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## **UGED: Creating a Culture of Engagement**

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UGED: Creating a Culture of Engagement

Submitted by

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For

EMPA 396 Graduate Research Project in Public Management

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### Abstract

As the second largest employer in the City of Dell and fourth largest employer in the Circuit Area, the University of Greater Expedia, Dell (UGED) has recently focused a considerable amount of its energy and resources to create a more satisfying and attractive working environment for its 24,000 employees (Circus, 2018). More specifically, UGED has targeted increasing levels of staff engagement at all of its campuses and hospitals. This research addressed the present day programs offered by UGED designed to invigorate employee engagement in its working community. It also focused on the human psyche and the influence members of management played on levels of employee staff engagement. The purpose of the study was to investigate, discover, analyze, examine and provide recommendations on current University resources which may be utilized to increase levels of staff engagement. It was a means to add to more information to the collective body of knowledge surrounding the topic of staff engagement. More importantly, the study helped to address the needs of the masses and not just a specific class of individuals. The review of literature for this course of study analyzed multiple authoritative publications, news articles, case studies, and written reports surrounding the topics of wellness initiatives, professional development programs, the human psyche, and human capital management. In this study, quantitative and qualitative data was collected, examined, and evaluated.

Keywords: UGED, engagement, staff, wellness, development, human capital, management

**Note: Identities of names and places are removed and replaced with pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of data sources to this project.**

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

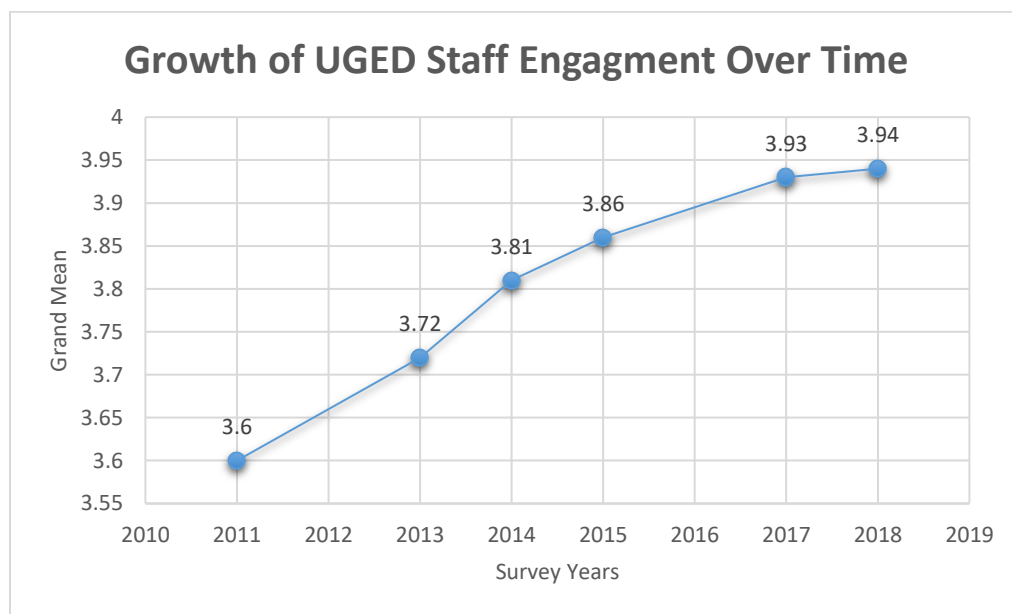
### **Background of the Problem**

As the second largest employer in the City of Dell and fourth largest employer in the Circuit Area, the University of Greater Expedia, Dell (UGED) has recently focused a considerable amount of its energy and resources to create a more satisfying and attractive working environment for its 24,000 employees (Circus, 2018). More specifically, UGED has targeted increasing levels of staff engagement at all of its campuses and hospitals. This research addressed the present day programs offered by UGED designed to invigorate employee engagement in its working community. It also focused on the role and influence management played to nurture and promote levels of employee staff engagement. The driving force behind the University's engagement initiative is the need to create an inclusive and supportive working environment for its workforce in light of the fact employee engagement has a direct relationship to workforce retention, morale, and productivity (UGED News Center, 2018). Furthermore, high levels of employee engagement in the workplace are associated with increased return on assets, decreased costs, lower absenteeism, and fewer quality errors (Xu, 2011).

