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WHITE PAPER: ENHANCING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

by Bateleur Brand Planning (Pty) Ltd



Bateleur
Vantage Point

VANTAGE POINT
2023

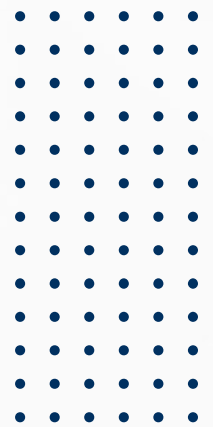
ABSTRACT

In the face of significant challenges such as a global pandemic, civil unrest, economic hardships, and environmental disasters, South Africa is navigating a complex landscape in 2023.

This white paper explores the results of a comprehensive survey conducted by Bateleur Brand Planning (Pty) Ltd, focusing on the critical issue of employee engagement in the South African workforce.

The survey reveals key insights into the current state of employee engagement, the impact of remote work, and the pivotal role of leadership in driving engagement.

The findings highlight the urgent need for improved engagement and a shift toward inspirational and inclusive leadership in South Africa.




I. INTRODUCTION: UNDERSTANDING THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

The last four years have witnessed an unprecedented series of challenges that have reshaped the global and South African landscape. From the COVID-19 pandemic to civil unrest, environmental disasters, power outages, and economic hardships, South Africa has experienced its fair share of adversity.

These events have created a highly stressful environment in which South African workers must operate, adapt, and hopefully thrive.

In South Africa, economic growth has stagnated, with inflation consistently outpacing income increases, forcing many to tighten their belts.

This paper delves into the findings of the Bateleur Vantage Point survey, conducted in 2023, to gain a deeper understanding of the current state of employee engagement in this challenging environment.



II. SURVEY METHODOLOGY AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The Bateleur Vantage Point survey conducted in 2023 involved 1,592 economically active South Africans and focused on a wide range of social, economic, and political topics.

Of these respondents, 1,053 were currently employed, making them eligible to participate in the employee engagement section of the survey.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND INSIGHTS:

● **GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION:**

Gauteng accounted for the majority of the workforce at 44%, followed by the Western Cape (25%) and KwaZulu-Natal (14%).

● **EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND:**

44% had a matric qualification, 35% held diplomas, and 27% had bachelor's degrees. Higher education correlated with higher income.

● **EMPLOYMENT TYPES:**

7.5% were contractors, 71.3% were employees, and 21.2% were self-employed.

● **JOB ROLES:**

Employees represented various job roles, with 13.4% in professions, 5.2% as organizational heads, and the majority distributed across different management levels and non-managerial roles.

● **INDUSTRY SECTORS:**

Respondents worked in diverse industries, including education, health, retail, ICT, civil services, banking, insurance, and many others.

● **REMOTE WORK:**

20% worked from home, 47% from their offices, and 33% enjoyed a hybrid model.

III. IMPACT OF REMOTE WORK ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

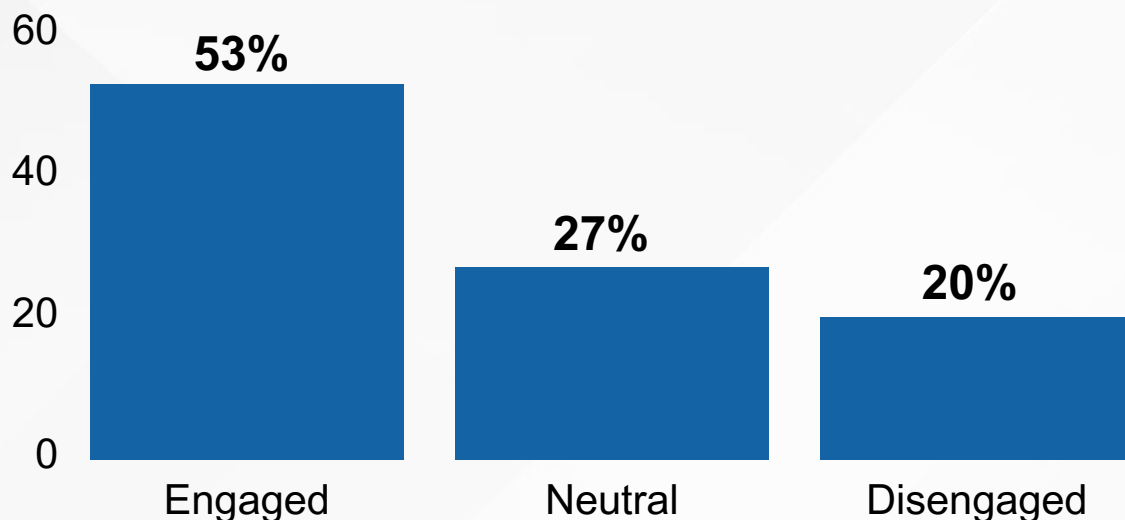
Remote work has become a prominent part of the South African work landscape. Findings include:

