Research on the Optimization Strategy of Facebook Employee Engagement in the Context of the VUCA Era

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Abstract. Employee engagement has become one of the hottest topics in recent years. In both theory and practice, it is a crucial issue for management. Numerous hypotheses have been developed over the past few decades to explain the influencing factors and outcomes of employee engagement. There are also a number of previous studies that have utilized meta-analyses on this question. This paper will explain these issues by applying a specific VUCA era and some of its characteristics (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous). It will describe improved employee engagement models for Facebook in this paper. The author compiles prior studies on employee engagement and the VUCA era and analyses the factors contributing to Facebook's low employee engagement around Facebook's CEO, Mark Zuckerberg's character flaws and management style. The studies showed that effective leadership is indispensable in times of turbulent economic environment. The CEO of Facebook is autocratic, does not communicate, constantly reprimands staff members, and prioritizes profits over all else. Due to the accumulation of these issues, Facebook experienced confusion in the VUCA era and steadily decreased employee engagement. All the preliminary results throw light on the nature of Facebook's need to change its management model. The findings indicate that employee engagement can be improved by changing leadership styles, improving communication skills, providing development opportunities and modifying workplace culture.

Keywords: Employee Engagement, VUCA, Facebook.

1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, the business world has experienced significant transformation, and today people live in a connected society where change may be quick, constant, and unpredictable [1]. The rapid advancement of technology has brought people into an unstable and chaotic environment. This type of environment can be described using the "VUCA" acronym, which stands for 'Volatile', 'Uncertain', 'Complex', and 'Ambiguous' [1]. 'Volatile' refers to the changes in the environment that occur quickly and where nature and scope are unpredictable. 'Uncertain' indicates an unclear present and an uncertain future. 'Complex' means people will often get confused and there is no connection between cause and effect. 'Ambiguous' refers to new situations for which there is no preparation, and lack of precision and awareness.

In 1987, the term VUCA was developed based on the leadership concepts put out by Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus. The term VUCA owes its origin to the United States defense forces. The US and the former USSR were the two global superpowers who engaged in a Cold War that lasted as long as it did. However, the US Army became somewhat "disoriented" once the former Soviet Union vanished [2]. Because the Americans previously had an identified enemy, the enemy now may be anyone and could originate from anywhere. The idea of VUCA was initially suggested in 1991, during the end of the Cold War. The goal was to highlight how the war's aftermath had made the international world more volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous [3]. More in-depth debates and explanations of the term VUCA first appeared in 2002.

Organizations are currently operating in a completely new environment due to the VUCA age. The real challenge in the VUCA world is in building flexible organizations that can respond quickly to shifts in the business environment and consumer preferences, and that enable each employee to broaden their knowledge and skill sets in order to complete each project in which they are involved

[4]. In this case, employee engagement is significant for a business's development. High levels of employee engagement lead to increased effort and concern for the company's objectives, which boosts productivity and competitiveness. In the following essay, there will propose the issues Facebook's employee engagement is facing in the VUCA era and give some suggestions to improve it.

2. Introduction to Facebook

Facebook, an American corporation, operates as a social networking platform where individuals have the capability to engage in live conversations, view concise video content, leave comments, upload images, and share links to captivating internet material [5]. The genesis of Facebook was rooted in the aspiration to facilitate connections among Harvard University students by utilizing their ".edu" email addresses and photos as the means of interaction [6]. Its establishment took place in February 2004, driven by the entrepreneurial spirit of Mark Zuckerberg and Edward Saverin, both Harvard students. However, it was not until 2006 that Facebook expanded its accessibility to users aged 13 and older [5]. At this juncture, it rapidly outpaced MySpace, emerging as the preeminent global social network [5].

In the present day, this behemoth of social media boasts an impressive market capitalization exceeding $500 billion, along with an annual revenue that soared to approximately $116 billion in the year 2022. Remarkably, its reach extended to encompass a staggering 4.7 billion monthly active users in the year 2021, solidifying its position as a global digital juggernaut. This meteoric rise has also translated into an extraordinary personal financial achievement for its co-founder, Mark Zuckerberg, propelling him to the ranks of the world's wealthiest individuals [6]. The mission of Facebook is to give individuals the ability to share and foster greater global connectivity [7]. Facebook places a high priority on creating interesting products that encourage communication and sharing between users via computers, mobile phones, and other devices [8]. Facebook gives users the chance to exchange thoughts, pictures, and other activities in order to help them learn and discover what is happening in the world around them [8].

Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Facebook, is a particularly authoritarian person who prioritizes profits. He dislikes engaging in conversation with others or respecting their viewpoints. His poor management style at Facebook has resulted in a low level of employee engagement. He is using repressive management and will blame his employees if they do not act according to his ideas. Moreover, Facebook employees are treated like working machines for the company and have no human rights. As a result, more and more employees are becoming dissatisfied with Facebook.

3. Reasons for Facebook's Low Employee Engagement

Employees who are passionately committed to the organization's objectives are considered engaged. Additionally, engagement has been found to have three distinct aspects: 1) Intellectual engagement, which denotes a dedication to improving one's work 2) Affective engagement or enjoying one's work after completing it 3) social engagement, which entails discussions with people on boosting professional development [9]. Next, there will analyze Facebook's challenges in maintaining good employee engagement.

3.1. Poor Leadership

Leadership agility and adaptability have become skills required among leaders to succeed in the VUCA world [10]. However, if the leaders of a business are ineffective in carrying out their responsibilities, it will affect the workers' productivity and overall performance. It restricts a worker's productivity and negatively affects their morale. Based on a Gallup survey involving over one million employed individuals in the United States, it was revealed that the foremost cause prompting people to leave their jobs is the presence of an ineffective manager or immediate supervisor [11]. This survey highlights the critical role that leadership plays in the workplace and emphasizes that the quality of

the relationship between employees and their managers significantly influences their decision to remain with or depart from an organization.

Mark Zuckerberg, the founder and CEO of Facebook is using Autocratic leadership which is the most controlling of management styles. The authoritative style of management lacks trust and confidence in employees. This type of manager barks orders at employees and expects them to do exactly what is asked of them. This type of manager usually makes all the decisions and treats employees in a condescending manner. With this style of management, employees might perceive a situation where they are unable to offer innovative solutions to team challenges, and they may believe that their insights and skills have been disregarded. This will make them feel that they are not able to realize their value in the company and thus lose engagement.

While enjoying making all the decisions and controlling employees, he never admits to or takes responsibility for his errors. Instead, he assigns blame to others in order to justify errors. A typical example is Facebook's market capitalization has dropped by more than $232 billion a few years ago, marking the most substantial single-day decline in U.S. stock market history. Zuckerberg and his leadership team attributed this decline to various factors, including the privacy modifications introduced by Apple in 2021, which made it more challenging to tailor advertisements to smartphone users, and the escalating competition from platforms like TikTok [10]. In contrast, he has never admitted that it was his own problem and did not say he would take responsibility for it.

This example demonstrates the type of person Mark Zuckerberg typically is at work. When there is a problem, he will first blame the employee instead of thinking of a solution. Employees who are often criticized will become nervous and scared to take risks and try new ideas. This will make it more difficult for the team to innovate and work together, which will make it difficult for the team to take advantage of new chances and challenges. Their motivation and level of engagement at work may decline if they experience frustration and disillusionment. Employees may eventually grow bored and lose interest in their work.

3.2. Inadequate Communication and Feedback

Mark Zuckerberg is also a loner who does not accept advice. Zuckerberg has transformed into an isolated individual who shies away from forming intimate connections and distances himself from others [12]. Such managers often decline help, recommendations, or feedback, thereby making themselves vulnerable to making mistakes. He usually refuses to communicate and does not give feedback to his employees. Poor communication can lead to bad decisions. If employees are unable to understand their tasks and goals, they may make mistakes when making decisions.

In an environment of constant change and uncertainty, any miscommunication can lead to missed opportunities. When more time is spent on decision-making than competitors, they get a head start. If an employer does not communicate with their employees, they may feel neglected and unappreciated, which can have a negative impact on their mental health. Especially in such stressful work environments, employees need guidance and support from their boss. If the boss does not fulfil this role and resolve the issue as quickly as possible, this can lead to emotional instability in the employee, which may decrease engagement levels.

3.3. Low Growth and Development Opportunities

A good development opportunity will make employees feel more involved in the company which will increase their productivity and engagement. Nonetheless, when employees encounter constraints in their chances for growth, their progress becomes impeded. This hinders their capacity to acquire new skills and makes their job monotonous. Consequently, this has a pronounced negative impact on productivity, and employees start to lose engagement in their core duties [11].