In 2011, UGED collaborated with Gallup to assist the University with this endeavor. Gallup is a global analytics and advice institution that helps administrators and organizations address and solve their firm's most urgent concerns via an electronic, confidential survey (Gallup, 2018). The confidential survey is composed of 12 questions (Appendix B) and takes approximately 10 minutes to complete. The questions themselves are structured to be simple, straightforward inquiries designed to measure the elements of staff engagement. Overall engagement is measured by use of a mean on a scale of 1 to 5; 1 representing low engagement

and 5 representing high levels of staff engagement. A mean is produced by taking the cumulative score of the survey and dividing it by the number of respondents. In order to measure participants' responses, a Likert rating scale was used in the survey.

The UGED community began participating in the Gallup Staff Engagement Survey in 2011. Participating in this examination allowed the University to begin collecting quantitative data as to move forward with a scientific approach to address staff engagement. Figure 1 below shows that staff engagement since 2011 has followed a slow but positive upward trend (Circus, 2018).



(Figure 1) N= 84 avg.

Since 2011, employee staff engagement increased approximately .10% each year. Years 2011 to 2013 showed an increase of .12 of 1 percent. From 2013 to 2014, there was a positive movement of .09 of 1 percent. 2014 to 2015 again showed a positive direction, but it was the lowest increase in the survey's history at .05 of 1 percent. In years 2015-2017, there was only .07 of 1

percent increase in worker engagement. As for the final mean scores recorded from 2017-2018, there was a .01 of one percent increase in staff engagement. Data for years 2012 and 2016 were missing for two separate, individual reasons. After receiving the results from the 2011 staff survey, UGED responded with a separate climate survey in 2012. Named the Inclusion Survey at UGED, it was created to poll trainees, students, staff, and faculty on their personal experiences in order to nurture a working environment that is tolerant and inclusive (UGED News Center, 2012). While the 2011 staff engagement survey captured the level of involvement in, commitment to, and enthusiasm about their work at the University, the inclusion survey evaluated workplace climate, which can demotivate or motivate an employee (Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor & Provost, 2013). The University did not participate in 2016 due to UGED Human Resource's initiatives around staff recognition and engagement.

Staff recognition initiatives were Staff Appreciation and Recognition Plan (the STAR Plan), an online recognition tool for THANKS (To Honor, Acknowledge and Note Kindness and Services) and Service Milestone Awards, and Career Tracks. The STAR Plan recognized staff contributions in two ways: Spot Awards and Achievement Awards. Spot Awards acknowledged staff contributions for specific projects or tasks. Achievement awards recognized sustained, exceptional performance and contributions over an extended period. THANKS and Service Anniversary Milestone Awards enabled quick acknowledgement of a colleague's efforts and years of service through e-mail communications (UGED Human Resources, 2016). Career Tracks standardized job classifications and working titles. It provided staff with better-defined career paths. Furthermore, it aligned future pay practices with the local labor market (Hawr, 2015). Staff engagement initiatives focused on department leadership. Managers were given

time to update their department's organization structure and they were issued additional resources to prepare for the upcoming 2017 Gallup Staff Engagement Survey.

Training sessions and study materials were sponsored by the University to improve managers' knowledge base of engagement and introduce new methodologies to increase levels of staff commitment (UGED Human Resources, 2016). The data collected from 2011-2018 told the University they had done something right in terms of employee engagement. However, according to Ellen Myers, UGED's Chief Learning Officer and director of Learning and Organization Development, UGED staff engagement plateaued in 2018 and the University needed to look for opportunities to make improvement (UGED News Center, 2018). This prompted the question: *what can UGED management do to increase staff engagement?* Examining this question was the reason for this research study.

