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Perceived determinants of effective employee engagement in a South African bank

Holder, Kerry-Lee

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Perceived determinants of effective employee engagement in a South African bank

Kerry-Lee Holder

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration

Johannesburg, 2016

ABSTRACT

Employee engagement is a relatively new concept which has come to prominence because of its link to individual performance and organisational success. About a decade ago the Gallup Organisation developed the Q12 survey to measure employee engagement and this caused a spike of interest in the topic, with research showing a decline in employee engagement. This highlights the importance of this research in identifying how employee engagement can be enhanced. Little is known about the factors that promote employee engagement in large bureaucratic organisations, like banks, and whether certain factors have a greater impact on employee engagement than others. Currently, in the bank in which the research was conducted, too much attention has been paid to the mechanical process of performance management rather than employee engagement and the willingness of employees to perform.

This research aimed to identify the factors that promote employee engagement in a large bureaucratic organisation, namely a bank, and to discover which of these factors are perceived to have the greatest impact on employee engagement.

Twelve in-depth structured interviews were held and a themed content analysis was conducted through which common themes and factors were derived. Ten factors were identified and ranked by the respondents as having the greatest impact on employee engagement.

The results of this study highlight the factors that contribute the most to employee engagement. The top three factors found to have the greatest impact on employee engagement are: reward and recognition; coaching, social support, good leadership and an environment that nurtures trust and collaboration; and employees feel valued and are treated fairly with respect and dignity. The results of this study provide guidance to organisations by way of a list of factors that managers can use to improve employee engagement. All the factors should be considered, but special attention should be paid to the top three factors identified in this study.

DECLARATION

I, Kerry-Lee Holder, declare that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Kerry-Lee Holder

Signed at …Johannesburg……

On the ……29th…….. day of ……March…… 2016

DEDICATION

To my dad and mom, Wayne and Rene' Holder

Thank you for all the sacrifices you made so that I could have the best education possible. I am truly blessed to have such amazing parents.

And

To my husband, Gustav van Aardt

I am confident that if we can make it through our first year of marriage with me doing an MBA Degree, we can make it through anything. I love you with all my heart.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my husband, Gustav van Aardt, for his endless support, patience, encouragement and understanding over the past two years. He played a huge role in me completing the degree, and I truly appreciate it.

I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to:

- My supervisor, Conrad Viedge. Thank you for your support and guidance. I would never have been able to do this without you.

- My family and friends. I have missed out on so many special times with you. Thank you for not giving up on me and for your continued understanding and support.

- All the respondents who gave of their precious time to meet with me. Thank you for your willingness to participate in the study, and for your open, honest and thought provoking responses.

- My manager, Andre Germishuizen. Thank you for your understanding and for approving all the extra time off work so that I could attend to my studies.

- My employer. Thank you for providing me with a full bursary to do the degree. It is greatly appreciated.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to identify the perceived factors and key activities that promote employee engagement in a South African bank.

1.2 Context of the study

Employee engagement is a precursor to effective performance management. Too much attention has been paid to the mechanical process of performance management rather than employee engagement and the willingness of employees to perform. Employees who are engaged tend to work harder, show greater loyalty, and are likely to go the extra mile (Lockwood, 2007). Employee engagement is a relatively new concept which has come to prominence because of its link to individual performance and organisation results (Macey & Schneider, 2008). About a decade ago the Gallup Organisation developed the Q12 survey to measure employee engagement (Medlin & Green, 2009). Since then there has been a spike of interest in employee engagement, with research showing a decline in employee engagement and growing disengagement among today's employees (Saks, 2006). This highlights the importance of this research in identifying how employee engagement can be enhanced so that organisations can reap the benefits of greater individual performance resulting in organisational success.

The process of performance management is critical to work being accomplished and organisations being successful and competitive. Despite the many benefits associated with effective performance management, it is poorly executed in most organisations. Research shows that on average fewer than 30% of line managers have faith in the performance management process and believe that it adds value to organisational performance (Wright, 2013). Performance management also tends to fall short of employee expectations. Many employees view performance management as an empty

process, a human resource (HR) requirement, and a one-sided critique filled with bias and inconsistency (Becom & Insler, 2013). According to Gruman and Saks (2011), less than a third of employees believe that their organisation's performance management process helps them to improve their performance. Research shows that organisations can enhance their performance management processes and improve employee performance by focusing on employee engagement.

The performance management process can be used by managers as a framework for guiding their efforts to increase employee engagement by focusing on major performance management activities like: setting goals; providing feedback, recognition and rewards; managing employee development; conducting appraisals; and creating an environment of trust and empowerment of employees. It is important that managers focus their efforts on the activities and behaviours that contribute the most to employee engagement (Mone, Eisinger, Guggenheim, Price & Stine, 2011). This is vital as it has been found that poor management is the root cause of employee disengagement (Frank, Finnegan & Taylor, 2004).

In order to compete, organisations must not only attract and retain top talent but must fully engage their employees by inspiring and enabling them to apply their full capabilities to their work (Bakker, Albrecht & Leiter, 2011). This means that the hearts and minds of employees must be captured (Lockwood, 2007). Employee engagement has a positive impact on employee retention, turnover, quality, absenteeism, shrinkage, productivity, loyalty, customer satisfaction, profitability, and stakeholder value. These are important business outcomes and organisations are thus increasingly trying to enhance their employee engagement levels in order to gain a competitive advantage in the market (Lockwood, 2007).Employee engagement is a two-way relationship between the employer and employee. Employees who believe that their needs are met and receive high levels of organisational support are likely to reciprocate with higher levels of engagement and hence performance (Saks, 2006). As mentioned by Markos and Sridevi (2010), employee engagement is the outcome of personal attributes i.e. knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes; organisational context i.e. leadership, physical and social

setting; and human resource practices that affect the person, process and context components of performance.

1.3 Problem statement

1.3.1 Main problem

The problem that this research will address is to identify what promotes employee engagement in a large bureaucratic organisation and which of these factors have the greatest impact on employee engagement. Not much is known about these factors in South African banks as the focus has largely been on performance management rather than on employee engagement and the facilitation of performance. The results will highlight the activities and behaviours that contribute most to employee engagement and on which managers should focus their efforts in their quest for engaged workers.

1.4 Significance of the study

Given the current economic challenges that organisations face, it is more important than ever for management to explore new ways of improving employee performance in order to put their organisation ahead of competitors (Medlin & Green, 2009). This study will provide guidance to organisations on how they can improve their performance and achieve their strategic goals and objectives by managing and improving the performance of their employees through engagement. Managers must understand that an organisation's competitive advantage lies in its people, and the organisation can only perform if its people perform (Gruman & Saks, 2011).

Today's global business environment is characterised by unprecedented change with many organisations competing for talented individuals, making engagement increasingly important (Lockwood, 2007). Managers must pay more attention to the employees' side of the organisaton and try to determine their needs and wants, as efficiency and

productivity can only be achieved through employee ability and commitment. Managers must therefore keep their employees engaged. By focusing on employee engagement organisations can create a more efficient and productive workforce (Markos & Sridevi, 2010).

Employee engagement has emerged as one of the biggest challenges facing organisations this decade (Frank, Finnegan & Taylor, 2004). Many global surveys have highlighted significant disengagement among employees, with many employees being skeptical of organisational initiatives and communication, and more likely to indulge in contagious negativity (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). According to the Gallup Organisation, only 13% of employees around the world are engaged, and managers account for about 70% of the variance in employee engagement (Royal & Sorenson, 2015). These numbers have barely changed over the last 12 years. This means that the majority of employees all over the world are not developing and contributing at work, with organisations experiencing wide fluctuations in performance. This problem can be solved by organisations raising employee engagement levels. Powerful links have been discovered between employee engagement and the achievement of vital business outcomes. An engaged workforce can create the difference between an organisation that succeeds and one that struggles. An engaged employee is passionate, creative, entrepreneurial, enthusiastic, and emotionally attached to the mission and purpose of their work. A disengaged employee is indifferent towards their job and often hate their work, manager and organisation. Disengaged employees can destroy organisations (Beck & Harter, 2015).

1.5 Delimitations of the study

The research will be delimited in the following respects:

- The research will take place in the Collections Department of a South African bank. The relevant department is located in Johannesburg, Gauteng.

1.6 Definition of terms

Definitions will be provided for the following terms:

- **Performance Management** - A process which affects organisational success by having managers and employees work together to set expectations, review results and reward performance (Grobler, Warnich, Carrell, Elbert & Hatfield, 2011).

- **Employee Engagement** - A worker who is fully involved in and enthusiastic about his or her work (Medlin & Green, 2009).

- **Factors** - For the purpose of this research, a factor is a circumstance, fact, or influence that contributes to a result or outcome.

- **Effective** - When success in producing a desired or intended result is achieved.

1.7 Assumptions

Below is a list of assumptions that could influence the outcome of the research:

- **Assumption 1**: The respondents have an understanding of the performance management process and the concept of employee engagement so that they can respond appropriately to the questions posed to them.

- **Assumption 2**: The respondents will be willing to share information and will provide honest answers. If this assumption is not met, it will degrade the value of the answers.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Employee engagement has been identified as a key determinant of performance and an enhancer of the performance management process. The sections that follow highlight the importance of employee engagement for organisational success and competitiveness, and the factors and activities that promote employee engagement. The definition of employee engagement has not been agreed upon in the literature. A number of definitions are mentioned below, and for the purpose of this research, the researcher has come up with a single definition that encompasses the main elements of employee engagement. Organisations must ensure that their performance management processes are geared towards achieving higher levels of engagement and that they have good leaders to drive the process and enhance engagement.

2.2 Employee Engagement

2.2.1 The importance and benefits of employee engagement

Employee engagement has received a lot of attention in recent years and has been described as vital to an organisation's success and competitiveness. The driving force behind the interest in engagement is its positive consequences for organisations. Consensus has been reached that there is a link between employee engagement and organisational results. Engagement leads to both individual outcomes i.e. the quality of employees' work and their experiences of doing that work, and organisational outcomes i.e. growth and productivity (Saks, 2006). Engagement is also seen as an important driver of employee attitudes, behaviour and performance, with benefits accruing to the organisation, like improved organisational and financial performance, productivity, retention and greater shareholder return (Gruman & Saks, 2011). Organisations are increasingly trying to run leaner operations, and find they operate in an environment of

rapid changes with increasing global competition. For these reasons, it is vital for organisations to tap into the discretionary effort provided by engaged employees in order to ensure success in the marketplace (Masson, Royal, Agnew & Fine, 2008).

2.2.2 Employee engagement- moving towards a definition

Debate exists around the definition of employee engagement, as no single definition of the concept is available. In order to advance our understanding of employee engagement consensus on a definition must be reached. Although numerous definitions exist, they all agree that employee engagement has an organisational purpose, is necessary and desirable, leads to performance outcomes, and involves both psychological and behavioural aspects (Gruman & Saks).

- Khan (1990, p. 694), defines engagement as “the harnessing of organisational members’ selves to their work role by which they employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performance”.
- Employee engagement is also described as “having a deep and broad connection with the company that results in the willingness to go above and beyond what is expected to help the company succeed” (Mone *et al.,* 2011, p. 206).
- An engaged employee has been defined as “someone who feels involved, committed, passionate, and empowered and demonstrates those feelings in work behaviour” (Mone *et al.,* 2011, p. 206).
- Schaufeli *et al.* (2002, p. 74), define employee engagement as “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption”.
- According to Crim & Seijts (2009), an engaged employee is someone who is fully involved in and enthusiastic about their work. They care about the organisation’s future and are willing to invest discretionary effort and exceed the call of duty in order for the organisation to succeed. They connect emotionally to the organisation and are cognitively vigilant.

- Macey and Schneider (2008), describe engagement as a multidimensional construct consisting of state, trait and behavioural forms, and propose that work attributes i.e. variety, challenge and autonomy, as well as personal characteristics and leadership all influence engagement.
- According to Masson *et al.* (2008), employee engagement encompasses affective commitment i.e. pride in an organisation, continuance commitment i.e. the intention to stay with an organisation, and discretionary effort i.e. feeling inspired and willing to go the extra mile.
- Medlin and Green (2009, p. 945), offer the following definitions for employee engagement, “an innate human desire to contribute something of value in the workplace” and “a heightened emotional connection that an employee feels for his or her organisation, that influences him or her to exert greater discretionary effort to his or her work”.
- Roberts and Davenport (2002), define engagement as an employee’s enthusiasm and involvement in their job and go on to say that engaged employees identify personally with their work and are motivated by the work itself.
- Mani (2011), defines employee engagement as the level of involvement that an employee has with their work and the extent to which they believe in what they are doing. An employee is engaged when they feel positive emotions towards their work, find their work meaningful, their workload manageable, and have hope about their future in the organisation.

2.2.3 A working definition of employee engagement

Based on the literature, and for the purpose of this research, the working definition of an engaged employee is: *somebody who is fully involved in and enthusiastic about their work, personally identifies with their work and has deep psychological and emotional connections with the organisation. Engaged employees feel inspired, energised, motivated, committed and empowered to invest discretionary effort and go beyond the call of duty in order for the organisation to succeed.*

2.2.4 The drivers of employee engagement

Employee engagement is a complex concept that is influenced by many factors such as workplace culture, communication, leadership and the organisation's reputation. Great leadership leads to increased employee engagement and better organisational performance (Mani, 2011). Employees become engaged when they are able to use their skills and abilities in their jobs, when they experience their work as challenging and stimulating, and when their work provides feelings of personal accomplishment (Roberts & Davenport, 2002). Organisational characteristics also influence employee engagement. Such characteristics include a reputation for integrity, good internal communication, and a culture of innovation (Lockwood, 2007).

According to Rothmann and Rothmann (2010), employee engagement is made up of three main components: a physical or behavioural component which involves being physically involved in a task and displaying positivity and vigour; a cognitive component which involves being alert, absorbed, involved and aware of one's mission and role, and concerns employees' beliefs about the organisation, the leaders and the working environment; and an emotional component which involves being connected to one's work and colleagues, and showing dedication and commitment, and concerns employees' feelings about the organisation, the leaders and their colleagues (Khan, 1990). Engagement is not just an attitude. It is the extent to which employees are attentive and absorbed in the performance of their roles, and involves the use of emotions, behaviours and cognitions (Saks, 2006).

In an article written by Mani (2011), it is suggested that employee engagement is made up of three basic aspects: the employees with their unique psychological makeups and experiences; the employers with their abilities to create the right conditions for engagement; and lastly, the interactions between employees at various levels. It is therefore largely the responsibility of the organisation to create an environment and a culture that is conducive to the relationship between employees and employers, and a win-win situation for all.

According to Khan (1990), employees can use different degrees of their selves, physically, cognitively and emotionally, as they perform their work. Khan (1990), identified three psychological conditions that have an impact on an employee's level of engagement, namely psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability.

Psychological meaningfulness is associated with an incentive to engage and refers to "a feeling that one is receiving a return on investment of one's self" (Khan, 1990, p. 703). Work role fit and positive relations with colleagues contribute to psychological meaningfulness (Khan, 1990). When employees feel like they are treated with respect and dignity, and valued for their contributions, they will experience greater psychological meaningfulness (Rothmann & Rothmann, 2010).

Psychological safety has to do with employees feeling able to express themselves and voice their opinions without the fear of negative consequences. When employees experience feelings of psychological safety they are more willing to invest themselves at work (Khan, 1990). Psychological safety is enhanced when employees experience supportive and trusting relations with managers and co-workers. Psychological safety is associated with reliable, predictable work environments where the boundaries of acceptable behaviour are clear (Gruman & Saks, 2011).

Psychological availability refers to the sense of having the necessary physical, emotional and psychological resources to be able to engage at a particular time. Factors that have an impact on psychological availability include employees' resources and work role insecurities, as well as their readiness and confidence to engage, given that they are also engaged in other life activities (Rothmann & Rothmann, 2010).

