

KNOWLEDGE WORKERS ENGAGEMENT IN WORK IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

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Abstract

Nowadays, in the knowledge-based economy, the special role in the process of building competitiveness of the organizations is played by employees who create and use knowledge in their everyday activities, namely knowledge workers. One of the most important factors deciding on the effectiveness of knowledge workers is their engagement in work. Therefore it was concluded that the issue of the employees' engagement is worth the scientific effort. The main objective of the following article is deepening and systematizing the knowledge related to the knowledge workers engagement in work. In the first part of this article the concept of knowledge worker is characterized, discussing such issues as knowledge workers definitions and characteristics. Roles they play in organizations as well as the essence of work perform by them, called knowledge work, is also discussed. Further part of this article focuses mainly on the issue of employee engagement. Particularly, the essence of this concept is explained, that is definitions of employees engagement are cited, dimensions of employees engagement connections to the organization are described, as well as reflection is made on the possibility to influence the level of knowledge workers engagement. Then, benefits that high level of knowledge workers engagement brings to employees, the organization and its stakeholders, as well as determinants of employees engagement are thoroughly analyzed. The author also presents results of the research devoted to the knowledge workers engagement in work. Thanks to this study, it was possible to determine the state of employee engagement as well as factors affecting its level. The final part of the article includes findings resulting from the research and theoretical consideration.

Key words: knowledge, knowledge worker, employee engagement.

Classification JEL: M12 – Personnel Management.

1. Introduction

In knowledge based economy it is extremely important to properly manage employees, who have a major impact on the future of the organization, namely knowledge workers. Managing these people in such a manner as to win their full engagement in work, is a true challenge for the organization they work in and their superiors.

To be able to derive as much as possible from knowledge workers' potential, one must determine whom knowledge workers are, what features characterize them, what knowledge workers expects of the organization in return for the possibility of using their talents, skills, and energy, and finally – what motivates them to the efficient work. Knowledge about the state and drivers of knowledge workers engagement allows managers to determine what actions should be taken in organizations in order to obtain full engagement of this group of employees.

The main research problem of presented article is knowledge workers engagement. The objectives of the study are: (1) identification of the level of knowledge workers engagement, and (3) identification of factors that influence knowledge workers engagement. To achieve these objectives, a questionnaire survey was performed in March 2015 among working people with higher education in Słupsk, Poland. It was assumed that the possession of higher education, which means an above-average level of knowledge in a particular area, is the basic factor distinguishing knowledge workers from other employees. This assumption has been made with the full awareness that this is the simplification.

The theoretical part of this paper was written on the basis of a vast scientific literature. The research part of this article was written on the basis on research conducted for the

purpose of this study (written questionnaire). In this paper the methods of descriptive and quantitative analysis were used, including structure and intensity indicators.

2. Knowledge workers characteristics

Knowledge originates and is applied in the minds of people. It is embedded in an individual's personal mental space and is strongly related to an individual's psychological features, volition, motivation and emotional intelligence (*see: Davenport & Prusak, 2000; Apshvalka & Wendorff, 2005*). Knowledge is localized, acquired, developed, shared, utilized and preserved by people, that's why it is extremely important to manage the knowledge workers properly in order to obtain their full engagement in work (*see: Davenport, 2007; Morello & Caldwell, 2001; Czubasiewicz, 2009; McKeen & Staples, 2001; Morawski, 2003; 2009; Figurska, 2010, 2012, 2015*).

Literature brings many definitions of knowledge workers which usually relate to knowledge management and/or human resources management and/or information management. According to different authors knowledge workers are people, who “*have high degrees of expertise, education or experience, and the primary purpose of their jobs involves the creation distribution, or application of knowledge*” (*Davenport, 2005, p. 10*). They have unique skills as well as are: specialized in their profession, well-informed, active and responsible, aware of their role and their self-worth, independent participants of the organization (*Morawski, 2003, p. 19*). Knowledge workers “*continually strive to understand the world about them and modify their work practices and behaviours to better meet their personal and organisational objectives*” (*Gurteen, 2006, p. 1*). They are employed because of their knowledge of a subject matter, rather than ability to perform manual labor (*Serrat, 2008, p. 1*), are paid for efficiency of thinking, and their minds are regarded as the primary work tools (*Skrzypek, 2009, p. 214*). They work not only with knowledge and information, but also on them (*Nickols, 2012*). Knowledge workers create the greatest added value and affect the value of their organizations (*Davenport, 2007, p. 17*). They “*understand, identify with, and see how their own contribution can be enhanced. They put their best abilities to the test. They challenge and achieve*” (*Serrat, 2008, p. 1*).

Knowledge workers understand, define, influence and help shape their domain of influence, knowledge, activity and responsibility. They understand the people, information and potential resources within that domain as well as have the authority to act within that domain (*Morello & Caldwell, 2001*).

High-qualified human potential (experts and managers) educate and learn themselves all their life and their potential is very wide. They are aware of own possibilities and skills, self-motivated and demanding both to themselves and their surrounds. They are often vulnerable and doubtful about the correctness of decisions they take, and they need to obtain the feedback about their effort and successes. The failures lead knowledge workers to much more intensive behavior and overcoming of the arisen obstacles (*Blaskova & Grazulis, 2009, pp. 415–419*).

The most significant goal of knowledge workers is active participation in knowledge management processes.