- Work-from-home employees are more satisfied with their working arrangements (74%) compared to those required to work at the office (54%). Hybrid workers fall in between, with 67% satisfaction.
- Engagement levels vary significantly based on working style. Remote workers are the most engaged (62%), followed by hybrid workers (60.5%). Conversely, employees in entirely office-based roles have the lowest engagement (43.9%).
- Older employees are generally more engaged than younger counterparts.
- Engagement correlates positively with education and income, with better-educated and higher-income employees exhibiting higher engagement levels.
- Interestingly, employees living in neighbouring countries have significantly higher engagement levels at 69.5%, raising questions about South Africa's engagement challenges.



IV. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT LEVELS

Current employee engagement levels in South Africa are less than ideal, with 53% of employees engaged, 27% neutral, and 20% disengaged. This suggests a need for improvements in fostering a more engaged workforce.



Insights:

- **Engaged Employees:** Typically exhibit positive, committed, focused, and motivated behaviours with a "we" mentality.
- **Neutral Employees:** Tend to be passive, freewheeling, and content with achieving ordinary outcomes, exhibiting an "I" mentality.
- **Disengaged Employees:** Are often negative, rebellious, distracted, and indifferent, wishing they were elsewhere, displaying a "they" mentality.

These engagement levels have remained relatively consistent over the past five years, with a slight increase during the initial COVID-19 pandemic. However, they have since regressed.

V. FACTORS INFLUENCING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

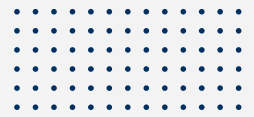
ENGAGEMENT

Several factors influence employee engagement, including leadership and organizational culture. The survey underscores the vital role of leadership:



LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE INSIGHTS:

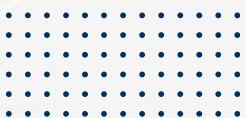
- Leadership plays a pivotal role in creating an organizational culture that fosters engagement, energy, and cooperation.
- Leaders should exhibit emotive and personality skills, including empathy, appreciation, and setting a good example, to inspire trust and commitment.
- Purpose-driven leadership, involving vision, long-term objective setting, and strategic planning, is crucial.
- Leaders should possess rational and functional skills like decisiveness and guidance to translate strategy into day-to-day actions.
- Emotive and personality skills, especially empathy, appreciation, and setting a good example, lay the foundation for purpose-driven leadership.



VI. CONCLUSION: THE URGENT NEED FOR CHANGE



South Africa's economy and society face numerous challenges, and employee engagement plays a crucial role in addressing these issues. Achieving a highly engaged workforce requires inspirational and inclusive leadership. The statistics reveal a strong link between employee engagement, general happiness, and optimism for the country's future.



VII. CALL TO ACTION

Improving employee engagement in South Africa is essential for the country's progress. Businesses and organizations need to prioritize leadership development, focusing on creating an inspirational and inclusive environment.

Call to Action Insights:

- South Africa's economic future hinges on a dramatic increase in employee engagement.
- The nation's history of instructive, autocratic leadership calls for a shift toward inspirational and inclusive leadership.
- To enhance employee engagement, organizations should focus on leadership development and the creation of cultures that emphasize empathy, appreciation, setting a good example, purpose-driven leadership, decisiveness, and guidance.

For organizations seeking to explore employee engagement and the role of leadership, we encourage reaching out to Gordon Hooper at Bateleur Brand Planning (Pty) Ltd. Contact details are provided below, and a conversation could be the first step toward a more engaged and prosperous South African workforce.

Contact Information:

Gordon Hooper Bateleur Brand Planning (Pty) Ltd

 0832122739

 gordon@batbrand.co.za

 www.bateleurbp.co.za

Disclaimer: The findings and recommendations presented in this white paper are based on the Bateleur Vantage Point survey conducted in 2023. Readers are encouraged to consider the evolving nature of these issues and engage in further research and discussions for comprehensive solutions to improve employee engagement in South Africa.