Facebook does not give its employees much opportunity to learn and advance. In the age of VUCA where every second is changing and technology is advancing rapidly. Employees are not just facing no opportunities for development, they may even be replaced by machines. It is possible that in the near future, Facebook will no longer need skilled employees, and robots will be able to get the job

done and achieve goals. When employees are facing this kind of crisis, they are no longer motivated to work hard. The survey shows that 68% of employees prefer to learn and grow at work, they think this is another form of engagement [11].

For many people, without better opportunities to grow, they have nothing to strive for. When employees lose the goal of their endeavours, they are no longer engaged.

3.4. Unhumanized Workplace Culture

The cultural atmosphere of an enterprise directly affects the work attitude and behaviour of employees. Especially in the age of VUCA, when the external environment is already very stressful, a good company culture and work environment can make employees relax well.

Facebook has a workplace culture that puts profits first. The company's managers do not care about the feelings of their employees and tell them they need to act fast no matter when and their objective is to help the company accomplish its goals. Facebook's core value is to train its employees to be good stewards of the company and its mission. In one case, a Wall Street Journal investigation published last year discovered that Instagram, a network controlled by Facebook and popular among young girls, was making users' mental health issues worse [12]. The investigation unveiled that the Facebook leadership deliberately chose to overlook the matter with the aim of safeguarding user engagement and expansion [12]. This choice underscores Zuckerberg's inclination to prioritize profits above all other considerations.

At the same time, Facebook has a very low focus on the mental health of its employees. At any given time when managers give a task, employees have to immediately drop what they are doing and get to work. This results in employees working overtime even during their breaks, which creates a poor work-life balance. If a company cannot offer its employees a flawless work-life balance, they will get disenchanted. Their mental health is severely impacted by work stress because they do not get enough time to rest. They also do not have any flexibility in their schedule to handle personal work, which can contribute to their frustration [11].

These elements give rise to an unhealthy work environment, which exerts an adverse influence on the professional lives of employees. It can result in heightened stress, anxiety, weariness, and potentially even depression. Over time, this diminishes employees' effectiveness and reduces their level of involvement at work.

4. Suggestions for Improve Employee Engagement

Undedicated employees can lead to decreased efficiency and increased costs for the company. In order to avoid this, this research have provided the following suggestions about improving employee engagement for Facebook.

4.1. Change the Leadership Style

Managers must adjust their leadership style in such an environment where employees are exposed to daily data changes so that they can act quickly when an alert state is established and minimize the impact of any potential event that could jeopardize the organization's activity or the development of an investment project [13].

Facebook's previous use of Autocratic leadership was time-saving and efficient. This kind of decisive action is very necessary in the era of VUCA, which can help the company to solve the crisis quickly. But for Mark Zuckerberg, he cannot utilize this leadership very well, and when he makes all the decisions by himself, he often makes mistakes. He needs someone to help him counsel his decisions and make them in the best interest of the company.

The author suggested that he could combine democratic and transformational leadership. Democratic leadership is marked by a leader who engages in consultations with group members and considers their input when reaching decisions [14]. Findings from additional research indicated that group members expressed higher levels of satisfaction when working with democratic leaders [15].

When managers are willing to discuss decisions with their employees, it allows them to feel involved in the company, so which will increase their engagement.

Transformational leadership is distinguished by a leader who serves as a source of inspiration and encouragement for group members, propelling them toward elevated performance and contentment [14]. It is a proactive style of leadership that is inclined to foster strong leader-member relationships, exerting a more substantial influence on employees' work-related attitudes and conduct [16].

The primary emphasis of transformational leadership lies in cultivating the inherent motivation of employees, nurturing their growth, and providing personalized emotional support within the workplace [17]. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, self-fulfilment needs are at the top of the pyramid. This means that this is the most difficult to satisfy, but once satisfied can also proportionately bring the greatest sense of fulfilment. When employees are under these types of encouraging leadership, they will easily achieve self-satisfaction and thus willingly work for this company, therefore increasing their engagement.

4.2. Trying to Trust Employees

The operation of a firm depends greatly on communication. According to the study, successful businesses are those who listen to their employees and frequently provide channels for upward communication. Moreover, thriving businesses excel in their downward communication approaches, ensuring that employees receive timely and relevant information, leading to a more comprehensive grasp of the organization's objectives [18].