Competent knowledge worker presents appropriate attitudes such as: *involvement in work*, depending to a large extent on their inner hierarchy of needs, *trust* which signifies an inner belief the other part is trustworthy in mutual relations, *creative direction*, constituting the basis for the creation of new knowledge, flexibility, the improvement of production quality, proactive attitude of an organization towards environment, providing services and mutual respect among people, as well as *mutual respect* between people which conditions the obtainment of the aforementioned attitudes (*Mikuła, 2006, pp. 217–219*).

To explain the place of knowledge workers in the organization, Mikuła (*2010, pp. 20–21*)

compares the organization to house. Knowledge workers, who combine above-average substantive competence to intellectual competence, are the roof of the house, which protects the organization against various types of threats appearing in the environment.

Taking into consideration definitions and characteristics of knowledge worker, from the organizational point of view it seems reasonable to describe such employee as a person who (Figure 1):

- Has – knowledge, experience, social competences, values, etc.,
- Wants to – develop, share and use knowledge, experience, social competences, as well as use resources, methods, tools etc.,
- Is able to – use knowledge, experiences, tools, resources, methods etc. thanks to his skills,
- Can – is provided by the organization the opportunity to actively participate in the realization of knowledge management processes,
- Is needed – his knowledge, experience, social competencies, engagement, etc. are important for achieving the objectives of the organization.

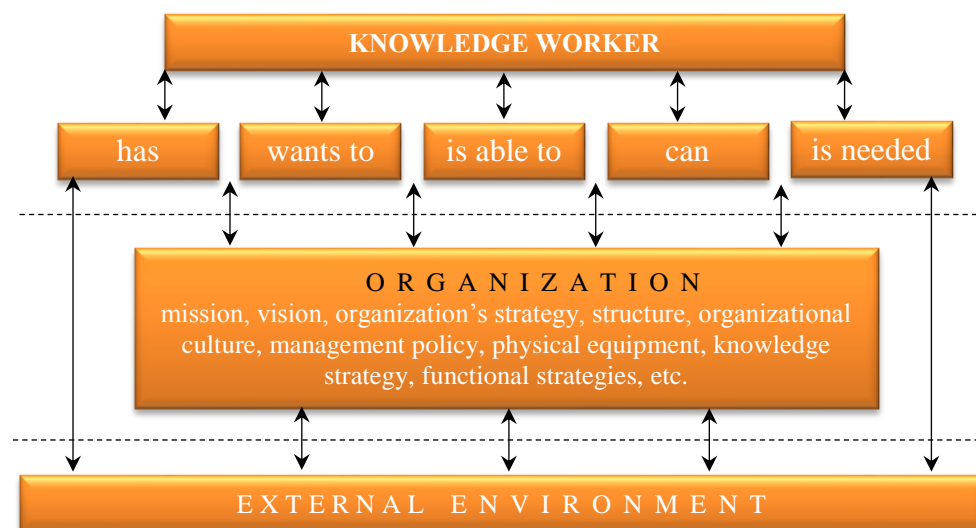


Figure 1. Knowledge worker characteristics (Figurska, 2015, p. 83)

The potential of knowledge worker is under the influence of both the specificity of the organization (its mission, vision, strategy, structure, culture, management policy etc.) he works in, as well as the external environment, which provides the organization and employees with different resources, including data, information and knowledge. However, knowledge worker – through his knowledge-based decisions and actions – actively interacts with the organization and may affect its external environment as well. For example, developed by the knowledge worker an innovative solution to a problem (organizational, technical etc.) faced by the organization, can be good enough to become a standard in the industry and/or to give the organization competitive advantage on the market (Figurska, 2015, p. 84).

To sum up, definitions and characteristics of knowledge workers emphasize the importance of their knowledge and/or their education and/or their personal traits and/or actions taken by them and/or attitudes presented by them and/or their core values. Observed differences stem from the different approaches presented by different authors, and realize the vastness and complexity of the subject.

Assumption, that knowledge worker is any person utilizing the knowledge in his work, is not so precise. It is necessary to draw attention not only to the employee's potential (knowledge, skills, experience, values, etc.) but also to the needs of the organization. Employee who has a high level of competence that are not useful at work, or there is no possibility to use them at work, can be seen only as a potential knowledge worker (*Figurska, 2015, p. 84*).

3. Types and roles of knowledge workers

The question arises which types of employees can be considered as knowledge workers? According to Davenport (*2005, pp. 5–6*): management, business and financial operations, computer and mathematical, architecture and engineering, life, physical and social scientists, legal, healthcare practitioners, community and social services, education, training and library, arts, design, entertainment as well as sports and media are categories of 'the knowledge worker camp'.

Taking into account the actions taken in the field of knowledge and information, Porat (*1998, pp. 103–113*) distinguishes five groups of knowledge workers:

- Knowledge producers: scientists, engineers, lawyers, architects, accountants, computer programmers etc.;
- Knowledge distributors: teachers, librarians, archivists, editors, journalists, etc.;
- Market search and coordination specialists: enumerators and interviewers, estimators, investigators, surveyors, buyers, shippers, brokers, auctioneers, advertising agents, salesmen, administrators, managers, process control workers, etc.;
- Information processors: proofreaders, secretaries, file clerks, telegraph messengers, statistical clerks, bank tellers, bookkeepers, cashiers, typists, sales clerks, etc.;
- Information machine workers: stenographers, printing apprentices, data processing machine repair computer/telegraph/telephone/radio operators, telephone installers, etc.