Bakker *et al.* (2008), view job and personal resources as important factors associated with employee engagement. Job resources refer to the physical, social and organisational aspects of the job. Examples include autonomy, social support, feedback on performance and skill variety. Personal resources or psychological capital (PsyCap) also enhance levels of engagement. Examples of personal resources include self-efficacy, self-esteem, hope, resilience and optimism (Bakker, Albrecht & Leiter, 2011).

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model is a more recent approach to increasing employee engagement and divides the work environment into demands and resources. High job demands drain employees' mental and physical resources and can result in burnout, reduced energy levels and health problems. Job resources are motivational and result in positive attitudes and behaviours, employee well-being and enhanced engagement (Gruman & Saks, 2011). When job demands are high, job and personal resources have a positive impact on engagement. Engaged employees are also able to create their own resources which further fosters engagement and improves performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008).

The social exchange theory (SET) is useful for explaining employee engagement. According to the theory, obligations are generated through a number of interactions between parties who are dependent on one another. As long as each party abides by the rules of exchange, the relationship will evolve into trusting, loyal and mutual commitments (Saks, 2006). When an organisation provides employees with physical, cognitive and emotional resources, employees repay the organisation with higher levels of engagement (Khan, 1990). Engagement is thus a two-way relationship between the employer and employee (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). The degree to which employees engage themselves will depend on the resources they receive from the organisation (Saks, 2006).

Roberts and Davenport (2002), identify the following three categories as key drivers of employee engagement: career development, identification with the organisation, and a rewarding work environment. The career development drivers focus on the opportunities that employees have to learn and enhance their careers. When employees have positive feelings about their long term career prospects, they will be more engaged. The drivers for identification with the organisation include employees feeling a sense of ownership in the success of the organisation, personally identifying with and taking ownership of the organisation's goals, being involved in decisions that affect their work, and having a sense of pride in the quality of their work. The drivers for a rewarding work environment include the organisation providing a fun and positive work environment, employees receiving recognition for their contributions, and having decision making authority to do their job (Roberts & Davenport, 2002).

Konrad (2006), suggests that high-involvement work practices can result in positive beliefs and attitudes among employees which are related to engagement, and can generate discretionary behaviours that lead to enhanced performance. Konrad (2006), identifies four principles for developing a high-involvement work system that will have a positive impact on employee engagement: power, information, knowledge and rewards. The first principle refers to the power that employees have to voice their ideas and make decisions that can improve their performance and the quality of their working lives. Providing timely and relevant information to employees helps them to understand what is going on in the business and they can then adjust their efforts accordingly. The more transparent managers are the more employees are able to see the link between their actions and the performance of the organisation. This enhances the cognitive aspect of employee engagement. The use of training and development can build the knowledge, skills and abilities of employees and this will empower them to make and implement decisions more effectively. Engaged employees use their power, information and knowledge for the benefit of the organisation, and must be rewarded for their extra efforts (Konrad, 2006).

In order to compete effectively, organisations must not only hire top talent, they must also inspire and enable their employees to give their best and apply their full capabilities at work. Employees who are psychologically connected to their work, who are willing and able to fully invest themselves in their roles, and who are proactive, energetic, dedicated and committed to high standards of performance, are needed by organisations (Bakker, Albrecht & Leiter, 2011).

In the Pretoria Portland Cement (PPC): Engineering HR case study, Gordon-Brown and Thomas (2004, p. 5) identify four types of people that exist in every organisation:

- *Champions (engaged employees)* – people who are willing and able to give their best to support organisational goals, and who act as ambassadors for the organisation's brand
- *Bystanders* – people who understand the organisation's goals but lack the emotional drive to support them
- *Loose cannons* – people who are highly motivated to support the organisation's goals, but lack a clear understanding of what the goals are and how to achieve them
- *Weak links (disengaged employees)* – people who are waiting to be engaged by the organisation and its goals and/or have already switched off from them

It is in every organisation's interest to have as many 'champions' as possible. In a survey conducted by PPC, they found that only 29% of their employees were classified as 'champions'. The following reasons were given in the case study for the low percentage of 'champions': poor communication and ineffective two-way communication, patchy management effectiveness, the failure of managers to bring out the best in their people, and employees not having a clear understanding of the organisation's aims and goals. It was found that the employees at PPC wanted the following: better teamwork, more people-oriented management, opportunities to show what they could do, and a better chance of promotion. The case highlights that the type of manager, their behaviour and the environment they create can either foster or hinder employee engagement. According to the case study, employees will be more engaged if they know what they

must do, are provided with the necessary tools, and then rewarded for good performance. This helps to create and maintain an inspiring climate. It is important for the organisation's goals to be communicated, for feedback to be provided on what the organisation is doing and how it is performing, and for managers to recognise employees for work well done. PPC also considered alignment to be an important issue and believed that employees are more motivated if they know how what they do contributes to the organisation's success. PPC wanted all employees to be engaged and to go to work with a sense of purpose, anticipation and excitement, and leave work with a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment.

Creating the right type of environment is crucial for employee engagement. Thomas (2009), has developed seven guidelines for building a culture that supports high levels of engagement. These are:

- Begin with a meaningful purpose
- Build intrinsic motivation and engagement into management training and executive coaching
- Focus conversations on meaningfulness, choice, competence and progress
- Engage those employees in the middle ranges who are not yet fully engaged
- Measure intrinsic reward levels
- Provide missing building blocks for intrinsic rewards that you need to bolster
- Adopt a change and implementation process that is itself engaging

Leaders should make employee engagement one of their top priorities. It is important that leaders know the level of engagement in their organisations and implement behavioural strategies that will result in full engagement. This is important as engagement drives results. The efforts of leaders to achieve full engagement should be ongoing. Employee engagement is not easy to achieve and if leaders do not sustain it, it can weaken with ease. Organisations that do a good job at engaging their employees tend to perform better than their competition. Employee engagement can set great organisations apart from good ones. Employee engagement also has an impact on the mindset of people. Engaged employees believe that they can make a difference and

have a positive impact on their organisation. Leaders have the vital job of creating an environment that allows employees to unleash their full potential, and a culture in which employees want to perform (Crim & Seijts, 2006).

Crim and Seijts (2006), came up with the Ten C's of employee engagement that leaders can use to engage the heads, hearts and hands of all employees. The Ten C's and their descriptors are mentioned in Table 1 below.

Table 1: The Ten C's of employee engagement (Seijts & Crim, 2006)

	The Ten C's	Description
1.	Connect	Leaders must show that they care for and value employees. Employee engagement is a direct result of how employees feel about their relationship with their leader. It is thus important for leaders to 'walk their talk'. Good leaders will be rewarded with engagement.
2.	Career	Leaders should provide challenging and meaningful work, enriched with duties and responsibilities, and opportunities for career advancement. This can be achieved through job rotation, stretch goals, holding employees accountable for their progress, instilling confidence in employees and providing the necessary knowledge and tools.
3.	Clarity	Leaders must constantly communicate a clear vision. Employees must understand the organisation's vision and goals, as well as why the goals are important and how they can be achieved.
4.	Convey	Leaders must be clear about what they expect from employees and provide regular feedback about their performance.
5.	Congratulate	Leaders must provide praise and recognition more often.
6.	Contribute	Leaders must ensure that employees feel that they are contributing to the organisation's success in a meaningful way.

7.	Control	Leaders must create opportunities for employees to exercise control over the flow and pace of their jobs. This can be achieved by involving employees in decision making and goal setting, allowing them to voice their opinions, and valuing their contributions.
8.	Collaborate	Leaders must build great teams and create an environment that nurtures trust and collaboration. It is important for employees to feel that their colleagues care.
9.	Credibility	Leaders must maintain the company's reputation and show high ethical standards.
10.	Confidence	Leaders must create confidence in the organisation by demonstrating high ethical and performance standards.

2.2.5 The characteristics of engaged employees

It has been found that engaged workers work harder, are more productive and committed, and more likely to produce the results that organisations value. They are less likely to leave the organisation, reducing the costs and disruption of turnover (Roberts & Davenport, 2002). Turnover is associated with high labour costs, a loss of skills, low morale and reduced customer satisfaction (Frank, Finnegan & Taylor, 2004).

Engaged employees put more effort into their work because they identify with it (Rothmann & Rothmann, 2010). They invest their physical, cognitive and emotional energies into their work, and this leads to superior performance as they work with more intensity for longer periods of time, they are more attentive and more focused on their responsibilities (Rich, Lepine & Crawford, 2010).

Employees who experience emotional engagement are likely to have solid emotional ties with their managers, feel that their opinions are heard, and believe that their managers are interested in their development. Employees who experience cognitive engagement understand their purpose and what is expected of them, take advantage of opportunities to excel and grow, and seek information on how they can improve their performance (Luthans & Peterson, 2001). The behavioural component of employee engagement provides value for the organisation as it is made up of the discretionary effort that engaged employees contribute to their work, by working extra time and using more of their brainpower and energy to complete tasks (Konrad, 2006).

Robinson *et al* (2004), highlights the characteristics of an engaged employee in the figure below. This is a well-respected and often sighted model of employee engagement.

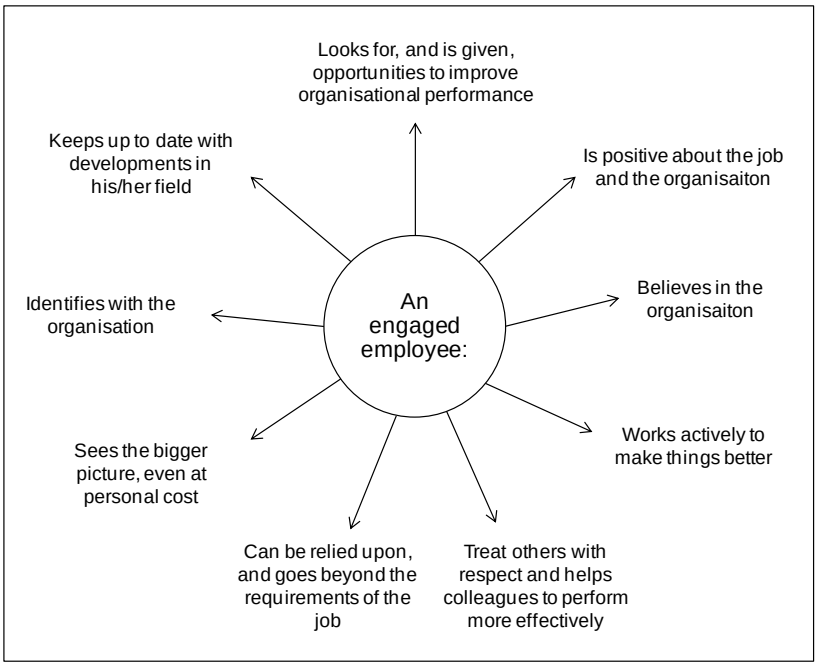

Figure 1: Characteristics of an engaged employee

2.2.6 Employee engagement and performance management

The performance management process can be used by managers as a framework for guiding their efforts to increase employee engagement as certain performance management practices can result in greater levels of engagement. Good leaders are vital to the success of performance management and play an important role in fostering employee engagement. It has been found that the quality of the exchange relationships between leaders and their subordinates are positively related to employees' feelings of satisfaction with their appraisals and their motivation to improve (Gruman & Saks, 2011). If an employee receives sufficient support, inspiration and coaching from their leaders, they are likely to find their work more challenging, involving and satisfying and will become more engaged in their tasks (Bakker, Albrecht & Leiter, 2011). It is important for performance management processes to facilitate enhanced performance by creating the conditions for employee engagement, and managing the context in which performance occurs (Gruman & Saks, 2011). The performance management process can be broken down into five major activities: setting goals; providing ongoing feedback, recognition and rewards; coaching and managing employee development; conducting appraisals; and creating an environment of trust and empowerment of employees (Mone *et al.,* 2011). Each of these will now be discussed in more detail highlighting how managers can use each of the activities to enhance employee engagement.

Setting performance and development goals

This is an important step in the performance management process as it outlines what employees must accomplish and stimulates the feeling of engagement. It also ensures that the necessary resources are recognised and made available, and enhances employees' beliefs that they will be successful in achieving their goals (Medlin & Green, 2009). An employee's needs, goals and desires must be taken into account during the goal setting process (Gruman & Saks, 2011). Mone *et al.* (2011), suggest that when managers and employees set goals together, through the process of negotiation, employees become more engaged as they are personally invested in achieving the goals and this has a positive impact on psychological meaningfulness. According to Gruman

and Saks (2011), allowing employees to participate in goal setting is likely to result in greater engagement than expecting employees to achieve imposed goals that do not take their values and interests into account. Goals that are in line with an employee's values and interests produce greater well-being for the employee and hence enhanced engagement. Stretch goals have the potential to enhance employee engagement as they provide a sense of challenge and can increase employee motivation. However, the stretch must not be so big as to result in burnout. The alignment of individual and organisational goals and the cascading of goals throughout the organisation are important for organisational success. It has been found that employees are more engaged when they understand how their work supports the achievement of the organisation's goals and strategy. This highlights the importance of communication as a key driver of engagement. In order to enhance engagement, managers must ensure that they communicate with their employees about the organisation's strategy, the importance of their work, and how it aligns with the organisation's greater purpose (Mone *et al.,* 2011).

Providing ongoing feedback, recognition and rewards

Managers are able to drive employee engagement by providing effective, timely, ongoing and honest feedback. Receiving feedback is considered a positive and motivating experience that allows employees to identify their strengths and development areas. By providing recognition managers are able to direct and improve the performance of their employees. Recognition and reward are vital to employee engagement and lead to greater employee satisfaction, motivation and morale. The form of recognition and reward that is used should be tailored to meet the unique needs of the individual and must support the psychological conditions that create engagement (Mone *et al.,* 2011). Managers must be aware that if they provide feedback in the form of destructive criticism it can have a debilitating effect on engagement and performance (Gruman & Saks, 2011).

Coaching and managing employee development

Gruman and Saks (2011), refer to this step as engagement facilitation with the key elements being job design, leadership, coaching, supervisor support, and training. Employees should be allowed to have a say in the design of their work, as having some control over their work helps employees feel safer. When work is challenging, well defined, varied, creative and autonomous, employees experience more psychological meaningfulness. It has been found that job enrichment is also positively related to meaningfulness and thus enhanced engagement (Gruman & Saks, 2011). In order to enhance employee engagement, managers must provide opportunities for learning, training and skills development. Career-planning conversations are important and managers must support career development efforts by providing motivational support and the resources that employees need to accomplish their development goals. Employees will be more engaged when they are satisfied with the opportunities available to them for career progression and promotion. Managers should provide ongoing coaching to help employees adapt, improve their performance and develop their potential (Mone *et al.,* 2011). While coaching is a source of support from an employee's supervisor, social support from fellow colleagues is also essential for engagement. Interpersonal interactions result in psychological meaningfulness and safety when they are supportive and trusting. It is important for there to be a good fit between the employee's skills, needs and values and the job and organisation. When a good fit exists employees will derive more meaning from their work and will be more engaged due to their ability to express their values and beliefs. They are also more likely to perform their work with enthusiasm and energy (Rothmann & Rothmann, 2010).

Conducting appraisals

Appraising and evaluating employee performance is a key part of the performance management process. Managers should also assess an employee's engagement behaviour i.e. their persistence, proactivity, role expansion and adaptability displayed (Gruman & Saks, 2011). When employees perceive organisational processes to be fair and when good quality appraisal discussions are held, they will be more engaged (Mone *et al.,* 2011).

Creating an environment of trust and empowerment

When employees feel that they can trust their manager and are empowered to perform their jobs, they will be more engaged. Managers can build a climate of trust and empowerment by involving employees in decision making, not abusing their managerial powers, showing an interest and confidence in employees, and demonstrating integrity and openness. Managers can further drive engagement by ensuring that employees have the resources they require to perform their jobs, and by encouraging innovation and creativity to improve work processes and productivity (Mone *et al.,* 2011).

Each of the above steps contributes to employee engagement. If the performance management process is designed in a way that fosters employee engagement, performance will improve (Gruman & Saks, 2011).