In addition to the dissemination of the Gallup Staff Engagement Survey and other initiatives to determine and drive worker engagement, UGED offers its human capital present day programs designed to invigorate employee engagement in its community. Such programs include wellness initiatives and professional development opportunities. Wellness programs are intended to better a person's health and fitness. They are normally offered through an employer as part of their benefits package. These programs include, but are not limited to gym memberships, schedules designed to help personnel stop smoking, weight loss programs, preventive health screenings, diabetes management programs, premium discounts, and cash rewards (HealthCare.gov, 2018). Wellness programs are resources that promote mental and physical health. Having a healthy mindset improves productivity, decreases turnover, and makes an organization more attractive to work for (Boyer, 2014). According to a 2012 Canadian Healthcare Survey, incorporating wellness programs into the workplace caused employees to



think more positively of the employers. Additionally, in a 2012 ADP Insurance Solutions survey of small businesses located in Canada, 80% of the survey's respondents stated wellness programs helped them retain the right people with the organization (Workplace benefits deliver healthy results, 2014). Two thirds of these companies involved in the survey cited improvement in employee productivity and reduced rates of absenteeism. Wellness programs deliver value, improve worker and management relations, improve productivity, and increase staff engagement. According to Kahn (1990), employee engagement involves the degree to which individuals make full use of emotional, physical, and cognitive resources to address their job related tasks. This includes wellness programs.

As an organization, UGED offers a colorful spectrum of wellness programs as a means to instill healthy behaviors. This curriculum is supported and facilitated by UGED Campus Life Services department. The organization aims to provide programs and services designed to benefit the institution and its community. Some of its programs include, but are not limited to, physical, emotional, social, and financial wellness (UGED Wellness and Community, 2018). Physical wellness is promoted through the University's Fitness and Recreation Centers. These resources are conveniently located throughout the City of Dell at select campuses. Adding to this curriculum are promotional campaigns and initiatives such as smoke/tobacco free policies, Healthy Beverage Initiative, Healthy Meeting and Event Guide, and stair promotion campaigns. Emotional wellness arrangements provide staff with confidential services at no additional cost to the beneficiary that include psychological counseling and consultation services staffed by licensed psychologists and postdoctoral trainees. Social wellness facilitates working people with services such as lactation centers, child care, elder care, and parent education. Lastly, financial wellness embraces fiscal education. Financial planning resources

are made readily available to those seeking to further their knowledge of the said topic as to plan for their retirement.

For those who search to expand their knowledge and professional working roles with the University, UGED offers a wide range of educational opportunities for members of its community. The institution recommends all stakeholders under its umbrella to establish goals for professional development and ambitiously strive to reach their targets. Some of the connections made available to staff are certification programs, staff internships, professional staff development, and learning guides (UGED Learning and Organization Development, 2018). Certification programs are online e-courses which focus on the needs of non-supervisory employees at UGED. The purpose of these courses is to increase professional effectiveness. These periods of instruction are tailored for working professionals who are new to the organization or those who are merely looking to refresh their current knowledge and skills in the workplace. The UGED Staff Internship Program is designed for career enhancement. It allows participants to maintain their current positions and working title while visiting other departments of the University. Staff members take this opportunity to learn new skills and gain hands-on experience with new operating systems that are critical to University goals and objectives. Professional Staff Development Systems at UGED is a learning tool comprised of various training courses that educates workers to understand professional career success. Students learn communication skills, explore customer-service relations topics, learn how to strengthen current business relationships, and it helps with self-awareness as to discover personal career development needs. Learning guides are a self-paced tool used by workers to map an avenue for job growth and development. Furthermore, it is designed to engage and incorporate one's

immediate supervisor into the process as to receive the necessary support required for creating a vision of success.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The specific problem examined in this study was how UGED could retain a quality workforce. The Gallup Employment Survey revealed that UGED could improve their employee engagement. UGED defines engaged employees as being involved in, committed to and enthusiastic about his or her work (Circus, 2011). Failure to do a better job in this arena could result in an attrition of high quality employees, which would then lead to a lower level of organizational performance. UGED plateaued in its effort to boost levels of employee commitment in 2018. The University prides itself on being an “employer of choice”. In order to maintain this status, members of management must look for opportunities to create improvement in staff engagement.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate, discover, and summarize current University resources, which may be utilized to increase levels of staff engagement. The investigative lens focused on University programs tailored to wellness programs and professional staff development. This study added to the pool of knowledge surrounding the general problem. It identified how to increase levels of staff engagement by means of additional resources that are currently budgeted for, in place, and readily available to staff. Benefits from this research not only profited members of senior management at UGED but also assisted other non-profit, public, and private institutions with utilizing their current resources to further drive engagement in the workplace.