Knowledge workers can play different roles in the organization they work for. Reinhardt and colleagues (*2011, p. 160*) propose a classification of the roles of knowledge workers and describe actions they are expected to perform during their daily work. *Controllers* monitor the organizational performance based on raw information. *Helpers* transfer information to teach others, once they passed a problem. *Learners* use information and practices to improve personal skills and competence. *Linkers* associate and mash up information from different sources to generate new information. *Networkers* create personal or project related connections with people involved in the same kind of work, to share information and support each other. *Organizers* are involved in personal or organizational planning of activities, e.g. to-do lists and scheduling. *Retrievers* search and collect information on a given topic, while *sharers* disseminate information in a community. *Solvers* find or provide a way to deal with a problem, and *trackers* monitor and react on personal and organizational actions that may become problems.

The above-described types of knowledge workers and roles played by them to a great extent are determined by a kind of work they perform in the organization. Knowledge work is oriented toward exploring, experiencing and trying. It creates value primarily through manipulation of ideas or symbols and occurs primarily in intellectual domains (*Austin, 2002*). It consists of converting information from one form to another, therefore the results of a knowledge work processes are frequently intangible (*Nickols, 2012*).

Bernstein (*2010, p. 6*) describes knowledge work as an interaction between: *technology*, which is driving the productivity of knowledge work, *information*, which is the basis for knowledge and decision making, *humans*, who are performing the work and *organizations*, which provide the structure and networks for knowledge work.

Morello and Caldwell (*2001*) distinguish three types of knowledge work. *Task-based*

knowledge work revolves around explicit operational processes, pre-engineered routines, well-defined responses and administrative activities. *Skill-based* knowledge work encompasses domains of expertise that are well-defined, well-prescribed, demonstrable, conducive to hands-on training and apprenticeships. *Innovation-focused* knowledge work is characterized by tacit knowledge, high creativity, intense collaboration, communities of practice, high improvisation and extensive role versatility. As state mentioned above authors, “*Knowledge work steadily transforms task-based and skill-based workers into people who are asked, expected and empowered to make value-added decisions instantly, whether in the office, on the manufacturing floor, in customer service departments or on delivery routes*” (Morello & Caldwell, 2001).

Core knowledge work activities involve: applying, presenting, sharing, analyzing, organizing, evaluating, retrieving, storing and securing information with the goal of making decisions and delivering services. These activities are supported or automated by the use of appropriate tools and applications Bernstein (2010, p.4).

Distinguishing a knowledge work from traditional work is not an easy task. “*The main feature differentiating knowledge work from other conventional work is that the basic task of knowledge work is thinking. Although all types of jobs entail a mix of physical, social, and mental work, it is the perennial processing of non-routine problems that require non-linear and creative thinking that characterizes knowledge work*” (Reinhardt et al., 2011, p. 150).

In summary, it should be clearly stated, that identification of knowledge workers through their occupations rises some concerns. Because of globalization, socio-economic development and technical advancement certain professions disappear from the market, while others appear. It is not possible to determine with absolute certainty which professions, based on knowledge creation and use, will operate on the market in the coming decades. Therefore, it appears that classifying people into a group of knowledge workers it is better to assume that *the knowledge worker is the employee whose passion, work and professional career are associated with active participation in the knowledge management processes (localization, acquiring, development, sharing, use and preservation)*, (Figurska, 2015, pp. 85–86).

4. The concept of employee engagement

Employee engagement is a growing area of focus for both scientists and business practitioners. Many books and articles are published on this subject, as well as many conferences, seminars, trainings and workshops are organized. Furthermore, the range of services of consulting firms focused on projects in the field of employee engagement is growing steadily. The issue of creating employee engagement is of special importance with reference to knowledge workers, who when engaged can contribute to the success of the organization, but when disengaged – can contribute to its defeat in the market.

Despite the growing interest in the employee engagement, the one definition of this concept that would be widely accepted both in academic and business circles, has not yet been elaborated. According to different authors employee engagement can be defined as:

- The psychological state and behavioral outcomes that lead to better performance (Aon Hewitt, 2014, p. 11);
- Positive state of employee which leads to take activities which are positive for the employer. Positive state means: deriving pleasure from work, optimism to the task, doing his/her best, treatment of work in the organization as an important aspect of his/her life (Barometr Zaangazowania, 2012, p. 11);
- Desirable condition that has an organizational purpose, and connotes involvement, commitment, passion, enthusiasm, focused effort, and energy (Macey & Schneider, 2008, p. 4);

- The emotional commitment the employee has to the organization and its goals (*Kruse, 2012*);
- Translating employee potential into employee performance and business success and thus changing the way employees perform by utilizing the tools in the armory of internal communication professionals (*Melcrum Publishing, 2005*);
- “*The extent to which employees go the extra mile and put discretionary effort into their work – contributing more of their energy, creativity and passion on the job,*” (*Towers Perrin, 2010, p. 5*);
- An active, positive work-related state that is characterized by: vigor (which refers to high levels of energy and mental resilience while working), dedication (which refers to being strongly involved in one’s work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, and challenge) and absorption (which is characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in work), (*Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p. 295*).

