

# ENGAGEMENT & VIRTUAL WORKERS

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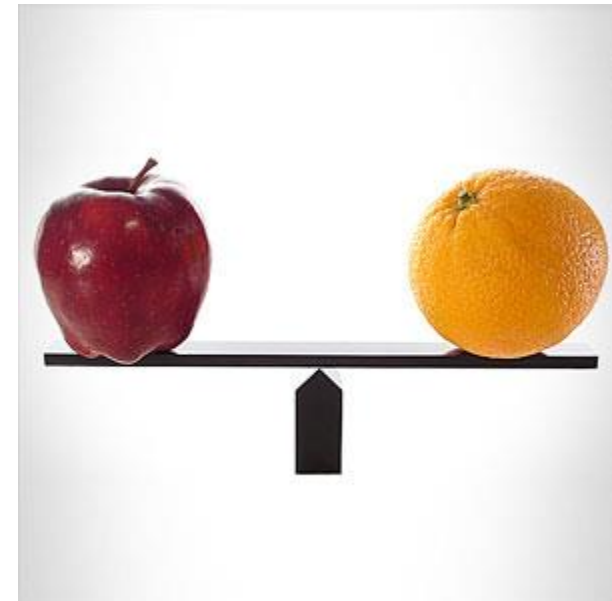
# Does Engagement matter?

Beyond wanting to cultivate a positive work environment, Engagement has additional benefits to employers and organizations.

- Research shows that companies with “engaged” employees have:
  - Improved financial returns
  - Enhanced organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) among engaged employees
  - Better job performance by engaged employees

# What *exactly* are we talking about?

- Gallup
  - Workplace Audit
  - Measures Job Satisfaction
- Employee Engagement
  - Job Engagement Survey
  - Measures at the Role level
- Work Engagement
  - Utrecht Work Engagement Scale
  - Measures at the Activity level



# Why this research question?

- From a research perspective:
  - There was a gap in the research literature related to e-leaders' choice of electronic communication media and coaching behaviors effect upon work engagement in individual virtual workers.
- From a personal perspective:
  - The most challenging aspect of working with remote leaders and workers for the last 9 years has been communication and a lack of engagement.

# Who are we looking at?

- Virtual Workers
  - Knowledge or technical workers
  - Full-time employees
    - Working an average of 40 hours per week
  - Routinely working from home 5 days per week
  - Limited in-person interaction with a supervisor
    - No self-employed individuals
- This represented approximately **6.6%** of the working population according to 2010 U.S. Census data.

# How was the study completed?

- Data Collection – Qualtrics Panel
  - Online survey of 203 individuals
  - 26 Questions
    - One question related to communication media type\*
    - Nine-item UWES
    - Seven-item Ellinger Behavioral Scale
    - Eight demographic questions\*
- Data Analysis conducted in SPSS; alpha level of .05 used for all statistical testing

\*Developed by the researcher.

# Significant Findings & Recommendations

Similar to studies in traditional work environments, the current study found a statistically significant relationship between e-leaders who demonstrate moderate and consistent coaching behaviors, a job resource, in the virtual work environment and higher levels of work engagement in virtual workers.

- ***Coaching Matters*** – organizations need to continue to provide coaching training to leaders of both traditional and virtual workers.

# Significant Findings & Recommendations

Overall, total UWES scores for virtual workers ( $M = 4.37$ ) did differ significantly from those of workers in traditional work environments ( $M = 4.05$ ).

- ***Organizations benefit by having engaged workers*** - organizations should look for virtual work arrangement options when appropriate.



# Significant Findings & Recommendations

The current study revealed e-leaders relied primarily upon text-based communication (81%) rather than voice/video communications (19%).

- ***E-leader Training*** – Organizations should incorporate training on communication modalities and challenges.

# Final thoughts...

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- Additional research is needed to determine why e-leaders rely so heavily upon text-based types of communication.