2.3 Conclusion

Employee engagement is an important driver of employee attitudes, behaviour and performance, with numerous benefits accruing to the organisation. It is thus vital for organisations to tap into the discretionary effort provided by engaged employees in order to remain competitive and ensure their success in the marketplace. Highly engaged employees do not only focus their physical efforts on achieving their tasks but are also cognitively vigilant and emotionally connected to the tasks at hand. Table 2 below is a summary of the factors identified from the literature that affect employee engagement.

Table 2: Factors affecting employee engagement

Factors affecting employee engagement	Gruman & Saks (2011)	Mone *et al.* (2011)	Lockwood (2007)	Macey & Schneider (2008)	Saks (2006)	Khan (1990)	Luthans & Peterson (2001)	Roberts & Davenport (2002)	Crim & Seijts (2006)	Bakker & Demerouti (2008)	Bakker, Albrecht & Leiter (2011)	Konrad (2006)	Medlin & Green (2009)	Rothmann & Rothmann (2010)
Employees understand & identify with the organisation's vision & goals	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*				*	*
Challenging, meaningful work with opportunities for learning, development & career growth	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*		*
Work-role fit, with employees feeling that they contribute positively to the organisation	*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*		*			*
The ability to voice opinions & being involved in job design, goal setting, decision making	*	*	*			*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*
Organisational characteristics i.e. values, reputation & ethical standards		*	*			*		*	*		*			
Reward & recognition	*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*		*	*		
Employees feel valued & are treated fairly with respect & dignity	*	*	*	*	*	*			*					*
Good internal communication, information sharing & feedback	*	*	*	*			*	*	*	*	*	*		*
Availability of resources	*	*	*	*	*	*				*	*		*	*
Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*			*

Managers should focus on the activities and behaviours that contribute the most to employee engagement. The literature shows that the performance management process can enhance individual performance through greater employee engagement, as engaged workers work harder, are more productive and committed, and are more likely to produce the results that organisations value. Interviews were held to identify the key factors for enhancing employee engagement and to determine which of those factors are perceived to have the greatest impact on employee engagement. The results highlight the activities and behaviours that contribute most to employee engagement and on which managers should focus their efforts within the framework of the performance management process.

Research question: What are the factors that promote employee engagement in a South African bank, and which factors are perceived to have the greatest impact on employee engagement?

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research methodology/ paradigm

This research employed a qualitative approach to interrogate the factors and key activities that promote employee engagement. Qualitative research is particularly suited to research that is exploratory in nature (Creswell, 2009).

The aim of qualitative research is to describe and understand something in a particular context, and to not produce findings by way of statistical procedures or other types of quantification. Qualitative researchers look for illumination, understanding and extrapolation to like circumstances. Quantitative research aims to explain, predict and analyse through the use of experimental methods and the testing of hypothesis. Quantitative researchers look for causal relationships, prediction and the generalisation of findings (Golafshani, 2003). The qualitative method was considered more appropriate for this research as employee engagement is a complex phenomenon and a deeper understanding of it is required.

According to Golafshani (2003), qualitative research has the following characteristics:

- Data is usually obtained through detailed interviews and observations
- Qualitative research generates words, rather than numbers, as data for analysis
- An interpretative technique is usually used to conceptualise and analyse the data in order to arrive at outcomes

According to Bricki (2007), some criticisms of qualitative research include:

- The samples are small and not necessarily representative of the greater population. It is therefore difficult to know how far the results can be generalised
- There is the risk that the findings may be biased by the researcher's own opinions, and the credibility of the research depends on the researcher's ability and effort

3.2 Research design

Due to the exploratory nature of the topic, the methodological approach that was used was in-depth structured interviews with identified respondents. This allowed the researcher to elicit views and opinions from the respondents. The researcher did not lead the discussions in any way as this would have corrupted the data and would have had a negative impact on the validity and reliability of the study.

The advantages of interviews are that the respondents are able to describe their answers and are not limited to a few alternatives. It reduces the number of ‘no answers’ as the researcher can probe for answers. If the respondents don’t understand something, the researcher can provide clarification. An interview also allows researchers to observe their respondents while asking questions. An interview provides greater flexibility as the researcher can manage and tweak the questions accordingly (Babbie, 2010).

The skill of the interviewer is crucial as they receive a lot of information during the interview and must be able to record it as accurately as possible, and gain the information relevant to the research problem (Bricki, 2007).

3.3 Population and sample

3.3.1 Population

The population for this research includes all the managers working for the South African bank in which the research was conducted.

There were no limitations as to gender, race and age. However, the respondents had to be on a managerial level within the bank with staff reporting to them. They also had to have worked for the bank for at least one year.

3.3.2 Sample and sampling method

The purpose of sampling is so that on the basis of a few observations, conclusions can be drawn about the properties of the whole population (Babbie, 2010). A purposeful sample of twelve respondents, who work in the Collections Department of the bank, was drawn from the population. “Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling in which the units to be observed are selected on the basis of the researcher’s judgment about which ones will be the most useful or representative” (Babbie, 2010, p. 193). Twelve possible respondents were identified and informed of the topical and meaningful nature of the study.

3.4 The research instrument

In-depth structured interviews were conducted, and a formal protocol was developed to introduce the research to the respondents. They were provided with a brief background to the topic, a definition of the term ‘employee engagement’ and the objectives of the research. A sample of the research instrument and the standard letter that was given to each of the respondents is included in Appendix A.

A number of non-leading, open-ended questions were posed to the respondents. The questions were based on the information obtained in the literature review, and the research question was answered during the interview process. The respondents were asked to answer the questions to the best of their ability. The personal details of the respondents are anonymous and confidential with only the researcher having access to this information.

3.5 Procedure for data collection

The researcher contacted the potential respondents and invited them to participate in the interview. At that time, the researcher informed the potential respondents of the purpose of the study, the topic, the research process and the expected duration of the interview. The potential respondents were also told that if they chose to participate in the interview their responses would remain anonymous and confidential. Those who agreed to be interviewed were then provided with a standard letter outlining the research and its objectives. The letter also thanked the respondents for their willingness to participate in the study and confirmed that the interview would take place on the date and time convenient for them. Refer to Appendix A for a copy of the letter.

For convenience, the interviews took place at the offices of the respondents. During the interviews, the researcher made every effort not to lead the respondents in their responses, and facilitated open discussions around the research questions. Handwritten notes were taken during the interviews. Immediately after the interviews, the notes were reviewed and any gaps were filled in.

3.6 Data analysis and interpretation

The data that was gathered during the interviews was analysed and interpreted by way of thematic content analysis. Thematic content analysis is used to identify, analyse and report patterns or themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The information was analysed immediately after each interview, and after all the interviews had been concluded, the data was combined into a single document. The key themes and factors that emerged from the interviews were identified, and tabulated, and unusual responses were noted. Each theme was colour coded and given a number in order to identify similar themes. The data that was collected during the interviews was clustered under the identified themes. Through this process, common themes and factors were highlighted, which helped the researcher to interpret the results and develop a deeper understanding of the concept of employee engagement.

3.7 Limitations of the study

The limitations for this particular study include:

- Only a limited number of respondents were interviewed, and because of the small sample size the findings may not be transferable to the greater population
- The research relied on the respondents' honesty
- The research was only conducted in a single department of a particular South African bank

3.8 Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability are key issues in research as they help to ensure that the findings are credible and trustworthy. This is especially important in qualitative research where the researcher's subjectivity can easily cloud the interpretation of the data (Brink, 1993). Both qualitative and quantitative researchers need to show that their studies are credible. The credibility of qualitative research is dependent on the ability and effort of the researcher. Validity and reliability are not viewed separately in qualitative research. Instead, words that encompass both terms like credibility, transferability and trustworthiness are used. As a validity procedure, the researcher made use of triangulation by searching for convergence among multiple sources of information i.e. the literature and interviews to form themes (Golafshani, 2003).

3.8.1 External validity

External validity refers to 'the generalisability of findings to the real world' (Babbie, 2010, p. 242). The research is made up of responses from a limited number of respondents who are not randomly selected, it is therefore not possible to generalise the findings, but the findings may be of value and applicable to other departments in the organisation, as well as to other banks and bureaucratic organisations in South Africa.

3.8.2 Internal validity

Internal validity refers to the possibility that the results may not adequately cover the topic under study (Babbie, 2010, p. 240). The researcher was objective in the collection and analysis of the data. The interviews were conducted in a way that did not lead the respondents to answer in a specific way.

3.8.3 Reliability

‘Reliability is a matter of whether a particular technique, applied repeatedly to the same object, yields the same result each time’ (Babbie, 2010, p. 150). The most important test for any qualitative study is its quality. A good quality qualitative study serves the purpose of explaining and generating an understanding of a confusing concept. The terms credibility, neutrality or confirmability, consistency or dependability and applicability or transferability are vital criteria for quality (Golafshani, 2003). To ensure trustworthiness and a good quality study, all the interviews were conducted in person by the researcher and the same interview structure and questions were used for each respondent. The data was collected and analysed concurrently. All biases were eliminated and the researcher was truthful in her findings.

CHAPTER 4. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the key factors and themes which were highlighted during the in-depth structured interviews. A research question was derived from the literature review against which the research was conducted. The researcher sought to identify the factors that promote employee engagement in a South African bank, and discover which factors are perceived to have the greatest impact on employee engagement.

4.2 Demographic profile of respondents

A total of twelve interviews were conducted. There were no restrictions regarding gender, age and race. The only requirement was that the respondent had to be on a managerial level within the bank, with a team of people reporting to them, and had to have worked in the bank for at least one year. Of the twelve respondents that were identified, all were willing to be interviewed. The interviews were conducted following an interview appointment schedule which is provided in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Schedule of interviews conducted

Respondent	Date	Time
R1	16/11/2015	10:00
R2	17/11/2015	09:30
R3	19/11/2015	13:00
R4	23/11/2015	13:00
R5	27/11/2015	14:00
R6	30/11/2015	11:00
R7	04/12/2015	14:30
R8	07/12/2015	16:00
R9	08/12/2015	13:30
R10	09/12/2015	14:00
R11	10/12/2015	10:30
R12	11/12/2015	15:00

All the interviews were held at the respondents' offices using the research instrument. A sample of the interview outline is included in Appendix A. Before starting the interviews, the respondents were informed that the researcher would be taking notes while they spoke, and they confirmed their preference regarding anonymity. The interviews were not recorded, only hand written notes were taken. The interview notes are not available to the reader, and will only be made available upon special request. Table 4 below contains the demographic profiles of the twelve respondents. It is noted that eight out of the twelve respondents fall in the 31- 35 age category, and the respondents are mainly female. This is representative of the Collections Department of the bank.

Table 4: Demographic profiles of the twelve respondents

Respondent	Title	No. of years in current organisation	Age range	Gender	Ethnic group
R1	Manager: Legal Registrations	8	31- 35	Female	Black
R2	Manager: Write-offs	5	41- 45	Female	Indian
R3	Manager: Project Support Legal	8	31- 35	Female	Black
R4	Operational Excellence Portfolio Manager	16	31- 35	Female	White
R5	Manager: Home Loans Customer Complaints Support	4	31- 35	Female	White
R6	Manager: Home Loans & Private Bank Deceased Estates	12	31-35	Female	Coloured
R7	Manager: Legal, SIE, PIP, Deceased & Insolvency Registrations	23	41- 45	Male	White
R8	Manager: High Risk & Aged Book	16	46- 50	Female	Coloured
R9	Manager: Phase 1 Litigation	15	31- 35	Female	Indian
R10	Manager: Private Bank & Retail Wealth Recoveries	3	31- 35	Female	Coloured
R11	Legal Analyst	1	31- 35	Female	Black
R12	Quality Specialist Manager	4	36- 40	Male	Black

4.3 Results pertaining to the factors that promote employee engagement in a South African bank

4.3.1 An overview of the twelve respondents' understanding of the term 'employee engagement'

Each respondent was provided with a definition of the term 'employee engagement' in order to ensure that each respondent understood the term in the same way. The respondents were asked to keep the definition in mind when answering the interview questions. Below is an overview of the twelve respondents' understanding of the term 'employee engagement'. The responses reveal that the respondents have a good understanding of employee engagement.

> *Respondent 1*- Respondent 1 believes that employee engagement is a two-way concept. Employees must take responsibility for their own engagement, but it is also up to the leader to understand what the employee is going through, their interests, aspirations, and where they are falling short, so that they can support and coach the employee accordingly. She feels that engaged employees understand the organisation's vision and goals and feel like their managers are interested in them. For her, two-way communication is vital for successful employee engagement. Role-fit is also important. Employees will not be engaged if they have no interest and are bored in their jobs. Respondent 1 believes that engaged employees enjoy their jobs and enjoy being at work. They constantly want to upskill themselves and put effort into becoming experts in their fields. They willingly go beyond the call of duty and like to participate in team activities.
>
> *Respondent 2*- Respondent 2 believes that employee engagement has to do with the way core responsibilities are fulfilled, and the interaction and connection that employees have with their work. She believes that engaged employees are disciplined and perform beyond the required standards. They have good work ethics and their behaviour is exemplary. Engaged employees take accountability

for their work. They don't need to be micro-managed, and are able to work independently. They show commitment, are self-motivated and take initiative.

Respondent 3- Respondent 3 believes that engaged employees do more than what's expected of them, they willingly go the extra mile and regularly come up with new and better ways of doing things. She believes that employee engagement is about being a team player and having a good relationship with colleagues. According to respondent 3, an engaged employee is focused and understands their purpose in the organisation. An engaged employee is also goal-oriented, always willing to learn new things, and wants to make a difference in their world of work. For respondent 3, engaged employees always want to assist and they care about their fellow colleagues. They act in line with the organisation's values, and display ethical behaviour like respect and honesty. Engaged employees tend not to shy away from challenges. If something needs to be done, you can count on them. They are dependable and responsible.

Respondent 4- For respondent 4, employee engagement is about buying into change and actively participating in change and other day-to-day activities that employees need to perform in order to deliver output. It's also about actively participating in things outside ones core work, such as meetings and training. Employee engagement is about employees being able to give their input into decisions that affect them without the fear of being victimised, and should be involved in decisions regarding their deliverables. Engaged employees do not just sit and wait for instructions, they take responsibility, show an interest and become actively involved. Respondent 4 believes that if employees are disengaged it will show in their output. Engaged employees tend to perform very well, are top achievers, achieve their targets and are very productive. They are team players and provide their teams with regular and constructive input. Their input is also valued by the team. They have high morale, are open for development, and accept constructive feedback. Engaged employees have a positive influence over fellow colleagues. They want to grow and become something in the organisation and take advantage of the opportunities available to them.

Respondent 5- According to respondent 5, engaged employees always strive to do their best, and help clients and fellow colleagues to the best of their ability. They perform well without having to be micro-managed. Engaged employees take ownership and responsibility for their work, and always go above and beyond expectations. They put the organisation first and do what's in the best interests of the organisation. Respondent 5 believes that engaged employees are happy to be at work, enjoy their jobs, work with enthusiasm and take initiative.

Respondent 6- For respondent 6, employee engagement is about relationships and building good working relationships with fellow colleagues. She believes that employee engagement is about having a sense of belonging and feeling a deep connection with the team and organisation. It is important for employees to feel like they are part of something and have a clear purpose for being there. For her, open, honest and constant communication is vital for employee engagement. Reward also plays an important role in engaging employees and can have an impact on the quality of their output and productivity, and serves as a motivating factor to boost employees. Respondent 6 believes that engaged employees serve as role models to others and live the values of the organisation. Their behaviour is good, they always act in the best interests of the organisation, and they operate at high standards usually exceeding requirements and exceling at everything they do. Engaged employees like to find better ways of doing things and leave things better than they were before. They are people you can depend on to deliver top results, they are trustworthy and do not need to be micro-managed.

Respondent 7- Respondent 7 believes that employee engagement is a two-way concept and is mostly about communication which must be regular, open and honest. Vital to employee engagement is the trust relationship that must exist between the employee and their manager, with employees feeling confident and at ease discussing things with their manager. According to respondent 7, engaged employees are ambitious, they ask questions and always want to learn and develop themselves. They take responsibility and accountability for their work and do not need to be micro-managed. They understand what their goals are, why

they are important and how to achieve them. They have a clear sense of how they want to grow in the organisation. Their behaviour is exemplary.