The above-mentioned and many other definitions existing in the literature associate employees engagement with their: attitude, behavior, emotions, potential, actions, as well as contributions to the organization’s success.

According to Towers Perrin Global Workforce Study (2010, p. 5), employees’ engagement reflects their connections to the organization across three dimensions:

- Rational, which shows how well employees understand their roles and responsibilities;
- Emotional, which presents how much passion and energy they bring to their work;
- Motivational, which shows how well they perform in their roles.

Full engagement represents an alignment of maximum job satisfaction (“*I like my work and do it well*”) with maximum job contribution (“*I help achieve the goals of my organization*”), (*Masarech, 2011, p. 3*). It means that job satisfaction without job contribution as well as job contribution without job satisfaction doesn’t guarantee an expected by the organization a level of employees’ engagement.

From the point of view of managing knowledge workers, it is worth considering whether the employee engagement is a constant feature, or is it possible to influence it?

Many managers are convinced that the level of employee engagement is his constant predisposition. Making such assumption means that in practice some employees have higher intensity of this feature and will always give of themselves more than other employees, who will give of themselves less irrespective of decisions and action taken by the manager or the employer (*Barometr Zaangażowania, 2012, p. 12*).

Such approach is very convenient for managers who don’t want to take responsibility for the state and development of knowledge workers engagement, or are not aware of the impact they can have on engagement of subordinates. Those managers feel justified in shifting the responsibility for the level of employee engagement onto the employees themselves (improper behavior, attitude, etc.), the company and HR departments (bad reward systems, no tools, ineffective process of recruitment etc.). From the manager’s point of view it is easier to assume that he has no influence on engagement of subordinates than take actions aimed at increasing a level of their commitment.

To sum up, assuming that engagement of the employee is his constant feature seems to be very comfortable for ... disengaged managers. Managers who want to achieve as much as possible thanks to engaged knowledge workers, should treat actions aimed at building employees engagement as an integral part of their everyday work.

5. Effects of high level of employees’ engagement

High level of knowledge workers’ engagement brings benefits to themselves, the organization in which they work, as well as the organization’s stakeholders.

Engaged employees: derive more pleasure from their work, have a sense of realization of their potential, feel that they are doing something important for themselves and the environment, realize their ideas and professional ambitions, go beyond the routine procedures and undertake challenges, improve working methods and improve the organization as well as actively shape the work environment (<http://barometrzaangazowania.com>).

The most important result of a high level of engagement is an improvement in the welfare – engagement influences the growth of employees' life satisfaction, more frequent feeling of positive emotions as well as heightens self-esteem and sense of meaning. What's more, engaged employees enjoy better physical and mental health: they have a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, rarely suffer from headaches or problems with the gastric system, half as often suffer from depression.

As Bakker (2011, p. 268) states: *“Engaged employees are physically, cognitively, and emotionally connected with their work roles. They feel full of energy, are dedicated to reach their work-related goals, and are often fully immersed in their work.”* On the other hand, not engaged employees are *“[...] sleepwalking through their workday, putting time - but not energy or passion - into their work”* (Gallup's Report, 2013, p. 17).

Engagement of highly skilled employees can easily create innovation, because *“There are many similarities between innovation and HR strategy – both are oriented on higher productivity and better competitiveness, and both are based on engagement of creative and dedicated employees, including managers”* (Matuska, 2014, p. 215).

Thanks to engaged subordinates, managers achieve benefits as well. The success of a manager depends on many factors, but the most important are attitudes presented by employees and actions taken by them. Every manager would like to have engaged employees in his team. Such employees present behaviors which positively affect effectiveness and efficiency of the team and thereby bring benefits for both the employer and the manager. Thus the high level of employees' engagement allows for: increasing the effectiveness of the key processes and productivity, delivering the extraordinary customer service as well as reducing the fluctuation and lowering absence (<http://barometrzaangazowania.com>).

Masarech (2011, p. 3) involves high employee engagement to discretionary effort, innovation, customer loyalty, quality, profitability, productivity and retention of top talent. This is confirmed by results of the research conducted by Barometr Zaangazowania, which shows that engaged employees 10 times more often seek innovative ways of working, 10 times more often speak with pride about their work, 8 times more often recommend their company as an employer, 8 times more often engage in a process of change and 6 times more often meet the goals of the organization (*Barometr Zaangazowania, 2012, p. 8*).

Ogneva (2012) in turn states, that engaged employees: turn customers into engaged advocates, are a source of knowledge, produce, save money and leads to higher stock price. Kruse (2012) presents Engagement-Profit Chain which shows how employee engagement leads to higher stock prices (Figure 2).

KPMG (2011, p. 7) lists the following benefits of a high level of employee engagement:

- Increased operational performance;
- Higher profit growth;
- Reduced reliance on financial incentives for employee engagement;
- Reduced sick days and absenteeism;
- Stronger ambassadors who recommend the company's products and services;
- Reduced recruitment costs due to higher retention rates;
- A strong people brand which attracts superior quality candidates and reduces recruitment costs;

- More committed staff who willingly go beyond their job specification to deliver exceptional service to benefit the business;
- Sustainable change due to better identification and alignment with the needs and motivations of employees;
- Greater understanding of the job, the team, the organization and how their role aligns to its strategy;
- Realization of business strategies by empowering people.

