

Abstract

Today's successful organizations depend upon many factors, including capable leadership, to guide them through unprecedented changes. The quality of leadership within an organization can increase organizational performance as vast literature has established solid linkages between employee engagement and organizational performance. The purpose of this action research was to determine the relationship between leadership styles and skills and employee engagement to strengthen an organization's human sales force capabilities. Data was collected from a sample which consisted of a few managers and employees at a financial service company in Thailand. The research foundation included the well-known models of transformational and transactional leadership styles, situational leadership, leadership skills and positive change approach and their impact on employee engagement. Leadership styles and skills were assessed by utilizing four assessment questionnaires: leadership styles questionnaire (MLQ Form 5X-short), in-company leadership skills questionnaire, leadership behaviors analysis II (LBAIL) and employee engagement questionnaire. There were 321 respondents (59 sales team leaders and 262 sales staff) who participated in the surveys and 32 respondents who participated in the in-depth interviews. The research findings concluded that the intervention affected positive change in the 4-month period. The sales team leaders' application of transformational and transactional leadership skills along with Whole Brain Literacy, Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Coaching combined to positively engage their sales staff. By selecting and implementing appropriate leadership styles and skills, sales team leaders achieved a high level of employee engagement. Study results also confirm that there was a direct positive association between the changes in sales team leader's leadership behavior and also in the positive outcomes at the individual, team level as well as the overall organization level.