An engaged employee is not just a satisfied one. They are individuals with high levels of loyalty and commitment for both their work and the interests of their organization.

There are clear benefits for organizations that develop an engaged workforce. The real value in employee engagement is that it contributes to employee well-being, increased productivity in the workplace, and improved performance for the organization. There is extensive research to support this.

Employee engagement is also a significant factor in fostering innovation and creativity. When employees really care about their work they are more willing to share their ideas on how to improve business and operations. In this sense, organizations can benefit significantly by being open to input from their employees, and encouraging new ideas as much as they can.

How do you engage employees?

The key is for organizations to treat employees as their most valued resource. This involves investing in areas such as professional development and workplace wellness. But even more importantly, employees need the opportunity to provide input and receive meaningful feedback from leadership.

More broadly, employee engagement requires a genuine commitment to continuous dialogue and organizational flexibility. Depending on what an employee needs – the behaviors, processes, and ways of doing things may need to change.

The best way to start is to ask employees the right questions about their work. Web-based technology has made it easier to involve employees and manage the data that is gathered so that organizations get the answers they are looking for.

Idea Crowdsourcing

Simply put, the concept of crowdsourcing is when an organization looks to a wider group for creative ideas and sustainable solutions.
In the context of employee engagement, crowdsourcing can be an effective method for gathering suggestions from employees on how to improve the work environment and the work they do. The real value of crowdsourcing is that it leverages the “wisdom of the crowds.” When an organization identifies a problem and puts it out there, it is seeking to harness the power of collective intelligence and ingenuity by collecting ideas from employees.

Employees are given the opportunity to share, comment and vote on ideas. By indicating if they like or dislike an idea, the highest ranked ideas bubble to the top – an empowering approach.

**In Focus: ODP Pilot Project**

In October 2009, the City of Ottawa conducted an Employee Engagement Survey. The purpose was to identify the areas that could help improve job satisfaction and commitment for City employees. The following were identified as areas requiring improvement by the Organizational Performance and Development (ODP) group:

- Interaction with Supervisors
- Managing Workload
- Organizational Value
- Career Growth and Development

**How Do You Idea Crowdsource Effectively?**

Idea crowdsourcing takes the saying “two heads are better than one” and amplifies it. With today’s web technology it’s possible for thousands, even millions of ideas to be heard and taken into account.

To do idea crowdsourcing effectively, the issues have to be relevant and the commitment by the organization has to be real.

When involving employees on matters of the workplace, participants will have a genuine interest in improving their work environment. Providing them with the opportunity to share ideas and contribute to decision-making shows that an organization places significant value in its employees. Not only does this increase the employee’s personal investment in the organization, but it also represents the path towards more sustainable decision-making and development for the organization as a whole.

**The Share Your Ideas Initiative**

ODP collaborated with Ascentum to develop a strategy for gathering employee input around the survey results. From this collaboration, the Share Your Ideas pilot project was created and
IdeaScale Case Studies

launched in April 2010. An idea sharing website was developed based on a crowdsourcing approach. Along with an innovative idea sharing and voting tool, the site also provided employees with the opportunity to learn about each of the issues so they could provide informed input. To cultivate the best ideas possible, it was crucial that all employees had a sufficient understanding of the issue areas before submitting their ideas and voting on others.

The user experience was simple and straightforward. Employees received an e-mail invitation from senior management that linked them to the idea website. Four separate Issue Booklets were available for employees to learn about each topic. The booklets included results from the Employee Engagement Survey, how the issue related to the City’s Service Excellence Framework and its impact on the workplace. Finally, it provided employees with questions to consider. Once they felt ready to make a contribution, employees could link to the Idea Area and share an idea, or two or more. They could also choose not to submit an idea but participate by voting or commenting on other ideas.

The pilot was a success. Participation was over 80% with an average of greater than one idea per employee. The top vote-getting ideas were forwarded to the City’s Service Excellence team for implementation.