To summarize the above considerations, presented in the literature results of the researches referring to the level, determinants and effects of employees' engagement indicate that activities aimed at building engagement of knowledge workers bring tangible results to the organization, managers, employees and stakeholders.



Figure 2. Engagement-profit Chain (based on: Kruse, 2012)

6. Drivers of employee engagement

Assuming that it is possible to influence a level of employees engagement, it is necessary to identify determinants of engagement, that is factors that may increase or decrease knowledge workers engagement. Knowledge of these determinants gives superiors the ability to take appropriate decisions and action resulting in the increase of subordinates engagement.

As already mentioned, consulting firms have a special contribution to the development of the theory and practice of employee engagement. One of these companies, Aon Hewitt, lists 10 drivers of employee engagement, such as (AON Hewitt, 2012, pp. 18–19):

- Career opportunities – employees' perceive a favorable set of circumstances for their future in the organization;
- Recognition – employees' contributions and accomplishments in their work is acknowledged and noticed;
- Organization reputation – the organization is regarded as a good place to work by those outside the organization;
- Communication (practices) – communication is effective across the organization and employees have the information they need to do their jobs well;
- Managing performance – the organization's formal performance management processes provide feedback and guidance to improve performance;
- Pay – employees' perceive their pay as appropriate, relative to their performance and contributions;
- Innovation – the organization looks for and accepts new ideas from its employees;
- Brand alignment – the promises an organization makes to its employees are consistent with the employee work experience;
- People/HR practices – company's formal policies and informal practices create a positive work environment;

- Career aspiration – ability to accomplish a major (from personal point of view or in the opinion of other people) achievement.

According to Towers Perrin (2003, p. 10) determinants of employee engagement are, in order of importance: senior management's interest in employees' well-being, challenging work, decision-making authority, evidence that the company is focused on customers, career advancement opportunities, the company's reputation as a good employer, a collaborative work environment where people work well in teams, resources to get the job done, input on decision making, a clear vision from senior management about future success.

To identify factors that determine the level of knowledge workers engagement, it is worthwhile getting to know their expectations towards organizations they work in, the nature of the job itself, superiors and co-workers. To be highly engaged and effective, knowledge worker (Figurska, 2015, pp. 93–94):

- Needs to be treated not as a component of the system, but as an individual who has his own needs, values, opinions, feelings, problems;
- Needs to be informed about activities and plans of the company as well as threats and opportunities affecting its functioning, what give him the wider context of his work;
- Needs to receive feedback on issues related to his work, thanks to which he knows how his work is evaluated, which of his competences should be developed, etc.;
- Expects that his professional achievements will be appreciated by managers;
- Expects tolerance for making mistakes, because mistakes are inextricably connected with human creativity and innovativeness;
- Needs to be provided with adequate technical and organizational working conditions which enable him to devote his time and effort to activities generating added value to the organization;
- Needs to be provided with the opportunities of professional development, because the desire to satisfy this need of is a strong motivator for taking (or not) specific activities;
- Needs to be engaged in the process of management so he will influence decisions and actions taken in the organization, by what he feels valued and appreciated;
- Needs to be independent in making decisions regarding his tasks and duties and in performing his job;
- Needs to be respected as an employee and as a man, so he feels comfortable at work,
- expects that work performed by him corresponds to his knowledge and skills by which his potential can be fully exploited;
- Needs to be provided with professional challenges at work, so he does not fall into a routine;
- Expects the lack of excessive bureaucracy what makes his professional life much more easy and enables him to focus on activities that are important to him as well as bring added value to the organization;
- Expects to be treated as a trustworthy person with respect to both him as a man and his professional competence, who does not need to be under strict control;
- Needs an appropriate working atmosphere, thanks to which the organization becomes a place where he wants to go, of which he says with pride, and for which he wants to do more than just what is necessary;
- Expects a high level of competence of the superior, what means that superior's knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors let employees perceive him as an reliable/responsible/trustworthy, etc. person;
- Expects consistency between his remuneration and his contribution to work, in other words – expects financial appreciation.

It can be assumed that the organization which meets the above-mentioned needs of knowledge workers can expect the increase in the level of their engagement in work. These needs can be considered as drivers of knowledge workers engagement (Figure 3).

It is worth mentioning, that engagement of knowledge worker depends not only on factors related to the organization (people, culture, policies, structure, etc.) but also on the environment (family status, situation on labor market, etc.), and knowledge worker himself – his features, values, norms etc. Masarech (2011, p. 3) confirms this by stating that “Individuals must own their engagement. They come to work with unique motivators, interests, talents, and goals. They can’t expect your organization to provide a formula tailored to fit their unique definition of meaningful, satisfying work.”

However hereinafter this paper focuses on determinants of employee engagement associated with the organization and its characteristics.



Figure 3. Organizational drivers of knowledge workers engagement (own study)

7. Employee engagement in the light of the research

Employee engagement is typically measured using an employee engagement survey developed specifically for this purpose. Such survey should be focused on collecting data that are relevant and possible to act on, because employees asked for their opinions, expect action to follow.

In March 2015 the study was conducted among working people with higher education. Overall 250 questionnaires were distributed, 210 questionnaires were correctly filled, giving a return of 84%. The subject of the survey was knowledge workers engagement in organizations. The purpose of the study was to gain respondents opinions on the subject of the state and determinants of knowledge workers engagement.