Respondent 8- Respondent 8 believes that employee engagement is about being involved in decision making and team activities. It's about employees understanding their environment, networking and building relationships with key people. Engaged employees are always willing to go the extra mile and do more than what is expected of them. They act in line with the values of the bank. Engaged employees have a clear understanding of their goals, what they're working towards and how to get there. Engaged employees have direction and drive and enjoy their jobs. Respondent 8 also acknowledges that employee engagement is a two-way concept.

Respondent 9- According to respondent 9, employee engagement is about interacting with and motivating employees. Respondent 9 believes that engaged employees always strive to do their best and meet deadlines timeously. They go the extra mile and get involved in things beyond their scope of work. They are eager to learn and to help fellow colleagues. Constant communication is vital for employee engagement. Engaged employees are proud of their achievements and are role models to fellow colleagues. They persist until they succeed.

Respondent 10- Respondent 10 believes that employee engagement is about communication i.e. managers having discussions and interacting with employees on a daily basis. Employee engagement is a two-way concept i.e. a give and take situation with both sides benefiting. If managers give their employees sufficient support, employees will perform well and deliver the results required by the organisation. According to respondent 10, engaged employees are more respectful and behave in line with the organisation's values. They willingly go the extra mile, they care about the quality of work they produce and enjoy new challenges at work.

Respondent 11- According to respondent 11, employee engagement is about employees being involved in every aspect of their working lives, knowing what is expected of them, sharing the same values as the organisation, identifying with the organisation's goals and knowing what needs to be done to achieve the goals. Respondent 11 also believes that high emotional intelligence levels are needed for employees to be fully engaged. They must be able to receive constructive feedback, be willing to learn from mistakes and take advice. Engaged employees are always willing to go the extra mile. They are happy employees who love their work and are eager to please. They have positive attitudes and motivate the people around them. Engaged employees tend to be well-liked in their teams and are dependable. Communication plays a key role in employee engagement.

Respondent 12- Respondent 12 believes that employee engagement is about employees understanding their contribution to the bigger picture, and how their contribution impacts the organisation in achieving its goals. When employees understand this, they will feel valued and have passion for what they are doing. Employees understand and identify with the vision and goals of the organisation and know what they must do to contribute to the goals. Employees will be more engaged when they understand their contribution to the organisation's objectives. Respondent 12 also believes that engaged employees always look for better ways to do things. Their attendance at work is good and their productivity levels are high. They have a positive attitude, always willing to get involved and participate in team activities and share their views.

4.3.2 The characteristics of engaged employees: A cross reference of the respondents' responses vs. the characteristics from the literature

Robinson *et al* (2004), identified nine characteristics that engaged employees are seen to have. Figure 1 (page 18) is a visual representation of the nine characteristics and is a well-respected and often sighted model of employee engagement. The characteristics are the outcomes of employee engagement, and are not the same as the factors that determine employee engagement. Table 5 below provides a list of the nine characteristics and a cross reference summary of the respondents' responses. Table 5 shows the number of times each characteristic was mentioned by the twelve respondents during the interviews. The characteristics are not listed in any order of priority, importance or preference.

Table 5: The characteristics of engaged employees: A cross reference of the respondents' responses vs. the characteristics from Robinson *et al* (2004)

The characteristics of engaged employees	Number of responses	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	R11	R12
Look for, & are given, opportunities to improve organisational performance	6	*		*	*		*	*		*			
Positive about the job and organisation	9	*		*	*	*	*		*		*	*	*
Believe in the organisation	2					*	*						
Work actively to make things better	4			*	*		*						*
Treat others with respect and help colleagues to perform more effectively	8	*		*	*	*	*		*	*			*
Can be relied upon and go beyond the requirements of the job	10	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
See the bigger picture, even at personal cost	1												*
Identify with the organisation and their work	7		*				*	*	*		*	*	*
Keep up-to-date with developments at work	1				*								

Table 6 highlights the response rate and shows the number of characteristics, identified from the literature, that were mentioned by each respondent.

Table 6: The response rate to the characteristics of engaged employees

Respondent	Number of the 9 characteristics mentioned
R1	4
R2	2
R3	5
R4	5
R5	4
R6	7
R7	3
R8	4
R9	3
R10	3
R11	3
R12	5

The response rate was rather low, with only four of the respondents mentioning more than half of the characteristics. Table 5 (page 40) shows that none of the characteristics were mentioned by all twelve of the respondents, while two of the characteristics were only mentioned by one respondent. The characteristic that was mentioned the most i.e. ten times, was that engaged employees can be relied upon and go beyond the requirements of the job.

4.3.3 The respondents' perceptions of the levels of engagement in the bank and in their teams

Questions one and two in the interview schedule asked the respondents about their perceptions of the levels of engagement in the bank in general, and in their teams. The respondents were provided with the following scale which was taken from the article written by Lockwood (2007).

Option	Description
1- Actively engaged	Work with passion and feel a deep connection with the bank
2- Not engaged	Put time but not passion into their work, 'checked out'
3- Actively disengaged	Act out their unhappiness and undermine what their engaged colleagues are trying to accomplish

The results are noted in Tables 7 and 8 below. Table 7 paints a gloomy picture about the levels of engagement in the bank, with the majority of the respondents indicating that the bank's employees are largely not engaged. Table 8 paints a different picture. It is interesting to note that the respondents have a more positive view about levels of engagement in their own teams than in the bank in general.

Table 7: The perceived extent to which employees in the bank are engaged

Respondents	Extent to which employees in the bank are engaged		
	Actively engaged	Not engaged	Actively disengaged
R1		*	
R2		*	
R3	*		
R4		*	
R5		*	
R6		*	
R7		*	
R8		*	
R9		*	
R10		*	
R11		*	
R12	*		

Table 7 shows that none of the respondents believe that the majority of the employees working in the bank are actively disengaged. Ten out of the twelve respondents believe that the majority of the employees working in the bank are not engaged, while two respondents believe that the majority of employees are actively engaged.

Table 8: The perceived extent to which the respondent's team is engaged

Respondents	Extent to which the respondent's team is engaged		
	Actively engaged	Not engaged	Actively disengaged
R1	*		
R2		*	
R3	*		
R4	*		
R5		*	
R6		*	
R7		*	
R8	*		
R9	*		
R10		*	
R11	*		
R12	*		

Table 8 shows that none of the respondents believe that their team is actively disengaged. Five out of the twelve respondents believe that their team is not engaged, while seven respondents believe that their team is actively engaged.

4.3.4 The factors that drive employee engagement: A cross reference of the respondents' responses vs. the factors from the literature

Based on the literature review, ten factors were identified as having a significant impact on employee engagement. Table 2 (page 23) provides a summary of the ten factors, and shows which of the authors made mention of the various factors in their articles.

Table 9 provides a cross reference summary of the respondents' responses versus the ten factors from the literature, and shows how many of the factors were mentioned by the respondents. The factors are not listed in any order of priority, importance or preference.

Table 9: The factors that drive employee engagement: A cross reference of the respondents' responses vs. the factors from the literature

Factors affecting employee engagement	No. of responses	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	R11	R12
Employees understand & identify with the organisation's vision & goals	5	*		*	*							*	*
Challenging, meaningful work with opportunities for learning, development & career growth	11	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Work-role fit, with employees feeling that they contribute positively to the organisation	4	*	*	*									*
The ability to voice opinions & being involved in job design, goal setting, decision making	8	*		*	*		*		*	*		*	*
Organisational characteristics i.e. values, reputation & ethical standards	1											*	
Reward & recognition	11	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*
Employees feel valued & are treated fairly with respect & dignity	8			*	*	*		*	*	*	*		*
Good internal communication, information sharing & feedback	11	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Availability of resources	2				*								*
Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration	12	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

Table 10 highlights the response rate and shows the number of factors, identified from the literature, that were mentioned by each respondent. The researcher used the logic that the more a factor was mentioned by the respondents during the interviews, the more important it is for promoting employee engagement.

Table 10: Number of factors from the literature mentioned by the respondents

Respondent	Number of the 10 factors mentioned
R1	7
R2	4
R3	7
R4	8
R5	5
R6	5
R7	5
R8	6
R9	6
R10	4
R11	7
R12	9

Table 11 below lists the factors in order of importance based on the number of times each factor was mentioned by the respondents.

Table 11: Factors listed in order of importance based on mentions in the interviews

Number	Responses	Factors affecting employee engagement
1	12	Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration
2	11	Challenging, meaningful work with opportunities for learning, development & career growth
2	11	Reward & recognition
2	11	Good internal communication, information sharing & feedback
3	8	The ability to voice opinions & being involved in job design, goal setting, decision making
3	8	Employees feel valued & are treated fairly with respect & dignity
4	5	Employees understand & identify with the organisation's vision & goals
5	4	Work-role fit, with employees feeling that they contribute positively to the organisation
6	2	Availability of resources
7	1	Organisational characteristics i.e. values, reputation & ethical standards

4.3.5 Factors identified by the respondents that hinder employee engagement in the bank

Question five in the interview outline asked the respondents what they thought hinders employee engagement in the bank. This is a key question as ten of the twelve respondents believe that the majority of the employees working in the bank are not engaged, and five of the twelve respondents believe that their team is not engaged. Table 12 below provides a bullet point summary of the factors mentioned by each respondent that they believe hinders employee engagement in the bank. In brackets, after each bullet point, the researcher has noted the factor from the literature that the hindrance links to.

The factor that came up most often i.e. 21 times was coaching, social support, good leadership and an environment that nurtures trust and collaboration. The respondents believe that poor leadership, in particular, plays the biggest role in hindering employee engagement in the bank. The next factor that came up most often i.e. five times was good internal communication, information sharing and feedback. The respondents believe that communication is done rather poorly in the bank and it hinders employee engagement. Reward and recognition; and employees having the ability to voice their opinions and be involved in job design, goal setting and decision making, are two factors that came up four times each. Employees feeling valued and being treated fairly with

respect and dignity; and employees understanding and identifying with the organisation's vision and goals, are two factors that came up three times each. Work-role fit; and challenging, meaningful work with opportunities for learning, development and career growth are two factors that only came up once each as hindrances of employee engagement in the bank.

Table 12: The factors that hinder employee engagement in the bank

Respondents	Factors that hinder employee engagement in the bank
R1	• **Managers do not show an interest in their employees** (Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration) • **Poor leadership** (Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration) • **Unfair processes** (Employees feel valued & are treated fairly with respect & dignity) • **Unclear expectations** (Employees understand & identify with the organisation's vision & goals)
R2	• **No role-fit** (Work-role fit, with employees feeling that they contribute positively to the organisation) • **Negative colleague influence** (Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration) • **No reward system in place** (Reward & recognition)
R3	• **Poor leadership** (Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration) • **No recognition & reward system in place** (Reward & recognition) • **Limited growth opportunities** (Challenging, meaningful work with opportunities for learning, development & career growth) • **Employee opinions not welcomed** (The ability to voice opinions & being involved in job design, goal setting, decision making) • **Negative environment not conducive to engagement** (Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration)

	• **Bad relationships with colleagues** (Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration)
R4	• **Low employee morale** (Employees feel valued & are treated fairly with respect & dignity) • **Lack of change management** (Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration) • **Unclear expectations** (Employees understand & identify with the organisation's vision & goals) • **Employee opinions not taken into account and they are not involved in decisions that affect them** (The ability to voice opinions & being involved in job design, goal setting, decision making) • **Managers with negative attitudes** (Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration) • **Poor leadership** (Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration)
R5	• **No consequence management** (Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration) • **Poor interaction and communication with employees** (Good internal communication, information sharing & feedback)
R6	• **No trust in leadership** (Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration) • **Employees not given the opportunity to share their ideas** (The ability to voice opinions & being involved in job design, goal setting, decision making) • **Low employee morale** (Employees feel valued & are treated fairly with respect & dignity)
R7	• **Managers lack people skills** (Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration) • **Poor relationships among employees** (Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration) • **Managers listen but take no action** (Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration) • **Poor leadership and no trust in leadership** (Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration)

R8	• **No recognition and reward system in place** (Reward & recognition) • **No consequence and change management** (Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration) • **Poor leadership** (Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration)
R9	• **Lack of communication with employees** (Good internal communication, information sharing & feedback)
R10	• **Communication between leader & employee is not open and honest** (Good internal communication, information sharing & feedback) • **Employees have no direction & objectives & expectations are unclear** (Employees understand & identify with the organisation's vision & goals) • **No trust in leadership** (Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration)
R11	• **Poor leadership** (Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration) • **Lack of communication with employees** (Good internal communication, information sharing & feedback) • **No recognition and reward system in place** (Reward & recognition) • **Managers lack people skills** (Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration)
R12	• **Employees afraid to raise opinions due to victimisation** (The ability to voice opinions & being involved in job design, goal setting, decision making) • **No trust in leadership** (Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration) • **Lack of communication with employees** (Good internal communication, information sharing & feedback)

4.3.6 An overview of the twelve respondents' responses regarding leadership and its impact on engagement

Questions eight, nine and ten in the interview outline deal with the issue of leadership and engagement i.e. the extent to which leaders are able to enhance and reduce levels of engagement. All the respondents agreed that their actions, as leaders, can either enhance or reduce levels of engagement in their teams. As highlighted in section 4.3.5, poor leadership can have a devastating impact on employee engagement. Leaders are able to influence many of the factors that affect employee engagement and have the ability to drive a culture of engagement in the organisation. Many of the factors identified from the literature that promote employee engagement starts with the leader. This comes through strongly in the respondents' responses below. Leaders can influence all of the ten factors identified in the literature by:

- Helping employees to understand the vision and goals of the organisation and how their work contributes to the organisation achieving its goals
- Providing employees with challenging, meaningful work and creating opportunities for them to learn, develop and grow in their careers
- Ensuring fit between the employee and their role, and making employees feel like their contributions are valued
- Allowing employees to voice their opinions and get involved in job design, goal setting and decision making
- Living the values of the organisation and displaying ethical behaviour at all times
- Rewarding and recognising good work
- Treating all employees fairly with respect and dignity
- Constantly communicating and sharing information with employees, and providing regular feedback on their performance
- Making available all the resources that employees require to do their jobs
- Providing employees with coaching and support, and being trustworthy

Below is an overview of the twelve respondents' responses regarding leadership and its impact on engagement.

Respondent 1- In order to enhance levels of engagement, a leader must have a positive attitude and must be interested in what their employees are doing in their personal lives and at work, as what happens at home has an impact on their performance at work. Leaders must identify what is hindering employees from being engaged, and try to solve the problems and provide them with the necessary support. Leaders must have regular one-on-one discussions with their team members, listen to their opinions, involve them in decision making, provide them with opportunities to learn, grow and develop, and challenge employees on a regular basis. It is important for leaders to gain their team's trust and build an open and honest relationship. Respondent 1 believes that leaders can reduce levels of engagement by being disrespectful and not treating all employees fairly, not having an open door policy, being unapproachable, not listening to employees or trying to understand their needs.

Respondent 2- Respondent 2 believes that leaders are able to enhance levels of employee engagement through constant communication, check-ins and one-on-ones with team members. Leaders should also show an interest in the personal lives of employees. Engagement can be enhanced by recognising work well done, accepting failures and providing the necessary coaching, and celebrating successes and sharing best practices. According to respondent 2, leaders often reduce levels of engagement by taking for granted that employees know what is expected of them, by not providing feedback on employee performance and not agreeing on clear objectives with employees.

Respondent 3- Respondent 3 believes that leaders are able to influence levels of engagement by displaying the right attitude. It is important for leaders to get to know their employees personally, not just professionally. This is vital as employees' personal lives affect their work lives. By getting to know employees personally, leaders will discover their likes, dislikes, interests, strengths, weaknesses, dreams and goals. Leaders can use this information to grow employees, help them to develop the right skills, provide them with meaningful challenges and ensure role-fit. According to respondent 3, a leader can reduce levels of engagement by not listening to the views of their employees, not showing appreciation or recognising good work, and by being unfair and showing favouritism for certain employees. A leader who cannot be trusted will definitely reduce levels of employee engagement.

