

# THE INSIDE-OUT APPROACH TO ENGAGEMENT



Ian Hutchinson

See Ian Hutchinson at the HR Summit Melbourne  
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[www.thehrsummit.com](http://www.thehrsummit.com)

Most Australian workers spend the majority of their lives going to work, being at work and stressing about work just so they can acquire that dream home and comfortable lifestyle they've always wanted. But having to constantly worry about maintaining a work-life balance and financial security can often obscure what one really wants in life, inevitably leading to disengagement in both their work and themselves. Many companies provide a smorgasbord of 'perks' to satisfy their employees. But are these band-aid solutions a way to solve employee disengagement? Are companies only creating a whinge-entitlement culture in the workplace?

*Ailene Belesina* spoke to an industry expert about why too many companies take a self-defeating hit-and-miss approach to employee engagement

CEO and founder of Life by Design Ian Hutchinson believes that employees are only five minutes away from achieving a culture of self responsibility and gain a sense of life direction.

**HC:** What is employee engagement?

**IH:** Employee engagement is where the hearts and minds of individuals are committed to the success of the business, and they are excited and proud to be working in the organisation. I do think there is a big difference between attraction, retention and engagement of employees. Attraction gets them in the door through recruitment and advertising process. Retention gets them to stay in the organisation. I've never been a big fan of retention because people can be retained but not necessarily engaged.

**HC:** What role does Life by Design play in employee engagement?

**IH:** We specialise in self-driven employee engagement. Our whole approach is to help organisations create a culture of self leadership and self responsibility.

**HC:** What are the 'seven engagement drivers'? How are these used to turn disengaged employees around?

**IH:** The seven engagement drivers are the key principles for creating an engaged organisation. They not only attract and retain employees, but also engage them to become advocates of the organisation they work for. The problem is that most individuals psychologically know what they don't want, but it's hard to actually work out what they do want.

The seven engagement drivers are:

1. **Leadership:** Keeps employees informed and appreciated
2. **Purpose:** The organisation has a meaningful purpose that makes a difference
3. **Reward:** Employees are rewarded for their contributions – other than financial rewards – to the company's success
4. **Opportunity:** Having a work culture that promotes constant learning and development opportunities
5. **Relationships:** Having a positive, open and collaborative relationship between leaders and employees at all levels

6. **Job fulfilment:** The nature of one's job role consistently energises each individual
  7. **Work-life balance:** Acknowledging, supporting and encouraging that everyone has a life outside of work
- Organisations are being sucked in to the whinge-entitlement culture, where employees expect more and more out of the companies they work for without necessarily knowing what they really want.

Providing a smorgasbord of employee 'perks', such as gym memberships or employee assistance programs, doesn't necessarily meet everyone's needs. There have been a lot of band-aid solutions out there which aim only to treat the symptoms, but do not necessarily treat the problem in hand.

**“Organisations are being sucked in to the whinge-entitlement culture, where employees expect more and more out of the companies they work for without necessarily knowing what they really want” – Ian Hutchinson**

**HC: What approach does Life by Design use? How does your system get tailored to each individual?**

**IH:** Life by Design works with organisations on two levels:

1. **Working from the top down:** Helping leaders understand what the seven engagement drivers are
2. **Working from the bottom up:** Helping individuals better work out what they want in their life, work and finances

We look at a company's engagement research and we will design or fine-tune the self-leadership approach around those engagement drivers based on their research. We go through a process to ensure that the programs we develop are tailored to each individual.

- **Stage 1: Diagnosis** – Analysing the research results
- **Stage 2: Planning phase** – Where we run a foundation program to make sure that there's a cultural fit
- **Stage 3: Implementation** – We run a series of programs for the people in the company
- **Stage 4: Sustainability** – This is where MeCentral ([www.mecentral.com](http://www.mecentral.com)) comes in, which allows people to look after themselves on an ongoing basis. This web-based program helps individuals get access to resources and tools where they can get more control of their work-life balance, job fulfilment, lifestyle and personal cash-flow situation. This is what we refer to as the self-driven approach. HR can also receive regular statistical reports, which gives them more qualified information that they wouldn't normally get from just any engagement research.

**HC: How big a problem is employee disengagement for Australian companies?**

**IH:** I believe that this is the number one problem for many Australian companies. I also believe that all organisations should

treat their employees as their number one customer, because if you don't look after your employees then you wouldn't physically be able to look after your customers. This is what we refer to as the inside-out approach.

**HC: Where do you think Australian companies get the basics wrong?**

**IH:** I think that leaders or managers don't understand that they need to treat their employees as their number one customers. Good leaders should be able to work with individuals on a one-on-one basis to identify what the seven engagement drivers are. The problem is that although focus is being placed on making and ensuring a profitable business, many leaders have not been educated on how to look after their people.

Another key issue is that companies are not implementing specific strategies based on their engagement research results. Analysing the results can become overwhelming, therefore Life by Design works with these companies to help them work out what the best implementation strategies are which are simple, easy and scalable.

At Life by Design, we believe the inside-out approach is the way to go, where we help individuals figure out what they really want and get clarity about what they want.

Inevitably, this creates a self-responsible culture which neutralises the whinge-entitlement culture. **HC**

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