## Significance of the Study

The field of Public Administration focuses on the management of programs. It is a means to make current operation practices more efficient and effective. Smoothly running institutional operations requires engaged human capital. It is not enough that human resources be physically present in the immediate work area; they must also have an emotional connection to their work and the organization in order to produce a maximum contribution to the firm because workers help guide the daily actions of the institution and compensation alone may not be enough.

## Research Question and Hypothesis

This study examined the following main research question: *what can UGED management do to increase staff engagement?* I derived this to be the main research question because of genuine interest on the subject matter and curiosity to discover alternate avenues of approach to increase levels of staff engagement. This research addressed the present day staff opportunities offered by UGED designed to help invigorate employee engagement in its working community; wellness and professional development programs.

The research hypotheses examined in this study were:

1. Improved staff participation in University wellness programs will enhance worker engagement.
2. Enrolling staff in University professional development programs will improve human capital engagement.

These research hypotheses above came to light due to direct observation while serving as a staff member of the University. Members of the working community at UGED speak positively of both programs and behave differently because of them. Their perception of UGED as an employer became more positive after participating in one or both programs.

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

The purpose of this research was to investigate wellness and professional development programs and their ability to increase levels of staff employment engagement. This study was not intended to provide a one-size-fits-all solution. The investigation gave insight to members of management at UGED and other working communities outside of the University seeking alternative avenues of approach towards increasing levels of engagement in the workforce. Furthermore, it contributed to the current inventory of information collected on the topic of worker engagement. Due to time constraints and available resources, it was not possible to measure the impact of wellness and professional development programs on present day staff members at UGED.

### **Definition of Terms**

- UGED - University of Greater Expedia, Dell
- Human capital and human resources – used interchangeably and refers to the working staff -- an employee of a company or institution.
- Staff engagement- “the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances” (Kahn, 1992, p. 694).

- Professional development programs- programs that help to train and introduce new skills to career employees.
- Wellness programs- programs intended to improve and promote health (HealthCare.gov, 2018).
- Quantitative data- data that can be expressed or measured in numbers and is summarized and analyzed with statistical techniques (O’Sullavin, 2017).
- Median or mode- “A measure of central tendency; the value of the middle case of an ordered distribution of values” (O’Sullavin, 2017).

### **Expected Impact of Research**

The expected impact of this research was to motivate senior members of management at UGED and other non-profit, public, and private institutions to utilize current resources made available by employers to their staff as tools which can be used to drive employee engagement; specifically, wellness and professional development programs.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The review of literature for this course of study analyzed multiple authoritative publications, news articles, case studies, and written reports surrounding the topics of wellness initiatives, professional development programs, the human psyche, and human capital management. The purpose of the inspection was to determine the effects of such programs on the workforce. Furthermore, it examined how wellness and professional development programs can further assist senior management with improving levels of staff employee engagement within the organization.

### **Wellness Programs**

A wellness program is defined as any activity taken by an institution to reduce health care needs (Paxton, 1993). They are the fastest growing area in employee benefits (Bottles, 2015). Hiring companies look toward wellness programs as a means to control health insurance costs, strengthen the overall health and productivity of their human capital, and reduce the number of employees who are chronically absent from the job site (Linder, 2011). Aside from this focus, the benefits associated to wellness schedules are usually overlooked by most organizations. Wellness programs have the ability to mold a firm's organizational culture to one that supports and drives employer and employee relationships based on trust (Berry, 2010). This level of trust is a solid foundation that gives birth to worker commitment which in turn drives employee pride and engagement. Wellness programs can be harnessed to unite management and employees in an organizational culture that will directly support the fulfillment of an organization's strategy (Ginn, 2003). Used effectively, wellness programs benefit an institution as well as employees who participate (Violette, 1990).

According to Page (2019), wellbeing consists of three components: psychological well-being, workplace well-being, and subjective wellbeing. Psychological well-being is an important part of human life and of an organization. It consists of attitudes towards ourselves, reflects a sense of further development towards ourselves, and gives us the ability to manage a complex working environment (Sarotar, 2015). Research evidence proposes that high-pitched levels of psychological well-being and staff engagement have a direct relationship to high performing, successful institutions. Subjective well-being is an individual's cognitive and affective self-evaluation. Subjective wellbeing is considered one of the highest goals of human motivation (Ngamba, 2017). Workplace well-being is job satisfaction. It is essential to improving health and productivity (Bertotti, 2017). Full staff engagement includes well-being which consist of psychological well-being, workplace well-being, and subjective wellbeing (Robertson, 2010).