The majority of the research participants were people between 25–34 years old (43.6%) and those under 25 years of age (34.5%). 12.7% of the respondents were in the age group between 35–44 years old, and those who were 45 years old or older constituted 9.2% of the whole group. The managerial positions were occupied by 20.9% of the researched group, others were employed on non-managerial posts.

The employee desire to stay in the organization in which he works for longer is one of the key reflections of his engagement in work. Therefore, respondents were asked if they plan to change their jobs and leave the organization they work in? In response to this question every fifth respondent say “*definitely yes and I’m actively looking for a new job*”. Considerable group of people, because as many as 35.5%, consider the possibility of leaving the organization they work in, and the same percentage of study participants declare that they are definitely not going to leave their organization. Other respondents were not able to answer this question by stating that they haven’t given some thought to it.

Among respondents holding managerial positions percentage of people who want to leave organizations in which they work is significantly lower than in case of non-managers (respectively 4.3% and 25.3%), but the percentage of people who want to stay in organization they work in is higher (respectively 47.8% and 32.2%).

From the point of view of taking actions aimed at building engagement of knowledge workers it is important to know factors that they take into consideration deciding whether to stay in or leave the organization in which they work. Respondents could indicate maximum 3 the most important factors determining their decisions on this matter (Table 1).

Table 1: Determinants of decisions regarding staying in or leaving the organization (own study)

	I am staying in the organization	I am considering the possibility of leaving the organization	I am definitely leaving the organization
1.	atmosphere	pay	pay
2.	relationships with co-workers	career prospects	career prospects
3.	relationships with superiors	atmosphere	opportunities to develop knowledge and skills
4.	pay	management style	relationships with superiors
5.	opportunities to develop knowledge and skills	relationships with superiors	atmosphere
6.	situation on the labor market	opportunities to develop knowledge and skills	management style
7.	the kind and the scope of responsibilities	the kind and the scope of responsibilities	relationships with co-workers
8.	career prospects	relationships with co-workers	organizational working conditions
9.	technical working conditions	organizational working conditions	the kind and the scope of responsibilities
10.	organizational working conditions	technical working conditions	technical working conditions
11.	management style	situation on the labor market	situation on the labor market

Respondents who have decided to leave the organization, the most often indicate: pay level (60.9% of this group of respondents), career prospects (52.2%) and opportunities to develop knowledge and skills (47.8%) as reasons for seeking a new job.

Respondents that consider leaving the organization, which they currently work in, take into account mainly: pay level (66.7% of this group of respondents), career prospects (43.6%), atmosphere in the organization (25.6%) and management style (25.6%).

Those who intend to stay in the organization, appreciate mainly: atmosphere at work (46.2% of this group of respondents), relationships with co-workers (35.9%), relationships with superiors (33.3%), and pay level (33.3%).

Analysis of factors that have a major impact on the employees, staying in or leaving the organization they work in, shows some discrepancies. Factors determining employee’s

staying in the organization, are primarily ‘soft’ and are largely related to emotions. Factors determining leaving the organization by employees are related to the lack of satisfying their material needs (pay) and the lack of opportunities for further professional development.

It is worth noting that the lack of opportunities to develop knowledge and skills is a very important factor inducing employees to change their jobs, and important for employees who don’t want to leave organizations in which they work, what is of special importance in case of knowledge workers.

To rank factors listed above according to their validity in the process of employees’ decision-making on their further place of work, for every factor an average of the place taken by this factor in each of three cases (*I am staying in the organization; I am considering the possibility of leaving the organization; Definitely I am leaving the organization*) was counted.

And so, the most important factor taken into account by the respondents is *pay*, then the *atmosphere*, and on the third place together – *relations with the superior* and *career prospects*. Such determinants as: technical working conditions, organizational working conditions as well as the kind and the scope of responsibilities, are significantly less likely to be taken into account by employees. The situation on the labor market was primarily taken into account by those who do not plan to change their jobs.

Respondents were also asked about the levels of their: job satisfaction, self-motivation to work and engagement to work. They were supposed to allot points, where 5 points meant the highest level of characteristics, and 1 point – the lowest. Then the average of points was calculated for each characteristic.

The highest average level of listed above characteristics was attributed to the respondents engagement in work (4.2), because as many as 44.5% of them declare that they are highly engaged (5 points) and 42.7% declare that they are engaged (4 points). The level of job satisfaction and the level of self-motivation to work are slightly lower and the average of these characteristics was 3.7 and 3.8 respectively. Persons that are very satisfied (5 points) with their work constitute 23.6% of all respondents, and those who are satisfied (4 points) – 34.5%. Every fourth respondent assesses himself as highly motivated (5 points), and 38.3% of survey participants – as motivated (4 points), (Figure 4).

