



Direct Selling **Strategies**

Are your Consultants satisfied or **engaged** ?

Having an **engaged** sales force is crucial not only to thriving but to surviving in today's competitive and ever-changing market place.

So, what does it mean for a direct selling sales force to be engaged? Engagement, in simple terms, is a consultant's willingness to be consistently active in their business – month-in and month-out – submitting orders and sharing the opportunity with others. Of course consultants are independent contractors and their effort is completely discretionary. But will they engage in the business at the level of effort that they are capable of, or at the level of effort required to "get by" – to maintain on-going consultant status and access to personal discounts.

Engaged consultants feel an emotional bond to their companies. These individuals see the company's goals in line with their personal goals and their team's goals. As a result they're willing to put in additional time and effort to see those goals met.

This emotional response translates to the consultant being ENGAGED, i.e. driven, loyal, focused, committed, accountable, and productive. In addition, an engaged consultant with a positive emotional connection benefits from an enriched work-life balance creating increased retention. Engaged consultants work harder and stay longer.

The emotional connection between a company and its independent direct sellers is the most valuable and meaningful component to driving business growth.

The biggest point of confusion, though, is that people often substitute the term "consultant engagement" with "consultant satisfaction." Engagement and satisfaction are two completely different mindsets. *Engagement* results in the output of additional and discretionary effort.

For example, a consultant may be perfectly satisfied with submitting an order once every other month. That individual is certainly not giving any discretionary effort—and possibly not giving any effort at all—toward their team or the company's overall goals.

An engaged consultant will have engaged customers. Instead of the mantra, "happy consultants equal happy customers," a more accurate phrase would be "engaged consultants equal engaged customers." No matter how great the product is, or how wonderful the pricing is, there is anywhere from a three-to-six-times greater impact on future loyalty based on how the customer is treated by consultants.

Statistics show that “engagement” is more than just a corporate buzzword. Studies show that on average increased consultant engagement can lead to a 57 percent increase in discretionary effort resulting in a 20 percent performance improvement.

Is It Worth It in This Economy?

In a word, yes! Not only is engagement worth it, but it is likely crucial to a company's survival.

The economic turmoil of the last recession (is it over?) has proven that, for some companies, having an engaged sales force literally has meant the difference between success and failure. We believe that we have yet to see the full impact of engaged consultants when it comes to surviving the current changes in the direct selling business model and the increased competition from internet retailers.

In order to make it, companies must first and foremost concentrate on building their culture with an emphasis on uniquely defining themselves. A culture is a group of people sharing the same values. Key questions in regard to core values include:

- Are they authentic or aspirational?
- How well are they communicated?
- How does the company ensure that they are living them?

Now more than ever, it is critical for consultants to be engaged.

Most direct selling companies realize that their consultants are the heart of the company, but are they communicating with them in a way that gives them the best possible opportunity for success?

How Do We Do It?

The creation of an engaging environment starts at the top. One of the greatest fallacies that leaders believe is that consultant engagement is something that should just be delegated to the sales and marketing department. This is not to say that sales and marketing isn't key to the process, but it needs to permeate the entire corporate home office.

Top-level management needs to care about the initiative, they need to understand its potential, and they need to lead by example.

If company management is able to understand the value of an engaged consultant, an individual who is willing and able to give additional, discretionary effort, the entire company will benefit.

It all starts with the basics. For the customer, it means a quality product (continuously innovated) at a competitive price, delivered promptly. For the consultant, it means a lucrative compensation program and technology that is up-to-date and an easy to follow to support their business.

Over and above this, the elements necessary for the creation of engaging environment include:

- A **brand** that is so much more than a good product at a good price. It must be about changing lives – the consultant’s life and the customer’s life. At the heart of the brand is a powerful unique selling proposition that is succinctly, compellingly and eloquently expressed at all customer touch points.
- A **recruiting philosophy** that understands that “you get what you ask for.” A culture is a group of people with shared values. If those values are properly expressed and demonstrated recruiters will be missionaries and not mercenaries and new consultants will be committed on day one – the only day that we believe real commitment can occur.
- An approach towards **training** that not only guides consultants in regard to what they must “DO” to “HAVE” the success they desire but is grounded in who they must “BE” to find fulfillment in their association with the company.
- A system for **recognition** that not only highlights top sales and recruiting achievements but goes beyond to recognize consultants in accordance with how they define success for themselves.

The long-term effect of an engaged workforce is massive. When an engaging work environment becomes an integral part of corporate culture, the ripple effect is extraordinary.

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