervisors' jobs easier, such as safety talks, leader sheets, quizzes, online training and injury tracking forms.