Respondent 4- Respondent 4 believes that leaders have a big effect on engagement. If a leader involves their employees in decision making and lets them voice their ideas and opinions, the leader will have a more engaged team. A leader should encourage their employees to contribute, and show them that their input is valued and taken seriously. A leader should show an interest in their employees, not only in their work but also in their personal lives. Recognition and reward is very important for employee engagement. A leader should communicate and share information constantly, and ensure that their employees understand their goals and why it's important to achieve them. Honest conversations must be held regularly so that employees become aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and so that the leader can coach the employees and help them to improve on their weaknesses. A leader must be a good listener. Respondent 4 believes that for an employee to be engaged, they must trust their leader. It is important for leaders to be transparent and create an open work environment where employees feel at ease approaching and talking to the leader. According to respondent 4, a leader can reduce levels of engagement by being disengaged themselves. Leaders with no people skills will struggle to engage their teams.

When a leader does not know what their employees do on a daily basis, they will not be able to provide them with the necessary support.

Respondent 5- Respondent 5 believes that if the leader is not engaged, their employees will not be engaged. Leaders must remember that engagement is a two-way relationship, if leaders satisfy the needs of their employees, they will reward the leader with productivity and passion. According to respondent 5, a leader can drive engagement by showing an interest in their employees, providing a support structure, helping them to solve their problems, giving them something to work towards, motivating them and offering a reward system. It is important for leaders to get to know their employees on a personal level so that they can discover what they value and what motivates them. Leaders must gain their employees' trust by keeping personal conversations confidential and treating everyone fairly. Often, leaders only focus on what goes wrong, and this reduces employee engagement.

Respondent 6- Respondent 6 believes that the most important thing a leader can do to enhance employee engagement is to show employees that they can trust the leader by being someone they can confide in. Building a trust relationship is vital. Leaders must be supportive, provide opportunities for growth and development, and help employees to achieve their goals through coaching. Leaders must encourage employees to participate in team activities, involve them in decision making, make them feel included and like they belong. Leaders can reduce levels of engagement by being negative and not displaying the values of the organisation.

Respondent 7- Respondent 7 believes that a leader can enhance levels of engagement by building a trust relationship with employees, treating everybody fairly, acting with integrity, being honest and showing respect. He believes that it is important for the leader to understand each employee individually and discover their needs and what drives them. Engagement levels can be enhanced through reward and recognition, constant communication, one-on-ones and coaching. It is important for employees to understand what's expected of them and for their objectives to be clear. According to respondent 7, a leader can reduce levels of engagement if they are not engaged and have a negative attitude.

Respondent 8- Respondent 8 believes that leaders can enhance levels of engagement by motivating their employees and recognising work well done, by coaching and developing them and helping them to improve on their weaknesses, and by giving them opportunities to grow in the organisation and learn new things. Leaders must listen and take action. Constant communication and one-on-ones around employees' performance and behaviours are vital. A leader must be open and honest and make sure that employees are clear about their expectations. Respondent 8 feels that her ability to fully engage her team is often limited by mandates and red tape. According to her, leaders can reduce levels of engagement by not treating everyone fairly, by not taking an interest and getting to know their employees, and not finding out what drives them.

Respondent 9- According to respondent 9, engagement levels can be enhanced by providing employees with challenging work and showing them that the leader is listening to their needs and wants, and more importantly, taking action. Respondent 9 believes that a leader's ability to engage their employees largely depends on the employees themselves and their willingness to engage. It is important for leaders to build a trust relationship with their employees, coach and guide them, and provide regular feedback regarding their progress. Communication is very important for successful engagement. A leader can reduce levels of engagement by showing favouritism, not treating everyone fairly, not

giving recognition when it is due and by not encouraging employees to grow and develop.

Respondent 10- Respondent 10 believes that a leader can enhance levels of engagement by keeping employees motivated and making sure that they know that the leader has confidence in them, providing them with continuous feedback, and providing them with opportunities to grow and develop. Respondent 10 also believes that it is important for the leader to gain the employee's trust and make the employee comfortable to talk to them. Leaders must listen to employees, address any issues immediately, give them support and assistance and try to understand their personal problems. According to respondent 10, a leader should lead by example, so if the leader is not engaged, has a bad attitude and behaves poorly they will not have an engaged team.

Respondent 11- According to respondent 11, a leader can enhance engagement by being engaged, displaying the right behaviour and leading by example. A leader should get involved with their team and try and understand the frustrations and problems being experienced and help to solve them. In order to have an engaged team a leader must provide as much support and assistance as possible. It is important for a leader to listen, communicate effectively and show that they care. Leaders are often so busy that they don't give sufficient time to their employees, and this can result in disengagement. If the leader is disengaged and negative, the team will also be. A leader must be genuine, trustworthy and true to their words.

Respondent 12- According to respondent 12, leadership is about coaching and motivating people and contributing to their behaviour through reward and recognition, clear and open communication. If a leader succeeds they will have productive, positive and engaged employees. Leaders must get to know employees on an individual basis and identify what drives each one individually. Increased responsibilities, job enrichment and job enlargement can help to

enhance engagement. Leaders must listen to employees and employees must know that their input is taken into account and valued. Employees will be more engaged when they feel like what they do contributes to the success of the greater team. Leaders reduce levels of engagement by being dishonest and untrustworthy, not leading by example, and showing favouritism.

4.4 Results pertaining to the factors that have the greatest impact on employee engagement

Question four in the interview guide asked the respondents what they think the key factors are that drive employee engagement. The last question in the interview guide asked the respondents to think back and reflect on everything that was discussed and mentioned during the interview, and to identify what they believe to be the most important factors that drive employee engagement. They were asked to identify what they see as the top three factors and to rank them in order of importance. Table 13 lists the factors that the respondents mentioned after applying their minds and thinking back on everything that was discussed. Table 13 shows the factors that were identified by each respondent as first (1), second (2) and third (3) most important for driving employee engagement. The responses were grouped into the same themes as identified from the literature. A total of ten factors were identified and ranked by the respondents. The factors are not listed in any order of priority, importance or preference in Table 13.

Table 13: The top 10 factors that drive employee engagement as identified by the respondents and the ranking thereof

The top 10 factors that drive employee engagement as identified by the respondents	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	R11	R12
Reward & recognition	1	3	2		1			1	1			
Employees feel valued & are treated fairly with respect & dignity			1					2		3		1
Motivation		1									1	
Employees understand & identify with the organisation's vision & goals				1			3			1		3
Good internal communication, information sharing & feedback						2	1			2	2	
Availability of resources												2
The ability to voice opinions & being involved in job design, goal setting, decision making				2					2			
Job satisfaction	2											
Challenging, meaningful work with opportunities for learning, development & career growth	3	2	3		3	3			3			
Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration				3	2	1	2	3			3	

In an attempt to discover which of the factors have the greatest impact on employee engagement and to come up with a rough ranking for the factors, the results from Table 13 are used in Table 14 to show how many respondents ranked each factor as one, two or three, and the total number of responses for each factor.

Table 14: A summary of the number of respondents ranking each factor as one, two or three

The top 10 factors that drive employee engagement as identified by the respondents	No. of respondents ranking factor as 1	No. of respondents ranking factor as 2	No. of respondents ranking factor as 3	Total no. of responses
Reward & recognition	4	1	1	6
Employees feel valued & are treated fairly with respect & dignity	2	1	1	4
Motivation	2			2
Employees understand & identify with the organisation's vision & goals	2		2	4
Good internal communication, information sharing & feedback	1	3		4
Availability of resources		1		1
The ability to voice opinions & being involved in job design, goal setting, decision making		2		2
Job satisfaction		1		1
Challenging, meaningful work with opportunities for learning, development & career growth		1	5	6
Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration	1	2	3	6

The study is a qualitative study, however, in order to arrive at a rough ranking of the most important factors, the respondents were asked to identify what they see as the top three factors and to rank these in order of importance. The researcher then converted the rankings into a value by allocating three points to every first place ranking, two points to every second place ranking and one point to every third place ranking. Table 15 shows the calculations and the final value attributed to each factor. The factors were then ranked according to their values, with the factor receiving the highest value ranked number one. Where the values are equal, the factor with the higher number of first place rankings is placed ahead of the other factor. Two factors, namely, employees feel valued and are treated fairly with respect and dignity; and good internal communication, information sharing and feedback, received a value of nine. However, employees feel valued and are treated fairly with respect and dignity was ranked ahead of good internal communication, information sharing and feedback due to the first factor receiving two

first place rankings compared to the second factor only receiving one first place ranking. Two factors, namely, the availability of resources; and job satisfaction received the same value and were equal in all aspects, so they share an overall ranking at nineth place.

Table 15: The ranking of the factors that promote employee engagement

Factor	Value of ranking 1	Value of ranking 2	Value of ranking 3	Total value	Final ranking
Reward & recognition	4 * 3 = 12	1 * 2 = 2	1 * 1 = 1	15	1
Employees feel valued & are treated fairly with respect & dignity	2 * 3 = 6	1 * 2 = 2	1 * 1 = 1	9	3
Motivation	2 * 3 = 6	0	0	6	7
Employees understand & identify with the organisation's vision & goals	2 * 3 = 6	0	2 * 1 = 2	8	5
Good internal communication, information sharing & feedback	1 * 3 = 3	3 * 2 = 6	0	9	4
Availability of resources	0	1 * 2 = 2	0	2	9
The ability to voice opinions & being involved in job design, goal setting, decision making	0	2 * 2 = 4	0	4	8
Job satisfaction	0	1 * 2 = 2	0	2	9
Challenging, meaningful work with opportunities for learning, development & career growth	0	1 * 2 = 2	5 * 1 = 5	7	6
Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration	1 * 3 = 3	2 * 2 = 4	3 * 1 = 3	10	2

Based on Table 15, Table 16 below gives the final ranking order of the factors identified by the respondents. Table 11 (page 46) gives the factors in order of importance based on the number of times the respondents mentioned the various factors during the interviews. However, Table 16 is the outcome of asking the respondents to apply their minds to the most important factors that influence employee engagement, and therefore, the results of this ranking will provide the definitive answer to the research question.

Table 16: The final ranking of the factors

Ranking	Factors	Value
1	Reward & recognition	15
2	Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration	10
3	Employees feel valued & are treated fairly with respect & dignity	9
4	Good internal communication, information sharing & feedback	9
5	Employees understand & identify with the organisation's vision & goals	8
6	Challenging, meaningful work with opportunities for learning, development & career growth	7
7	Motivation	6
8	The ability to voice opinions & being involved in job design, goal setting, decision making	4
9	Availability of resources	2
9	Job satisfaction	2

4.5 Summary of the results

4.5.1 An overview of the responses from the twelve respondents

Table 17 provides a brief summary of the responses received during the interview process. For those factors that the respondents saw as hindrances to employee engagement, see Table 12 (page 47).

Table 17: A summary of responses given by the respondents

Respondents	A summary of the respondents' responses
R1	• Mentioned 4 of the 9 characteristics of engaged employees identified in the literature (Table 5, page 40) • Believes that the majority of employees in the bank are not engaged but their team is actively engaged • Mentioned 7 of the 10 factors from the literature that drive employee engagement (Table 9, page 44) • Believes that reward & recognition; job satisfaction; and challenging, meaningful work with opportunities for learning, development and career growth are the 3 most important drivers of employee engagement, in order or importance (Table 13, page 57)
R2	• Mentioned 2 of the 9 characteristics of engaged employees identified in the literature (Table 5, page 40) • Believes that the majority of employees in the bank are not engaged and their team is also not engaged • Mentioned 4 of the 10 factors from the literature that drive employee engagement (Table 9, page 44) • Believes that motivation; challenging, meaningful work with opportunities for learning, development and career growth; and reward & recognition are the 3 most important drivers of employee engagement, in order or importance (Table 13, page 57)

R3	• Mentioned 5 of the 9 characteristics of engaged employees identified in the literature (Table 5, page 40) • Believes that the majority of employees in the bank are actively engaged and their team is also actively engaged • Mentioned 7 of the 10 factors from the literature that drive employee engagement (Table 9, page 44) • Believes that employees feel valued and are treated fairly with respect and dignity; reward & recognition; and challenging, meaningful work with opportunities for learning, development and career growth are the 3 most important drivers of employee engagement, in order or importance (Table 13, page 57)
R4	• Mentioned 5 of the 9 characteristics of engaged employees identified in the literature (Table 5, page 40) • Believes that the majority of employees in the bank are not engaged but their team is actively engaged • Mentioned 8 of the 10 factors from the literature that drive employee engagement (Table 9, page 44) • Believes that employees understand and identify with the organisation's vision and goals; the ability to voice opinions and being involved in job design, goal setting and decision making; and coaching, social support, good leadership and an environment that nurtures trust and collaboration are the 3 most important drivers of employee engagement, in order or importance (Table 13, page 57)
R5	• Mentioned 4 of the 9 characteristics of engaged employees identified in the literature (Table 5, page 40) • Believes that the majority of employees in the bank are not engaged and their team is also not engaged • Mentioned 5 of the 10 factors from the literature that drive employee engagement (Table 9, page 44) • Believes that reward & recognition; coaching, social support, good leadership and an environment that nurtures trust and collaboration; and challenging, meaningful work with opportunities for learning, development and career growth are the 3 most important drivers of employee engagement, in order or importance (Table 13, page 57)

R6	• Mentioned 7 of the 9 characteristics of engaged employees identified in the literature (Table 5, page 40) • Believes that the majority of employees in the bank are not engaged and their team is also not engaged • Mentioned 5 of the 10 factors from the literature that drive employee engagement (Table 9, page 44) • Believes that coaching, social support, good leadership and an environment that nurtures trust and collaboration; good internal communication, information sharing and feedback; and challenging, meaningful work with opportunities for learning, development and career growth are the 3 most important drivers of employee engagement, in order or importance (Table 13, page 57)
R7	• Mentioned 3 of the 9 characteristics of engaged employees identified in the literature (Table 5, page 40) • Believes that the majority of employees in the bank are not engaged and their team is also not engaged • Mentioned 5 of the 10 factors from the literature that drive employee engagement (Table 9, page 44) • Believes that good internal communication, information sharing and feedback; coaching, social support, good leadership and an environment that nurtures trust and collaboration; and employees understand and identify with the organisation's vision and goals are the 3 most important drivers of employee engagement, in order or importance (Table 13, page 57)
R8	• Mentioned 4 of the 9 characteristics of engaged employees identified in the literature (Table 5, page 40) • Believes that the majority of employees in the bank are not engaged but their team is actively engaged • Mentioned 6 of the 10 factors from the literature that drive employee engagement (Table 9, page 44) • Believes that reward & recognition; employees feel valued and are treated fairly with respect and dignity; and coaching, social support, good leadership and an environment that nurtures trust and collaboration are the 3 most important drivers of employee engagement, in order or importance (Table 13, page 57)

R9	• Mentioned 3 of the 9 characteristics of engaged employees identified in the literature (Table 5, page 40) • Believes that the majority of employees in the bank are not engaged but their team is actively engaged • Mentioned 6 of the 10 factors from the literature that drive employee engagement (Table 9, page 44) • Believes that reward & recognition; the ability to voice opinions and being involved in job design, goal setting and decision making; and challenging, meaningful work with opportunities for learning, development and career growth are the 3 most important drivers of employee engagement, in order or importance (Table 13, page 57)
R10	• Mentioned 3 of the 9 characteristics of engaged employees identified in the literature (Table 5, page 40) • Believes that the majority of employees in the bank are not engaged and their team is also not engaged • Mentioned 4 of the 10 factors from the literature that drive employee engagement (Table 9, page 44) • Believes that employees understand and identify with the organisation's vision and goals; good internal communication, information sharing and feedback; and employees feel valued and are treated fairly with respect and dignity are the 3 most important drivers of employee engagement, in order or importance (Table 13, page 57)
R11	• Mentioned 3 of the 9 characteristics of engaged employees identified in the literature (Table 5, page 40) • Believes that the majority of employees in the bank are not engaged but their team is actively engaged • Mentioned 7 of the 10 factors from the literature that drive employee engagement (Table 9, page 44) • Believes that motivation; good internal communication, information sharing and feedback; and coaching, social support, good leadership and an environment that nurtures trust and collaboration are the 3 most important drivers of employee engagement, in order or importance (Table 13, page 57)

R12	• Mentioned 5 of the 9 characteristics of engaged employees identified in the literature (Table 5, page 40) • Believes that the majority of employees in the bank are actively engaged and their team is also actively engaged • Mentioned 9 of the 10 factors from the literature that drive employee engagement (Table 9, page 44) • Believes that employees feel valued and are treated fairly with respect and dignity; the availability of resources; and employees understand and identify with the organisation's vision and goals are the 3 most important drivers of employee engagement, in order or importance (Table 13, page 57)

4.5.2 Closing remarks

Tables 15 (page 59) and 16 (page 60) provide a summary of the results and a definitive answer to the research question. Table 15 shows how the final rankings were derived and Table 16 is the outcome of asking the respondents to apply their minds to the most important factors that influence employee engagement. Table 16 provides the final ranking of the most important factors, identified by the respondents during the interviews that affect employee engagement. The ranking comes purely from the fact that the respondents were asked to give their top three factors in order of importance. The elaboration of the different factors in chapter five is based on the factors identified and prioritised by the respondents.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

The researcher sought to identify the factors that promote employee engagement in a South African bank, and discover which factors are perceived to have the greatest impact on employee engagement. In this chapter, the research question is discussed by comparing and analysing the results from the interviews with the various respondents in chapter 4 with the literature review in chapter 2. The results are discussed in order of priority as given by the respondents and shown in Table 16 (page 60). This is the table which took into account the ranking of the factors where the respondents gave their top three factors in order of importance.

