

progressing business

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The Engagement Contract

Karen Schmidt, Let's Grow.



We are all familiar with the idea of legal contracts. You encounter them when you buy a house, get a loan or sign up for a mobile phone. They may be annoying and time consuming to read but we know that they are a good idea because they protect our interests and give us a clear understanding of what to expect. Most people are also used to the idea of signing an employment contract when they start a job, outlining the legal obligations of the employer and the employee. Again, this document is designed to protect the interests of all parties and set out expectations.

Well, I don't believe it goes far enough. I think we should take it a step further and introduce an engagement contract.

Like the employment contract, an engagement contract outlines what each party agrees to do or not do during the term of their arrangement. In this case, though, the contract is not about the standard clauses involving hours of work and remuneration. This contract is about the psychological agreement the two parties are making. I know this means it is probably not binding in a court of law, but it's not meant to be. The goal of an engagement contract is to get the parties to recognise the importance of engagement and to be clear on what each side needs to do for engagement to occur. Here are some of my suggestions for what I think should be in a standard engagement contract.

I, the employer, agree to:

- Be engaged myself and act as a role model for you

- Be genuinely interested in your needs and wants
- Communicate openly and honestly with you on a regular basis
- Listen to your ideas
- Admit when I am wrong
- Keep the promises I make and not make promises I can't keep

I, the employee, in return agree to:

- Take responsibility for my own engagement
- Actively contribute to making this a better workplace
- Let you know about issues that are negatively affecting me
- Be open to constructive feedback on my performance
- Admit when I am wrong
- Keep the promises I make and not make promises I can't keep

You will notice that the lists are equal in length, signifying that engagement is the responsibility of both parties. Most points are the same on both lists with some slight modifications. You could also add some of your own organisation specific criteria. The possibilities are endless.

Imagine if we could make signing a contract like this a standard part of our recruitment and induction process. It would really set the scene for the type of relationship we want to have throughout the life of our employment. It would also make it very clear to people who think they are going to turn up to work and do the bare minimum that this is not that kind of organisation.

More information request Schmidt 0711 to
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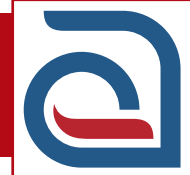
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July 2012

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