Working against the fulfillment of an organization's strategy, employees who are classified as actively disengaged can cost the job market more than 300 billion dollars per year in lost productivity alone (Taylor, 2012). In 2018 a provider of research and education known as, the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans, analyzed responses from 431 U.S. benefit managers regarding their company wellness programs and their ability to manage stress. Data from this survey revealed that companies who offer wellness initiatives to their employees saw a substantial improvement in employee satisfaction and engagement (Miller, 2018). From a narrower perspective, LuAnn Heinen, vice president at the nonprofit National Business Group on Health, gives further support to the position of wellness programs and their effect on staff engagement. According to Heinen, "Health and well-being are part of a broader workforce strategy that seeks to impact business outcomes such as recruitment, retention, customer satisfaction, and employee engagement" (Miller, 2018). By offering working staff of



the organization wellness programs, employers demonstrate their genuine interest in the overall health of their workforce and, as a direct result, laborers tend to behave in a favorably manner which is beneficial to the organization and its business objectives (Miller, 2010).

### **Professional Development Programs**

Professional development programs are action plans utilized by universities to ensure their staff continue to enhance and develop their business practices throughout their careers (Chikari, 2015). As institutions continue to expand due to globalization, human capital is becoming one of the most important factors which require inside attention to staff development programs (Borisova, 2017). Professional learning and development programs are critical for organizations for two reasons (Julia, 2008). The first reason these calendared events are crucial is in view of the fact effective learning programs ensure that institutions can successfully acquire and retain essential human resources. A past survey conducted by Deloitte (2005) of 1,396 human resource practitioners from over sixty countries further reinforces this position. This survey discovered that an institution's ability to retain and attract new human capital were perceived as the two most important worker management issues facing companies. The second reason, and, most important for the scope of this research, is that it keeps company employees engaged. In alliance with Morton (2005), "Talent management is integral to engaging employees in the organization." The ability to properly address both of these key areas has become a primary determinant of organizational success and, in some cases, even the survival of the firm (Julia, 2008).

Organizational training and learning schedules require a participant to get involved, take charge, and plan their development process; to become engaged in the working environment.

Doing so will elicit and develop the leadership and interpersonal skills of an individual (Rilley, 1981). Staff members are allowed an opportunity to stay current with business related trends, discuss work related problems in order to address key business issues, and enhance their standing and reputation with the organization. However, benefits derived from learning and training are not one sided. Employers also profit when human capital participate in professional development programs. Institutions directly benefit from the new skills acquired by their workers as staff implement them into their daily assigned duties and tasks (Rilley, 1981).

### **The Human Psyche**

Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides a framework for understanding the critical component of fulfilling human needs. The relationship between Maslow's theory and employee engagement is found in the structure of the theory and the definition of each basic need. Human needs are arranged by potency, the need for survival, and filled from lowest to highest which establishes a hierarchy (Shuck, 2011). Psychological needs are the most powerful need of human survival (Reeve, 2001). In the workplace, different people come together and express diverse behaviors (Makkar, 2017).

Kahn (1990) tell us that there are two self-in-role behaviors which people bring out of themselves during work role performance. They are personal engagement and disengagement. Kahn defines personal engagement as the harnessing of institution members' selves to their job roles. This commitment is present when staff employ and express themselves emotionally, cognitively, and physically in the work environment. Kahn characterizes personal disengagement as divorcing themselves from work appearances. These workers are the exact opposite of engaged personnel as they shield themselves emotionally, cognitively, and physically

in a professional setting. Both personal engagement and disengagement effect psychological relationships in the working environment (Kahn, 1987). It alters relationships between peers, members of management, and the work they perform in terms of whether someone is accessible or inaccessible for collaboration.