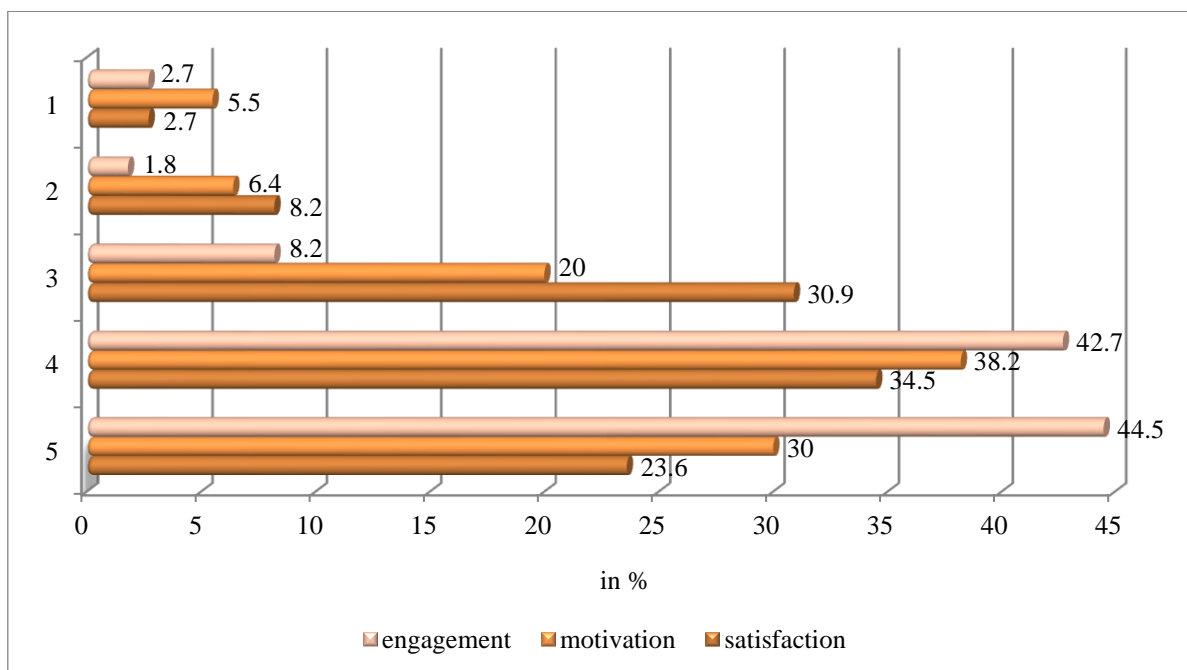


Figure 4. Self-assessment of engagement, motivation and job satisfaction (own study)

The subjective self-assessment of the level of the respondents work engagement seemed unreliable. With high probability, declaring overstated level of their engagement results from their internal need of positive perceiving oneself as an employee. Therefore, it was decided to verify the level of respondents' engagement by analyzing answers to questions concerning symptoms of engagement. It was assumed that truly engaged employees:

- Do not intend to leave the organization in which they work;
- Give of themselves more than is required;
- Are very satisfied with the work;
- Speak with pride about their organizations.

Bearing in mind criteria listed above, the selection of the respondents was made. Those who don't want to leave their organizations and give of themselves more than required state 19.1% of all respondents. Almost 48% people in this group (that state 9.1% of all respondents) are very satisfied, the rest are satisfied with their work.

The selection of the respondents lets to distinguish a group of people which are characterized by the highest levels of meeting of all criteria. These fully engaged in work knowledge workers constitute only the 7.3% of all respondents (Figure 5).

