

CONSTRUCTION ENGINEERING MASTERS DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Engagement and motivation within a construction workforce

The concept of employee engagement has become widespread in industry. Research demonstrates that engagement can be a conduit to employees feeling valued, leading to improved motivation, output and business performance. However, there is limited research within the construction industry, specifically pertaining to the construction worker.

The aim of this research was firstly to establish the meaning of employee engagement to a construction workforce and how it specifically affects them. Secondly, to understand the key factors influencing a construction worker's felt value. Felt value is a perception or a belief in what a person is doing, and an individual's mental impression of what they are worth and what a business is worth to that individual. Lastly, to investigate what motivates a construction workforce to improve their output.

The methodology made use of an existing large data set, generated through the Eurofound, 6th Workforce Engagement Survey (2015) to establish patterns between engagement, felt value or worth and motivation. The patterns and trends established by analysing the survey data then formed the basis for discussion in three focus groups held with up to eight construction workers in each group, covering projects across the UK, with different main contractors and employers. The data gathered from the focus groups was then coded and analysed around the primary topics of engagement, felt value and motivation.

The conclusions of the research established, through a qualitative approach, that whilst engagement has little impact on the felt value of a construction worker, it can be linked to negative motivation. That is, if it is carried out in a negative context or poorly delivered the negative outputs are significant and far outweigh any positive impacts of good engagement. When considering what motivates a construction workforce, several factors were identified: the environment which people are asked to work in, the welfare conditions available to the workforce and relationships within a team. Any engagement with construction workers should be based around building trust, strengthening relationships and providing support to the individual. This should be between both managers and employees and most importantly, between colleagues. Providing the environment to empower and support construction workers, will lead to a more motivated construction workforce and in turn an improved work output leading to better project and business performance.

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