During the interviews, the respondents were asked what they think the factors are that drive employee engagement. They were then asked to apply their minds and identify the three factors that they believe to be the most important drivers of employee engagement and to rank these in order of importance. From this question, a total of ten factors emerged as the most important factors for driving employee engagement. Eight of the ten factors correspond to the ten factors identified from the literature as having a significant impact on employee engagement.

5.2 Analysis of the determinants of effective employee engagement and the factors that are perceived to have the greatest impact on employee engagement

5.2.1 Reward and recognition

Eleven out of the twelve respondents indicated that reward and recognition is an important driver of employee engagement. Of the ten factors identified and prioritised by the respondents as being the most important factors for driving employee engagement, reward and recognition was ranked number one. When the respondents were asked about the top three factors that they believe drives employee engagement, and to rank them in order of importance, respondents 1, 5, 8 and 9 ranked reward and recognition as the number one factor. According to respondent 5, it is important for leaders to recognise good behaviour and not to only focus on what employees do wrong but also on what they do right, and reward them for going above and beyond their duties. Due to budgetary constraints and red tape, it is not always possible for the reward to be monetary in nature. Leaders must be creative and come up with other forms of reward and recognition that mean something to the employees and will motivate them to excel. Respondent 8 mentioned that employee engagement is hindered when employees do not feel appreciated, and when they are not rewarded and recognised for work well done. This sentiment was echoed by respondent 9. Respondent 3 ranked reward and recognition as the second most important factor for driving employee engagement. She says that it is important for leaders to show their appreciation through reward and recognition, and when employees are not recognised they will lose interest in going the extra mile. Respondent 3 agrees with respondent 5 in that there is not always a budget for monetary rewards, but other rewards such as free time off work can be just as effective. Respondent 2 ranked reward and recognition as the third most important factor for driving employee engagement and stressed the importance of recognising good work and showing employees that their efforts do not go unnoticed. She gave time off as an example of a reward. She says that employees must benefit from their good performance. Respondent 6 mentioned that reward is important as it serves to boost

employees and can positively impact the quality of their output and productivity. According to respondent 7, a leader can enhance levels of engagement through reward and recognition and also mentioned time off as a reward, other than money, that employees value. He says that it is important for leaders to say thank you for work well done, and a leader can display their gratitude by rewarding and recognising their employees. Respondent 11 mentioned the lack of reward and recognition as a hindrance to employee engagement in the bank. According to respondent 12, leadership is about motivating people and shaping their behaviour through reward and recognition.

Roberts and Davenport (2002), identify a rewarding work environment as a key driver of employee engagement. They say that the drivers for a rewarding work environment include the organisation providing a fun and positive work environment and employees receiving recognition for their contributions. Konrad (2006), also identifies reward as a factor that has a positive impact on employee engagement. He says that employees must be rewarded for their extra efforts. In the PPC: Engineering HR case study, Gordon-Brown and Thomas (2004), suggest that employees will be more engaged if they are rewarded for good performance. Crim and Seijts (2006), suggest ‘congratulate’ as a driver of employee engagement. They say that leaders must provide praise and recognition more often. According to Mone *et al.* (2011), reward and recognition is one of the five major activities in the performance management process and can be used my managers to enhance employee engagement. They say that by providing recognition managers are able to direct and improve the performance of their employees. Recognition and reward are vital to employee engagement and lead to greater employee satisfaction, motivation and morale. The form of recognition and reward that is used should be tailored to meet the unique needs of the individual and must support the psychological conditions that create engagement.

Based on the responses received from the respondents, and the literature, it is clear that leaders play an important role in driving this important factor for enhancing employee engagement. Leaders must understand the importance of rewarding and recognising good work and how this positively impacts levels of engagement.

5.2.2 Coaching, social support, good leadership and an environment that nurtures trust and collaboration

All of the respondents mentioned coaching, social support, good leadership and an environment that nurtures trust and collaboration as an important driver of employee engagement. Of the ten factors identified and prioritised by the respondents as being the most important factors for driving employee engagement, coaching, social support, good leadership and an environment that nurtures trust and collaboration was ranked number two. When the respondents were asked about the top three factors that drive employee engagement, and to rank them in order of importance, respondent 5 ranked this factor as the second most important factor, and respondents 4 and 11 ranked it as the third most important factor for driving employee engagement. According to respondent 5, poor leadership hinders employee engagement in the bank. She says that there is no consequence management and this creates an environment of distrust. Also, too many leaders are too self-involved and are not interested in supporting and interacting with their teams. Engagement is not on their agenda. She says that for employees to be engaged they must trust their leaders. Leaders can gain their trust by creating an open and honest environment and by building good working relationships with their team members. According to respondent 4, in order to be engaged employees need the necessary support from their leaders. Leaders play a big role in influencing levels of engagement and creating an open work environment. She believes that if the leader is engaged and positive about engaging their employees then engagement levels will be enhanced. Respondent 11 agrees with respondent 5 that poor leadership hinders employee engagement in the bank. She says that the leaders are not visible enough, don't know who their staff are, or what they do, and don't lead by example. She feels that they are power hungry and authoritative, and lack the necessary people and leadership skills that are required to drive employee engagement. They do not create an inclusive environment and do not show sufficient support for their team members. They just care about the numbers but forget about the people behind the numbers. She says that it is important for employees to see that their leader cares, and this is lacking in the bank. According to respondent 1, for an employee to be engaged, they must feel like their

manager is interested in them and is supportive of them. She says that it is the leader's responsibility to identify what is hindering their employees from being engaged and to try and fix it. Respondent 1 also identified poor leadership as a factor that hinders employee engagement in the bank, and believes that the leaders are only interested in productivity and targets, but do not realise that in order to achieve the targets, the staff must be engaged. She says that it is important for there to be trust between the leader and the employee. Leaders must put time aside to coach employees and get to know and understand them. Often problems in their personal lives may be preventing employees from achieving at work, and the leader must be understanding and supportive of this, and put things in place, or try to provide support to resolve the problem, so that the business is minimally affected. According to respondent 2, it is important for leaders to provide coaching in areas where the employees are failing and to share best practices in the areas where they are succeeding. Respondent 3 believes that being a team player and having good, supportive working relationships with colleagues are important for employee engagement. This is vital as one spends most of their time at work. She agrees that management plays a huge role in driving employee engagement and poor leadership is one of the factors that hinder employee engagement in the bank. She says that the bank lacks good leaders who can be trusted, show an interest in staff and make employees' lives easier. She adds that bad leaders with bad habits drive absenteeism and disengagement as people do not want to be at work, and copy the leader's bad behaviour. According to respondent 6, employee engagement is about relationships and having good relationships with fellow team members. Leaders must make employees feel part of the team i.e. included, and give them a sense that they belong. This creates an environment conducive to engagement. She believes that trust is very important and mentioned that if an employee doesn't trust their leader they won't engage. Respondent 6 believes that trust is a key ingredient for driving employee engagement. She also said that coaching and mentoring is important. Leaders must keep their employees under their wing, give them small tasks that they can accomplish, build their knowledge, groom and mould them, teach them how they should be working, build their character, and let them experience how it feels to succeed. She says that if the leader doesn't display the bank's values, employees are likely to copy that behaviour. Leaders are role models and

must support and show confidence in their teams in order to build trust and commitment. According to respondent 7, trust and respect between leaders and employees is important for enhancing levels of engagement. He says that a leader can gain trust by being honest and acting with integrity. Respondent 7 said that trust is the second most important factor for driving employee engagement. He believes that being a good leader is vital for engagement, if the leader is negative and not engaged, their team will also not be engaged. He says that leaders must coach and mentor employees, monitor their progress and provide direction and advice. This is especially important for those who are not engaged. Respondent 8 also identified poor leadership as a factor that hinders employee engagement in the bank. She says that leaders can enhance levels of engagement by coaching and developing their employees and helping them to improve on their weaknesses. Respondent 8 ranked trust as the third most important factor for driving employee engagement. Respondent 9 believes that having good relationships and support from colleagues drives employee engagement. She says that it is important for there to be trust between leaders and employees and that leaders should coach and guide their employees, and monitor their progress without micro-managing. She feels that micro-management makes employees despondent and reduces levels of engagement. According to respondent 10, leaders need their staff to deliver results and if leaders give their staff the necessary support, they will deliver. Leaders must show their staff that they have confidence in them and build levels of trust. She says that a leader can reduce levels of engagement by displaying bad behaviour and not leading by example. Employees are likely to copy the leader's bad behaviour. Respondent 12 believes that it is important for leaders to 'walk the talk', guide their staff, provide coaching and gain employee trust. Dishonesty, and leaders that say one thing but do another, leads to employee disengagement. He says that a lack of leadership results in demotivated staff and greater turnover.

According to Mani (2011), one of the factors that drive employee engagement is leadership. Great leadership leads to increased employee engagement and better organisational performance. Mani (2011), suggests that it is largely the responsibility of the organisation to create an environment and a culture that is conducive to the relationship between employees and employers, and a win-win situation for all. Gruman & Saks (2011), say that employee engagement is enhanced when employees experience supportive and trusting relations with managers and co-workers, and when the work environment is reliable, predictable and the boundaries of acceptable behaviour are clear. According to the social exchange theory, obligations are generated through a number of interactions between parties who are dependent on one another. As long as each party abides by the rules of exchange, the relationship will evolve into trusting, loyal and mutual commitments (Saks, 2006). In the PPC: Engineering HR case study, Gordon-Brown and Thomas (2004), suggest patchy management effectiveness and the failure of managers to bring out the best in people as reasons for the low percentage of engaged employees. It was found that the employees at PPC wanted better teamwork and more people-oriented management. The case highlights that the type of manager, their behaviour and the environment they create can either foster or hinder employee engagement. Thomas (2009), believes that creating the right type of environment is crucial for employee engagement. According to Crim & Seijts (2006), leaders should make employee engagement one of their top priorities as engagement drives results. The efforts of leaders to achieve full engagement should be ongoing. Leaders have the vital job of creating an environment that allows employees to unleash their full potential, and a culture in which employees want to perform. They suggest 'collaborate' as a driver of employee engagement and say that leaders must build great teams and create an environment that nurtures trust and collaboration. It is important for employees to feel that their colleagues care. According to Bakker, Albrecht & Leiter (2011), if an employee receives sufficient support, inspiration and coaching from their leaders, they are likely to find their work more challenging, involving and satisfying and will become more engaged in their tasks. According to Mone *et al.* (2011), managers should provide ongoing coaching to help employees adapt, improve their performance and develop their potential. While coaching is a source of support from an employee's supervisor, social

support from fellow colleagues is also essential for engagement. Interpersonal interactions result in greater engagement when they are supportive and trusting. Mone *et al.* (2011), also say that when employees feel that they can trust their manager and are empowered to perform their jobs, they will be more engaged.

5.2.3 Employees feel valued and are treated fairly with respect and dignity

Eight out of the twelve respondents indicated that employees feeling valued and being treated fairly with respect and dignity is an important driver of employee engagement. Of the ten factors identified and prioritised by the respondents as being the most important factors for driving employee engagement, employees feeling valued and being treated fairly with respect and dignity was ranked number three. When the respondents were asked about the top three factors that they believe drives employee engagement, and to rank them in order of importance, respondents 3 and 12 ranked fairness as the number one factor. Respondent 3 mentioned that it is important for leaders to treat employees with respect and dignity. When employees feel that they are treated with respect and their leaders act with integrity they will be more engaged. She says that a leader can reduce levels of engagement by being unfair, having preferences among their employees, showing favouritism and treating everyone differently i.e. double standards. According to respondent 12, when employees understand how their contribution impacts the organisation in achieving its goals, they will feel more valued and have passion for what they are doing. He says that it's important for leaders to treat everyone fairly, provide equal opportunities and not to display favouritism. Leaders can reduce levels of engagement by being dishonest. It is important for leaders to 'walk the talk' and lead their teams by example. Respondent 8 ranked fairness as the second most important factor for driving employee engagement. She echoed respondent 9 and 12's sentiments that leaders must be transparent, treat everyone fairly, give everyone a fair chance, and not favour certain employees over others. Respondent 10 ranked fairness as the third most important factor for driving employee engagement and believes that it is vital for leaders to be transparent. According to respondent 4 is it important for leaders to be transparent and make employees feel valued by taking their input seriously. Respondent 5

mentioned that for employees to be engaged they must feel like they are being treated fairly. Respondent 7 mentioned that leaders can enhance levels of engagement by showing respect for their employees and dealing with them in a respectful way, by acting with integrity, treating everybody fairly and showing employees that they are valued and appreciated.

According to Rothmann & Rothmann (2010), when employees feel like they are treated with respect and dignity, and valued for their contributions, they will experience greater psychological meaningfulness. Psychological meaningfulness is associated with an incentive to engage and refers to "a feeling that one is receiving a return on investment of one's self" (Khan, 1990, p. 703). Crim and Seijts (2006), suggest 'connect' as a driver of employee engagement. They say that leaders must show that they care for and value employees. Employee engagement is a direct result of how employees feel about their relationship with their leader. It is thus important for leaders to 'walk their talk'. Good leaders will be rewarded with engagement. According to Mone *et al.* (2011), when employees perceive organisational processes to be fair they will be more engaged.