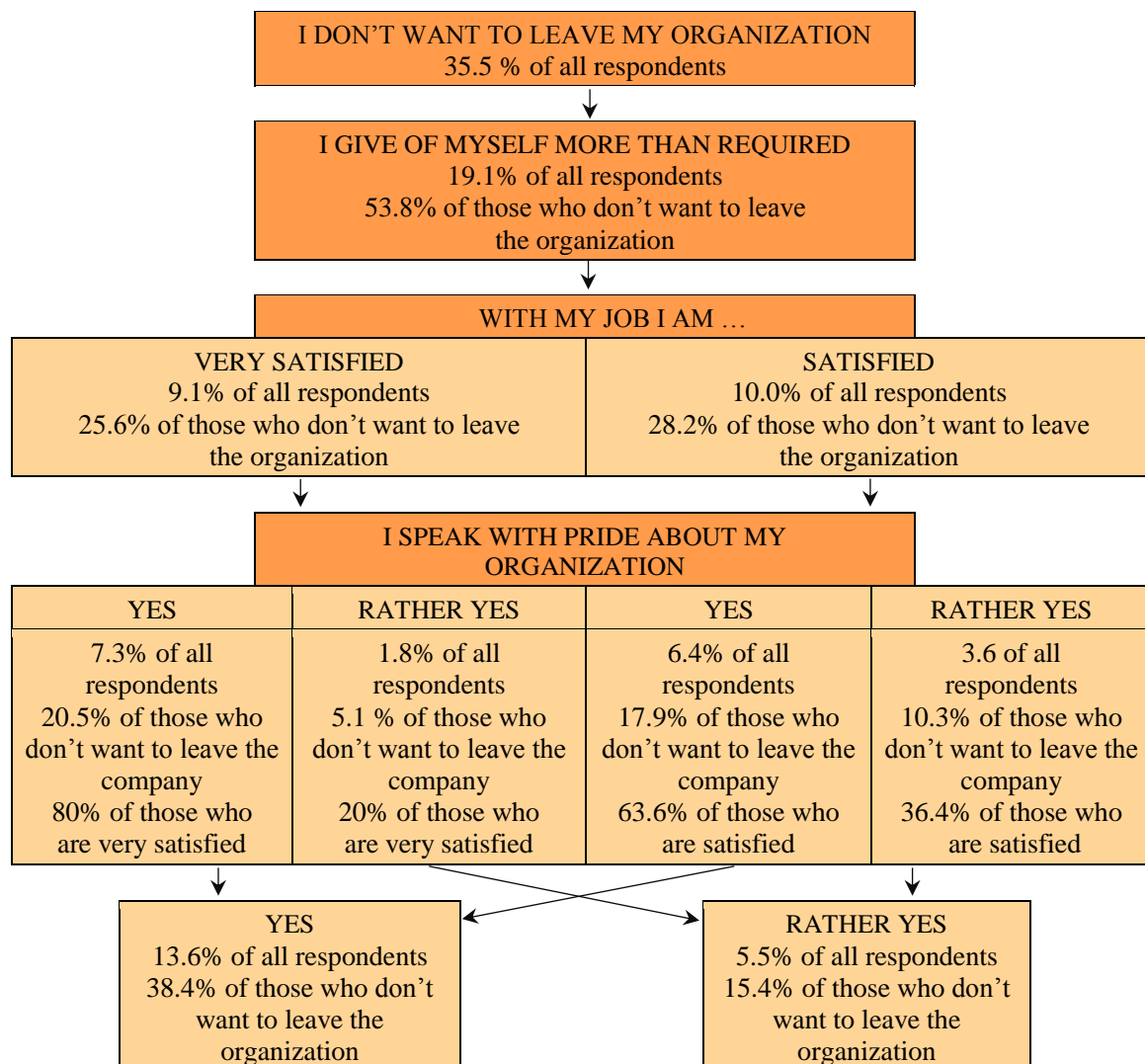


Figure 5. Symptoms of engagement (own study)

The high level of work engagement also present people who declare the highest level of meeting of the first three criteria, what means that they don't want to leave their organizations, they give of themselves more than is required as well as are very satisfied with their work, and would *rather* talk about their work with pride. They represent 1.8% of the survey participants.

Those respondents that present the highest level of meeting the first two criteria and are satisfied (but not very satisfied) with their work, can be perceived as employees that are engaged in work. Every tenth survey participant is in this group.

Summing up, the results of the survey conducted for the purpose of presented article show that the subjectively perceived by knowledge workers level of their engagement to work and objectively verified through analysis of answers to questions about symptoms of engagement, are fundamentally different. The need for positive perception of oneself as a person and employee makes employees assessment of the level of their own commitment overstated in relation to the actual level presented by them in their daily work. This is a valuable indication for those who carry out or intend to carry out research on employee engagement in organizations.

Pay equivalent to the employees input in work, good atmosphere at work, opportunities for career development, appropriate relationships with people (in particular with superiors), opportunities for knowledge and skills development are factors which have the greatest influence on the employees decisions about changing a place of employment or staying in the organization in which they work.

8. Conclusion

Knowledge workers constitute a specific group of employees. In knowledge based economy their knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors, increasingly determine the success or failure of the organizations in which they work. Commitment to work is on the one hand a feature attributed to knowledge workers, on the other hand – the challenge for organizations and managers.

Even high internal motivation to work faced with an inadequate organizational culture, obstructive procedures, bureaucracy, unacceptable personnel policy or the incompetent superior, will lose on power, and knowledge workers with high potential and intentions to give of themselves more than required, will turn into passive employees or will induced to change place of employment.

Although recognizing and satisfying the needs of knowledge workers can be difficult for the organizations, benefits they can achieve thanks to work of engaged employees are very measurable, because highly engaged employees work more, harder and more effectively. In other words, activities aimed at building employees engagement pay off, as evidenced by the results of researches carried out systematically by various consulting firms.

In case of knowledge workers it is sometimes difficult or even impossible to note and assess the level of their engagement only on the basis of their work observation. As already mentioned, the main tool of their work is their mind, and the processes taking place in peoples' minds cannot be visibly observed. It is difficult to assess whether in a given situation knowledge workers gave their all or could have given more. To determine the level of engagement managers should observe effects of their work, and attitudes and behaviors presented by employees, as well as ask them about emotions which accompany them at work and in relation to work in their workplace. Therefore researches on employees' engagement are so valuable. Thanks to systematic studies on knowledge workers engagement it is possible to determine both the state of engagement and its determinants, as well as their changes, what is very important in the context of planning and taking appropriate actions aimed at building employees engagement in the organization.

Summing up, it should be emphasized that nowadays, in the knowledge-based economy, building engagement of knowledge workers, which requires a systematic and comprehensive approach, is not a matter of choice but a necessity for organizations that want to be competitive in the market. However, as shown by the results of a study, in the area of building knowledge workers engagement, it is still much to be done. Only every fourteenth person participating in the study is fully engaged in the work, which is a very poor result. Although this situation is an effect of many different factors, it can be assumed that decisions and actions of superiors of knowledge workers are essential factors.

The building of knowledge workers engagement in the organization is a complex problem. The following article doesn't deplete the topic and is only a basis for further considerations.

The analysis of the survey results was made with full awareness of the limitations resulting from the relatively small number of respondents. Thus, although the generalization based on this research is not possible, the results indicate both the future directions of research, and are important information for organizations and managers who want to 'keep an eye' on engagement of employees.

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