Mark Zuckerberg, as someone who does not accept other people's opinions and does not like to build close relationships and communicate with others, he can start improving communication by building trust with his employees. He can implement this by scheduling regular meetings. This meeting can be a one-on-one interaction or many people getting together for coffee or a potluck. It can be a review of overall work, or it can create a more relaxed space to let them share things about their lives and personal interests. Once he became trusting of his employees, he could stop working alone and could listen to employees and make them more engaged.

Secondly, he has to develop the skill of active listening to his staff in order to establish two-way communication. Effective communication is not just about conveying his own message, but also attentively listening to the other person. Additionally, by thoughtfully providing constructive feedback after listening, he should accurately suggest what the employee needs to improve and what he is doing well. Finally, he ought to be generous with his compliments at the end of the conversation. By doing so, the employee will feel appreciated and become more engaged in the work.

4.3. Provide Growth and Development Opportunity

When there is growth and development opportunity for employees, they are more motivated to get the job done and are more loyal to the company. The dynamics of the industry evolve swiftly, underscoring the significance for companies to stay up to date. Continuous professional growth serves as a preventive measure against potential stagnation, enabling the enhancement and upkeep of employees' skills [19].

Facebook should give training to all employees and give them courses that can help them grow and make them more skilled people. Allocating resources to professional development training initiatives also demonstrates a company's commitment to its employees' achievements and a keen interest in fostering their advancement. Facebook could also periodically open up one or two higher positions for all employees to compete for. In this way, by providing all employees with a fair opportunity for promotion, competition can also stimulate their motivation and potential at the same time. It could also increase the level of engagement of employees.

4.4. Modify Workplace Culture

Workplace culture plays a vital role in the overall performance and satisfaction of employees in an organization. Facebook should rework its corporate culture and stop being one that puts profits

first. A good workplace culture encourages employees to reach their full potential. Facebook should create a workplace culture that is dominated by the feelings of its employees.

Every employee in a company should be treated with respect, regardless of their position in the company, and create a positive, inclusive work culture. Facebook should give flexibility and autonomy to its employees which includes giving them enough space and rest. When employees are struggling to balance work and family life, the company should be enabled to be productive at work without sacrificing their personal lives and not be actively asked to work overtime. An incentive system can also be put in place to recognize and reward employees who achieve outstanding results.

In general, Facebook should consider everything from the perspective of the employees and actually put their feelings first. This way the employees will feel like they and the company are one and completely touched by the importance of the company. Thus, they will be more willing to work for the business. This is what a healthy company culture can bring to the company as well as improve employee engagement.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the problems and challenges of employee engagement faced by Facebook in the VUCA era and provide suggestions on the corresponding issues. This paper divided the problems into four main sections. One of the biggest challenges faced by Facebook is their leadership is really poor. Employee engagement at Facebook is low due to the incorrect management style of its CEO Mark Zuckerberg. He uses Autocratic leadership, which lacks trust in his employees and likes to make all the decisions himself. At the same time, he likes to control and blame his employees. The advice for this one challenge is to change the Leadership Style to democratic and transformational leadership. The combination of these two leadership styles will make employees feel valued and therefore more motivated and engaged.

The second problem Facebook faced was inadequate communication and feedback. Mark Zuckerberg was a reluctant relationship builder and often refused to communicate with or give feedback to his employees. For this problem, this research suggests that he can start improving communication by building trust with his employees. He can do this by scheduling regular meetings or dinners with his employees. He also needs to learn to listen to his employees in order to establish two-way communication rather than one-way output.

The next challenge is that Facebook does not provide its employees with adequate opportunities for growth and development. The suggestion to solve this problem is for Facebook to provide training to all employees and to give every employee a fair chance to compete for higher positions. Lastly, Facebook's workplace culture is all about profit first and they do not care about the mental health of their employees. Even during breaks, employees are expected to act quickly whenever a manager hands out a task. This leads to a very depressing and human rights-free work atmosphere. The advice for modifying the corporate culture is that every employee of the company should be treated with respect regardless of their position. Employees should also be given flexibility, autonomy, and encouragement.

The purpose of this study is to allow more managers to use the example of Facebook to avoid factors that are not conducive to increasing employee engagement. It also provides suggestions for companies that are facing low levels of employee engagement, which can help them to solve this problem. One concern about the findings was the accuracy of existing research on the topic. Considerably more work will need to be done to explore the ways to improve employee engagement.

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