5.2.4 Good internal communication, information sharing and feedback

Eleven out of the twelve respondents indicated that good internal communication, information sharing and regular feedback is an important driver of employee engagement. Of the ten factors identified and prioritised by the respondents as being the most important factors for driving employee engagement, good internal communication, information sharing and regular feedback was ranked number four. When the respondents were asked about the top three factors that they believe drives employee engagement, and to rank them in order of importance, respondent 7 ranked communication as the number one factor. Respondent 7 said that employee engagement is about communication and getting to understand employees on a work and personal level. He went on to say that communication must be regular, daily if possible, and must be open and honest. He believes that it is a two-way relationship i.e.

it is the manager's responsibility to check-in with employees, but it is also up to the employee to communicate with the manager whenever there is something on their mind. He said that it's important to build a trust relationship so that employees feel at ease opening up to their manager. Managers must not just listen, they must take action. Respondents 6, 10 and 11 ranked communication as the second most important factor. According to respondent 6, open, honest and constant two-way communication is vital for employee engagement. She says that managers must provide their employees with regular feedback on their performance and progress. Respondent 10 believes that employee engagement is about having discussions and interacting with employees on a daily basis. She said that communication must be two-way and the leader must have regular one-on-one conversations with their team members, however, employees should not wait for their one-on-one discussion and should know that if something is bugging them they can talk to their leader at any time. It is important for employees to feel comfortable to talk to their leader. Having an open-door policy is important for engagement. Leaders must build trust by listening and trying to understand their employees' problems. Respondent 10 believes that when communication between the leader and employee is not open and honest it hinders employee engagement. A lack of communication is one of the factors identified by respondents 11 and 5 that hinder employee engagement in the bank. Respondent 11 says that leaders must be attentive, listen and communicate regularly with their employees. She believes that communication plays a key role in engagement. Leaders must communicate with their staff, ask questions, find out what their challenges are and help to solve them. According to respondent 11, it is important to build a trust relationship where leaders can provide constructive feedback and employees are willing to accept it, learn and take advice on how they can grow. Two-way, open, and honest conversations are vital for employee engagement. Respondent 1 also mentioned that two-way communication is vital for successful employee engagement. She said that communication must be regular and one-on-one conversations between the leader and staff member, at least on a monthly basis, are needed. According to respondent 2, a leader is able to enhance levels of engagement through constant communication, check-ins, and one-on-one meetings with their employees to discuss their performance and anything else that is going on in their

lives, both work and personal, that they would like to share. Respondent 4 also mentioned that constant communication and sharing information about strategy and policy changes are ways in which a leader can enhance levels of engagement. According to respondent 8, a leader can reduce levels of engagement by not communicating with staff and therefore not knowing what drives them, their needs and their goals. She said that weak leaders are not able to have difficult conversations with their staff and this drives bad behaviour and creates an environment where employees get away with not doing what they are supposed to do. Communication is thus vital. Respondent 9 identified a lack of communication as a factor that hinders engagement in the bank. She says that in her experience, engaged employees like to communicate with their leader and give feedback on their work. They also like to receive feedback. Communication is very important, should be constant and a two-way thing. She believes that it is important for leaders to listen to their staff's needs and take action. According to respondent 12, communication is very important for employee engagement, and should be open and two-way in nature. Leaders and employees should address and resolve issues as they come up in order to maintain levels of engagement.

According to Mani (2011), one of the factors that influence employee engagement is communication. Lockwood (2007), also identifies good internal communication as a factor that influences employee engagement. One of the four principles identified by Konrad (2006), as having a positive impact on employee engagement is information. Providing timely and relevant information to employees helps them to understand what is going on in the business and they can then adjust their efforts accordingly. The more transparent managers are the more employees are able to see the link between their actions and the performance of the organisation. In the PPC: Engineering HR case study, Gordon-Brown and Thomas (2004), considered poor communication and ineffective two-way communication as reasons for the low percentage of engaged employees. They say that it is important for the organisation's goals to be communicated and for feedback to be provided on what the organisation is doing and how it is performing. Crim and Seijts (2006), suggest 'convey' as a driver of employee engagement. They say that leaders must be clear about what they expect from

employees and provide regular feedback about their performance. Gruman & Saks (2011), found that the quality of the exchange relationships between leaders and their subordinates are positively related to employees' feelings of satisfaction with their appraisals and their motivation to improve. They also say that managers are able to drive employee engagement by providing effective, timely, ongoing and honest feedback. Receiving feedback is considered a positive and motivating experience that allows employees to identify their strengths and development areas. Managers must be aware that if they provide feedback in the form of destructive criticism it can have a debilitating effect on engagement and performance. According to Mone *et al.* (2011), providing ongoing feedback is a major activity in the performance management process and can enhance employee engagement.

5.2.5 Employees understand and identify with the organisation's vision and goals

Five out of the twelve respondents indicated that understanding and identifying with the vision and goals of the organisation is important for promoting employee engagement. The respondents ranked this factor number five out of the ten factors. Respondents 4 and 10 ranked clear goals as the most important factor for driving employee engagement. According to respondent 4, it is important for employees to understand the organisation's goals, how the goals can be achieved and why it's important to achieve the goals. Respondent 4 believes that employees will feel more committed and engaged when they see the link between their goals and the goals of the organisation. She says that leaders must ensure that this link is evident when contracting the employees' key performance indicators with them. According to respondent 10, it is important for the employees' objectives to be clear and aligned with the goals and vision of the organisation. She says that leaders must provide their employees with direction. Employees must know what they need to do, what their goals are and how to achieve them. She believes that targets must be ambitious but achievable. Respondents 7 and 12 ranked clear goals as the third most important factor for driving employee engagement. According to respondent 7, it is important for leaders to provide staff with direction toward achieving the organisation's goals. Employees must be clear about their

purpose and what they need to achieve. He says that it is vital for the employees' objectives to be clear in order to avoid grievances and employees thinking that they performed well when in actual fact their objectives were not met. Misalignment between the organisation's expectations and the employees' understanding of what needs to be done must be managed by the leaders. According to respondent 12, it is important for employees to understand what is expected of them and what the timelines are. Leaders need to guide their staff and help them to achieve the goals. Respondent 12 also felt that being engaged is about employees knowing what the organisation wants to achieve and understanding their contribution to the bigger picture and how their contribution helps the organisation to achieve its goals. When employees understand this they will have more passion for what they are doing. He goes on to say that identifying with the mission, objectives and goals of the organisation enhances levels of engagement. Respondent 1 mentioned that the reason she thinks the majority of employees in the bank are not engaged is because they do not see the bigger picture and don't really care or know what the organisation is about. She goes on to say that most people come to work and do what they have to do in order to get a salary without understanding how what they do contributes to the organisation achieving its vision and goals. She also mentioned that employees must understand their purpose, and know why what they are doing is important. According to Respondent 1, when staff do not know what is expected of them employee engagement is hindered. Respondent 3 had a similar response. She mentioned that when an employee understands the reason for them being at work, where they fit into the picture, and the contribution they are making to the goals of the larger organisation they are more engaged. Respondent 2 also mentioned the importance of clear objectives and alignment with the organisation's goals. She says that when objectives are clear and achievable, employees will be more engaged and eager to achieve the goals. According to respondent 8, it is important for the organisation's and the employees' expectations to be clear and aligned. Respondent 11 mentioned that being engaged is about understanding what the organisation wants and what needs to be done.

According to Roberts and Davenport (2002), one of the key drivers of employee engagement is identification with the organisation, with employees feeling a sense of ownership in the success of the organisation and personally identifying with and taking ownership of the organisation's goals. In the PPC: Engineering HR case study, Gordon-Brown and Thomas (2004), suggest that one of the reasons for the low levels of engagement was employees not having a clear understanding of the organisation's aims and goals. Crim and Seijts (2006), suggest 'clarity' as a driver of employee engagement. They say that leaders must constantly communicate a clear vision. Employees must understand the organisation's vision and goals, as well as why the goals are important and how they can be achieved. According to Mone *et al.* (2011), it has been found that employees are more engaged when they understand how their work supports the achievement of the organisation's goals and strategy. In order to enhance engagement, employees must be aware of the organisation's strategy, the importance of their work, and how it aligns with the organisation's greater purpose.

5.2.6 Challenging, meaningful work with opportunities for learning, development and career growth

Eleven out of the twelve respondents indicated that challenging, meaningful work with opportunities for learning, development and career growth is an important driver of employee engagement. Of the ten factors identified and prioritised by the respondents as being the most important factors for driving employee engagement, challenging, meaningful work with opportunities for learning, development and career growth work was ranked number six. Respondent 1 ranked growth opportunities as the third most important factor for driving employee engagement. She went on to say that engaged employees tend to be willing to upskill, while disengaged employees show no interest in learning new things or developing themselves further. Respondent 3 ranked career growth as the third most important factor for driving employee engagement. Respondent 3 believes that in order to enhance levels of engagement, leaders must create opportunities for employees to grow and develop their skills. She said that leaders should challenge employees, and put them in roles that will allow them to learn new skills.

According to respondent 4, engaged employees are open for development and learning new things, they want to grow and become something in the organisation and take the opportunities available to them. It is important for leaders to highlight employee weaknesses and help them to improve on their weaknesses. For respondent 5, in order to enhance levels of engagement, it is important for leaders to challenge their employees by giving them something to work towards, and to discover what meaningful work means to each employee. She said that when employees feel passionate about their work, and derive meaning from their work, they will be more engaged. According to respondent 6, leaders must give employees stretch goals to help them grow to their full potential. Respondent 6 ranked growth opportunities as the third most important factor for driving employee engagement. She also mentioned that in her experience engaged employees like to learn new things. This sentiment was echoed by respondent 7 and 11. They both believe that engaged employees like to learn and develop themselves. Respondent 8 mentioned that in order for leaders to enhance levels of engagement in their teams, they must provide their employees with opportunities to grow in the organisation and to learn new things through job rotation. Respondent 9 ranked a challenging environment as the third most important driver of employee engagement. She thinks that it is important for leaders to provide their staff with challenging work as this will help them to grow, develop, learn new things, and boost their engagement. According to respondent 10, providing challenging work is vital to enhancing levels of engagement. Respondent 12 mentioned that leaders can enhance levels of engagement by increasing their employees' responsibilities, giving their employees stretch goals, and through job enrichment and job enlargement.

According to Roberts & Davenport (2002), employees become engaged when they are able to use their skills and abilities in their jobs, when they experience their work as challenging and stimulating, and when their work provides feelings of personal accomplishment. Roberts and Davenport (2002), identify career development as one of the three key drivers of employee engagement. They say that the career development driver focuses on the opportunities that employees have to learn and enhance their careers. When employees have positive feelings about their long term career prospects,

they will be more engaged. One of the four principles identified by Konrad (2006), as having a positive impact on employee engagement is knowledge. The use of training and development can build the knowledge, skills and abilities of employees and this will empower them to make and implement decisions more effectively. In the PPC: Engineering HR case study, Gordon-Brown and Thomas (2004), suggest that one of the reasons for the low levels of engagement was the failure of managers to bring out the best in their people. It was found that the employees at PPC wanted more opportunities to show what they could do. Crim and Seijts (2006), suggest 'career' as a driver of employee engagement. They say that leaders should provide challenging and meaningful work, enriched with duties and responsibilities, and opportunities for career advancement. This can be achieved through job rotation, stretch goals, holding employees accountable for their progress, instilling confidence in employees and providing the necessary knowledge and tools. According to Bakker, Albrecht & Leiter (2011), if an employee receives sufficient support, inspiration and coaching from their leaders, they are likely to find their work more challenging, involving and satisfying and will become more engaged in their tasks. Mone *et al.* (2011), suggest that stretch goals have the potential to enhance employee engagement as they provide a sense of challenge and can increase employee motivation. According to Gruman & Saks (2011), when work is challenging, well defined, varied, creative and autonomous, employees experience more psychological meaningfulness. It has been found that job enrichment is also positively related to meaningfulness and thus enhanced engagement. In order to enhance employee engagement, managers must provide opportunities for learning, training and skills development. Career-planning conversations are important and managers must support career development efforts by providing motivational support and the resources that employees need to accomplish their development goals. Employees will be more engaged when they are satisfied with the opportunities available to them for career progression and promotion.

5.2.7 Motivation

According to the respondents, motivation was ranked number seven out of the ten factors. Respondent 2 and respondent 11 ranked motivation as the number on factor for driving employee engagement. According to respondent 2, motivation includes both self-motivation and motivation from ones leader and colleagues. She says that when employees are motivated they are more productive and produce better quality work. There is also less absenteeism. She says that in her team, the employees are responsible for performing very routine and mundane work, and she tries to keep them motivated through job rotation, recognition and stretch goals. She feels that when a job is exciting and more specialised, it is easier for employees to be self-motivated. According to respondent 11, an uninterested and unwilling employee is detrimental to the organisation's success. If an employee is unmotivated and does not care about their job, they will not put any effort into their work. She says that it is important for leaders to energise their employees, meet their needs and provide them with direction. A motivated employee will want to persist even in the face of adversity, and that is the type of employee every manager wants in their team. Respondent 5 mentioned that it is important for leaders to motivate their staff. She believes that if a leader satisfies the needs of their employees, the leader will get ten times more in return from their employees in terms of productivity and passion. She says that it is important for leaders to give their employees something to work towards. Leaders must discover what is meaningful to their employees, and motivate them with what means something to them i.e. something they value. Respondent 12 echoed the sentiments of respondent 5. He stated that leadership is about motivating people and treating each staff member as an individual. He also believes that leaders should identify what motivates each employee so that they can motivate each employee with something that means something to them. He says that employees can be motivated through increased responsibilities, job enrichment and job enlargement. Respondents 8, 9 and 10 also mentioned the importance of leaders keeping their staff motivated and how this positively impacts employee engagement. Motivation was not highlighted in the literature as one of the key factors for promoting employee engagement.

5.2.8 The ability to voice opinions and being involved in job design, goal setting and decision making

Eight out of the twelve respondents indicated that the ability to voice opinions and being involved in job design, goal setting and decision making is an important factor for driving employee engagement. Of the ten factors identified and prioritised by the respondents as being the most important factors for driving employee engagement, the ability to voice opinions and being involved in job design, goal setting and decision making was ranked number eight. Respondent 1 said that a leader can reduce levels of engagement by failing to get employees' input and opinions on things, and failing to involve employees in decision making. She believes that leaders who think they have the answer to everything and are not willing to listen to their subordinates' views destroy levels of engagement in their teams. Respondent 3 expressed that in order for engagement levels to be enhanced the environment must be conducive to employees feeling comfortable to voice their opinions. She also believes that leaders who do not want to listen to the views of their team members have a negative impact on employee engagement. According to respondent 4, employee engagement is about employees actively participating and being involved in change and other day-to-day activities that they need to perform. Respondent 4 ranked employee involvement as the second most important driver of employee engagement. Leaders can enhance levels of engagement by involving employees in decision making, encouraging employees to contribute, making them feel like their views count, and their input is valued. Respondent 6 expressed that engagement is hindered when employees are not given the opportunity to share their ideas, and their input is not taken seriously or considered. She said that leaders can enhance levels of engagement by involving employees in decision making and encouraging them to participate. Before employees can feel engaged, they must feel involved and included. When asked what employee engagement means to her, respondent 8's first response was that it's about being involved in decision making and providing your team with ideas that can be implemented to improve the business. Respondent 9 also ranked employee involvement as the second most important driver of employee engagement. Respondent 11 believes that employee engagement is about

employees being involved in every aspect of their jobs. According to respondent 12, employees will be disengaged if leaders do not listen to them and make them feel like their views and input is taken into account and valued.

According to Khan (1990), employee engagement has to do with employees feeling able to express themselves and voice their opinions without the fear of negative consequences. Roberts & Davenport (2002), mentioned that when employees are involved in decisions that affect their work they will be more engaged. One of the four principles identified by Konrad (2006), as having a positive impact on employee engagement is power i.e. the power that employees have to voice their ideas and make decisions that can improve their performance and the quality of their working lives. Crim and Seijts (2006), suggest 'control' as a driver of employee engagement. They say that leaders must create opportunities for employees to exercise control over the flow and pace of their jobs. This can be achieved by involving employees in decision making and goal setting, allowing them to voice their opinions, and valuing their contributions. According to Gruman and Saks (2011), allowing employees to participate in goal setting is likely to result in greater engagement than expecting employees to achieve imposed goals that do not take their values and interests into account. Gruman and Saks (2011), also say that employees should be allowed to have a say in the design of their work, as having some control over their work helps employees feel safer and more engaged. Mone *et al.* (2011), suggest that when managers and employees set goals together, through the process of negotiation, employees become more engaged as they are personally invested in achieving the goals. They also say that managers can build a climate of trust and empowerment by involving employees in decision making. When employees feel that they can trust their manager and are empowered to perform their jobs, they will be more engaged.

5.2.9 Availability of resources

Two out of the twelve respondents identified the availability of resources as a driver of employee engagement. Respondent 4 expressed that it is important for employees to have all the right tools i.e. the knowledge and the equipment in order to do their jobs effectively. Respondent 12 ranked the availability of resources as the second most important driver of employee engagement. He says that if employees do not have the right equipment to perform their duties, they will be demotivated and disengaged. Of the ten factors identified and prioritised by the respondents as being the most important factors for driving employee engagement, the availability of resources shared a joint ranking at number nine with job satisfaction.

According to Rothmann & Rothmann (2010), to be able to engage employees must have the necessary physical, emotional and psychological resources at any particular time. Gruman & Saks (2011), say that job resources are motivational and result in positive attitudes and behaviours, employee well-being and enhanced engagement. Bakker *et al.* (2008), also view job and personal resources as important factors associated with employee engagement. Khan (1990), finds that when an organisation provides employees with physical, cognitive and emotional resources, employees repay the organisation with higher levels of engagement, and according to Saks (2006), the degree to which employees engage themselves will depend on the resources they receive from the organisation. In the PPC: Engineering HR case study, Gordon-Brown and Thomas (2004), suggest that employees will be more engaged if they are provided with the necessary tools. According to Medlin & Green (2009), leaders must ensure that the necessary resources are recognised and made available to employees as this enhances employees' beliefs that they will be successful in achieving their goals, and will enhance levels of engagement. Crim and Seijts (2006), suggest 'career' as a driver of employee engagement, and this involves providing employees with the necessary knowledge and tools. According to Mone *et al.* (2011), managers can drive engagement by ensuring that employees have the resources they require to perform their jobs, and by encouraging innovation and creativity to improve work processes and productivity.

5.2.10 Job satisfaction

According to the respondents, job satisfaction shared a ranking at number nine with the availability of resources. Respondent 1 ranked job satisfaction as the second most important factor for driving employee engagement. She believes that the more satisfied an employee is with their job, the more productive they will be. She says that it is important for employees to feel a connection with their work and be interested in what they are doing. Job satisfaction was not highlighted in the literature as one of the key factors for promoting employee engagement.

5.3 Factors mentioned in the interviews but not ranked by the respondents as their top three

The two factors discussed in this section are identified in the literature as important drivers of employee engagement. During the interviews, there were respondents who mentioned these two factors, either in general discussion or in response to question four in the interview guide. However, at the end of the interview when the respondents were asked to apply their minds and give the top three factors that they believe to be the most important determinants of employee engagement, none of the respondents gave these two factors. These two factors were therefore not ranked.

5.3.1 Work-role fit with employees feeling that they contribute positively to the organisation

Four out of the twelve respondents mentioned work-role fit with employees feeling that they contribute positively to the organisation as an important driver of employee engagement. Respondent 1 mentioned that role fit is very important for engagement as she believes that if an employee is in the wrong role, or even if they have been in the same role for a very long time, they become bored, uninterested, and disengaged. They go through the motions but don't feel passionate about their work or engaged. She says that it is up to the leader to identify this lack of fit and do something about it by giving such employees opportunities to do something new, shadow colleagues and learn how to perform other roles within the team. Respondent 1 also expressed the importance of employees seeing how what they do contributes to the bigger picture and benefits the organisation. Respondent 2 identified no role fit as one of the factors that hinder employee engagement in the bank. She says that too many people are placed in roles, especially through secondments and restructuring, that they are not interested in, they show no enthusiasm, commitment or dedication to their work and are not engaged. She says that disconnection between employees and their jobs definitely has a negative impact on engagement. According to respondent 3, it is up to the leader to get to know their employees on a personal basis, and if they identify a lack of fit between an

employee and their role, and see that it is having an impact on engagement in their team, they should have the necessary conversation with the employee and support the employee in finding the right role. It is in the best interest of the organisation to have the right people in the right roles. Respondent 3 also mentioned that it is important for employees to understand the contribution they make to the organisation. Respondent 12 mentioned that when employees understand their contribution to the bigger picture, and how their contribution impacts the organisation in achieving its goals, they feel more valued, have more passion and drive for what they are doing, and feel more engaged. When the respondents were asked about the top three factors that they believe drives employee engagement, and to rank them in order of importance, none of the respondents mentioned this factor. This factor did not receive a ranking.

According to Khan (1990), work role fit contributes to employee engagement. Rothmann & Rothmann (2010), suggest that it is important for there to be a good fit between the employee's skills, needs and values and the job and organisation. When a good fit exists employees will derive more meaning from their work and will be more engaged due to their ability to express their values and beliefs. They are also more likely to perform their work with enthusiasm and energy. Crim and Seijts (2006), suggest 'contribute' as a driver of employee engagement. They say that leaders must ensure that employees feel that they are contributing to the organisation's success in a meaningful way. In the PPC: Engineering HR case study, Gordon-Brown and Thomas (2004), considered alignment to be an important issue and believe that employees are more engaged if they know how what they do contributes to the organisation's success.

5.3.2 Organisational characteristics i.e. values, reputation and ethical standards

One out of the twelve respondents indicated that organisational characteristics are important for promoting employee engagement. Respondent 11 expressed that being engaged is about identifying with and sharing the same values as the organisation, believing that the organisation operates according to high ethical standards, and being proud to work for the organisation. When the respondents were asked about the top three factors that they believe drives employee engagement, and to rank them in order of importance, none of the respondents mentioned this factor. Organisational characteristics did not receive a ranking.

Mani (2011) and Lockwood (2007) agree that organisational characteristics influence employee engagement. Such characteristics include a reputation for integrity and workplace culture i.e. a culture of innovation. Crim and Seijts (2006), suggest ‘credibility’ and ‘confidence’ as drivers of employee engagement. It is important for employees to have confidence in the organisation. Leaders must boost confidence in the organisation and maintain the company’s reputation by demonstrating high ethical and performance standards.

5.4 Conclusion

The research question for the study is: what are the factors that promote employee engagement in a South African bank, and which factors are perceived to have the greatest impact on employee engagement?

Table 18 is a repeat of Table 11 (page 46), but is inserted below for ease of reference. It shows the factors identified from the literature, listed in order of importance, based on the number of times each factor was mentioned by the respondents during the interviews.

Table 18: Factors listed in order of importance based on mentions in the interviews

Number	Responses	Factors affecting employee engagement
1	12	Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration
2	11	Challenging, meaningful work with opportunities for learning, development & career growth
2	11	Reward & recognition
2	11	Good internal communication, information sharing & feedback
3	8	The ability to voice opinions & being involved in job design, goal setting, decision making
3	8	Employees feel valued & are treated fairly with respect & dignity
4	5	Employees understand & identify with the organisation's vision & goals
5	4	Work-role fit, with employees feeling that they contribute positively to the organisation
6	2	Availability of resources
7	1	Organisational characteristics i.e. values, reputation & ethical standards

At the end of the interviews the respondents were asked to think back and reflect on everything that was discussed and mentioned during the interviews, and to identify what they believed to be the most important factors that drive employee engagement. They were asked to identify what they see as the top three factors and to rank them in order of importance. Table 19 is a repeat of Table16 (page 60), but is inserted below for ease of reference. Table 19 shows the outcome of asking the respondents to apply their minds to the most important factors that influence employee engagement and therefore represents the definitive answer to the research question. Table 19 provides the final ranking of the most important factors that affect employee engagement identified by the

respondents during the interviews. A total of ten factors were identified and ranked by the respondents.

Table 19: The final ranking of the factors

Ranking	Factors	Value
1	Reward & recognition	15
2	Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration	10
3	Employees feel valued & are treated fairly with respect & dignity	9
4	Good internal communication, information sharing & feedback	9
5	Employees understand & identify with the organisation's vision & goals	8
6	Challenging, meaningful work with opportunities for learning, development & career growth	7
7	Motivation	6
8	The ability to voice opinions & being involved in job design, goal setting, decision making	4
9	Availability of resources	2
9	Job satisfaction	2

Eight of the ten factors, listed in Table 19 above, correspond to the ten factors identified from the literature as having a significant impact on employee engagement. The corresponding factors are:

- Reward and recognition
- Coaching, social support, good leadership & an environment that nurtures trust & collaboration
- Employees feel valued & are treated fairly with respect & dignity
- Good internal communication, information sharing & feedback
- Employees understand & identify with the organisation's vision & goals
- Challenging, meaningful work with opportunities for learning, development & career growth
- The ability to voice opinions & being involved in job design, goal setting, decision making
- The availability of resources

The respondents identified and ranked an additional two factors that were not highlighted in the literature as important. The two factors are motivation and job satisfaction.

Two factors i.e. work-role fit; and organisational characteristics, were identified in the literature as having a significant impact on employee engagement. Although these two factors were mentioned during the interviews by the respondents, when the respondents were asked to apply their minds and identify what they see as the top factors that drive employee engagement, and to rank them in order of importance, the respondents did not identify them. These two factors therefore did not receive a ranking.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This closing chapter of the report summarises the main research findings and conclusions from the literature and the interviews. The chapter proceeds to highlight a number of significant recommendations and then concludes with suggestions for further research.

The research aimed to identify the factors that promote employee engagement in a South African bank, and discover which factors are perceived to have the greatest impact on employee engagement.

Twelve respondents from the Collections Department of a South African bank were interviewed and asked what they think the factors are that drive employee engagement in the bank. They were then asked to apply their minds by reflecting on the interview, and to identify what they believe to be the top three factors and to rank these in order of importance.

According to the responses received from the twelve respondents, 10 factors emerged as having the greatest impact on employee engagement in the bank, and were ranked.

6.2 Conclusions of the study

Table 11 (page 46) shows the factors identified from the literature, listed in order of importance, based on the number of times each factor was mentioned by the respondents during the interviews. All ten of the factors identified from the literature were mentioned in the responses by at least one or more of the respondents. Coaching, social support, good leadership and an environment that nurtures trust and collaboration is a factor that was mentioned by all twelve of the respondents, while organisational characteristics is a factor that was only mentioned by one respondent.

In an attempt to discover the factors that have the greatest impact on employee engagement and obtain a ranking the respondents were asked to apply their minds and identify what they see as the top three factors that drive employee engagement and to rank these in order of importance. From this, ten factors were identified and ranked. Table 15 (page 59) shows how the final ranking was derived, and Table 16 (page 60) provides the final ranking of the most important factors identified by the respondents during the interviews.

Prior to this study, not much was known about the factors that promote employee engagement in South African banks and which of those factors have the greatest impact on employee engagement, as the focus has largely been on performance management rather than on employee engagement and the facilitation of performance. Employee engagement is a relatively new concept which has come to prominence because of its link to individual performance and organisation results. This study has shown that the majority of the employees in the bank are perceived to not be engaged. Ten out of the twelve respondents believe that the majority of the employees working in the bank are not engaged, while two respondents believe that the majority of employees are actively engaged. This is in line with previous research findings that show low levels of employee engagement and growing disengagement among today's employees (Saks, 2006).

It can be concluded from this research study that 80% of the factors that were identified from the literature are the same ones that pertain to the bank which is a very bureaucratic organisation. The results of this study have highlighted the key factors that contribute most to employee engagement and on which managers should focus their efforts in their quest for engaged workers. The study shows that certain factors have a greater impact on employee engagement than others but no single factor will result in an engaged workforce. As many of the identified and ranked factors as possible should be used in combination by managers to ensure an engaged workforce. Leaders play a key role in driving employee engagement and it was noted by a number of the respondents that if the leaders are not engaged, the employees will not be engaged, as they follow the example their leaders set.

6.3 Recommendations

Given the current economic challenges that organisations face, it is more important than ever for management to explore new ways of improving employee performance in order to put their organisation ahead of competitors. The results of this study will provide guidance to organisations by way of a comprehensive list of factors on how they can improve their performance and achieve their strategic goals and objectives by managing and improving the performance of their employees through engagement.

It is recommended that organisations, especially other banks and bureaucratic organisations, review the list of factors identified in this study and try to understand where they are falling short and how they can use and implement the various factors to improve employee engagement. Each factor should be considered and special attention and focus should be placed on the top 3 factors identified in this study being reward and recognition; coaching, social support, good leadership and an environment that nurtures trust and collaboration; and employees feel valued and are treated fairly with respect and dignity.

It is largely the leader's responsibility to keep their employees engaged. Employee engagement can best be tackled through an organisational development intervention that focuses on leadership and culture as precursors to employee engagement.

Managers need to pay particular attention to their relationships at work and the way they interact with employees, as managers have a great influence on employees' perceptions of employee engagement.

6.4 Suggestions for further research

This research study was conducted in order to identify the factors that promote employee engagement in a South African bank, and discover which factors are perceived to have the greatest impact on employee engagement. The following areas are suggested for further research and each area is accompanied by a suggested research question:

- To conduct the same study across different sectors in South Africa and compare whether the list of factors derived is similar or different to the factors identified in this study.

  Suggested research question: How do the factors that promote employee engagement differ across various sectors in South Africa?

- To look at various demographics and compare how differences in age, gender and race affect employee engagement.

  Suggested research question: How do differences in various demographical factors impact employee engagement?

- To look at the characteristics of leaders and identify which characteristics promote and hinder employee engagement.

  Suggested research question: What leadership characteristics promote and hinder employee engagement?

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APPENDIX A

Request letter to respondents

Dear _____,

I am an MBA student at Wits Business School and am currently completing my research report to fulfil the requirements of the degree. The title of my research report is: “Perceived determinants of effective employee engagement in a South Africa bank”. The purpose of the study is to identify the factors that promote employee engagement and to discover which factors are perceived to have the greatest impact on employee engagement.

An engaged employee is defined as somebody who is fully involved in and enthusiastic about their work, personally identifies with their work and has deep psychological and emotional connections with the organisation. Engaged employees feel inspired, energised, motivated, committed and empowered to invest discretionary effort and go beyond the call of duty in order for the organisation to succeed.

The meeting should take no longer than 45 minutes and will take the form of a structured interview in which I will ask you to answer eleven questions relating to the topic of employee engagement. The meeting will take place at your offices at a time and date convenient for you. Your personal details and responses will remain anonymous and confidential.

Thank you for your willingness to take part in the interview. I appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule and I look forward to meeting with you.

Yours faithfully,
Kerry-Lee Holder
Tel: 073 171 3242
E-mail: kerry-lee.holder@absa.co.za

Interview outline for respondents

Details of the respondent:

Name:

Title:

No. of years working in current organisation:

Age range:

25- 30	31- 35	36- 40	41- 45	46- 50	51- 55	56- 60

Gender:

Male	Female

Ethic Group:

Working definition of employee engagement: 'An engaged employee is defined as somebody who is fully involved in and enthusiastic about their work, personally identifies with their work and has deep psychological and emotional connections with the organisation. Engaged employees feel inspired, energised, motivated, committed and empowered to invest discretionary effort and go beyond the call of duty in order for the organisation to succeed'.

Question one:

To what extent do you believe that employees are engaged at this bank?

1- Actively engaged (work with passion and feel a deep connection with the bank)
2- Not engaged ('checked out', put time but not passion into their work)
3- Actively disengaged (act out their unhappiness, and undermine what their engaged colleagues are trying to accomplish)

Question two:

And in your team?

1- Actively engaged (work with passion and feel a deep connection with the bank)
2- Not engaged ('checked out', put time but not passion into their work)
3- Actively disengaged (act out their unhappiness, and undermine what their engaged colleagues are trying to accomplish)

Question three:

What does employee engagement mean to you?

Question four:

What do you think are the key factors that drive employee engagement?

Question five:

What do you think hinders employee engagement in this bank?

Question six:

What are the characteristics of an engaged worker?

Question seven:

How do engaged employees behave? How does this differ from the behaviour of disengaged employees?

Question eight:

Do you agree that your actions can either enhance or reduce levels of engagement in your team? To what extent are you able to influence levels of engagement in your team?

Question nine:

What can you as a leader do to drive the characteristics and behaviours mentioned above in order to enhance employee engagement?

Question ten:

How may a leader reduce levels of engagement?

Question eleven:

Take a moment to reflect on everything that has been discussed so far. What do you think are the top 3 factors that are most important for driving employee engagement? Please rank them in order of importance.