According to Caniëls (2018), employees with growth mindsets are more susceptible to be engaged with their work. Someone with a growth mindset believes in the adaptability of characteristics and personal traits (Murphy and Dweck, 2016). They do not believe they are defined by their past behavior. In light of this self-held perception, someone with a growth mindset is in a better position to react to challenging situations (Yeager and Dweck, 2012). When presented with challenging situations, someone with a growth mindset views barriers as an opportunity to grow and learn. The opportunity to learn motivates them to do their best and they become further engaged in the workplace. Possessing a growth mindset elevates a staff member's perception of the working environment in view of the fact daily challenges in the workplace encourage them to learn and grow. They consistently see the potential to develop new skills (Harvard Business Review, Nov 2014). Engagement is understood to be an active state, not a passive condition (Shuck, 2017).

### **Human Capital Management**

Members of an organization who pose a growth mindset look to management for direction, inspiration, and constructive feedback (Caniëls, 2018). When a member of management facilitates this need, they are viewed as transformational leaders. This term was first coined by American historian and political scientist James McGregor Burns (Burns, 1978). A transformational leader is a person who provides the workforce with intellectual stimulation

and inspiration. These types of leaders bring out the best from their supervised staff (Den Hartog et al., 1997; Den Hartog and Belschak, 2012). Leadership of this caliber has the ability to reinvent and build-up members of the organization (Warrick, 2011). The transformational process is relevant to staff engagement because this type of leadership style brings forth significant positive changes in organizations, teams, groups, and individuals (Avolia, 1991). Managers do this by transcending self-interests to a collective purpose by inspiring and motivating their direct reports.

Staff members of the body corporate look to management direction, inspiration, and constructive feedback (Caniëls, 2018). Kouzes and Posner's (2012) "The Leadership Challenge" identifies five key roles of leadership. These five key roles are model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart. Modeling the way refers to setting an example for direct reports to follow. It displays personal commitment to the organization by clearly stating who they are, helping others to understand company expectations, and defining what they believe in. To inspire a shared vision, leaders must properly define reality to their supervised staff in order to develop an accurate picture of future organizational end goals (Depree, 2004). It calls for involving supervised staff into the equation and perceiving them as valued partners in the problem solving process (Block, 1993). Challenging the process means to question the status quo. This requires leaders to empower their workers, which is relevant in light of today's competitive market. It is important for institutions to respond to changes in the market and empowering employees is a logical way to achieve this goal by eliminating extensive communication within the company hierarchy (Biard, 2010). Management can construct this essential component by removing barriers and supporting staff with the necessary resources required to complete a task. Doing so elevates levels of customer service,

levels of productivity, and adds to the company's bottom line (Shockley, 2010). Lastly, encouraging the heart calls for members of management to show compassion to their workforce. This creates an emotional connection between both parties and develops a relationship built on trust. All five roles define what it is to be a leader. The success of any institution greatly depends on leadership (Poston, 1988).

## **Conclusion**

Wellness schedules and professional development programs both have the potential to contribute and reinforce staff employee engagement in the professional workplace. Promoting wellness schedules in a working environment not only reduces levels of stress and anxiety. It also conveys a clear message to workers that their employer genuinely cares about them. These programs help build trust between laborers and management, which drives staff engagement. Professional development programs also drive engagement. These training and learning timetables empower staff to take ownership of their careers and stay current with the skills which are necessary to remain competitive in the job market. Professional development programs help reinforce worker loyalty to an institution by establishing an emotional connection with the work they do.

There are additional subparts that influence staff engagement. They are the human psyche and human capital management. The human psyche is a critical component because it serves as the impetus for self-driving commitment. It elevates a staff member's perception of the working environment. In turn, this increases the chances of workers stepping-up to the plate to accept new roles and responsibilities; to become more engaged. Human capital management plays a critical part in staff engagement. Used correctly, proper management creates comradery

among individuals, groups, teams, and organizations (Avolia, 1991). Managers have the power to transcend self-interests to a collective purpose by inspiring and motivating their direct reports. They can reinvent and build-up members of the organization to be more engaged (Warrick, 2011).

### **Chapter 3- Research Methods**

A mixed method research design was utilized for this study. The decision to use this method was made for six reasons. The first reason was because it allowed the researcher to fully address the research problem and its hypotheses. This was achieved by collecting and analyzing qualitative and quantitative data. The second was because quantitative areas of the study could compensate for weak points in qualitative research and vice versa. The next reason was due to the mixed method's ability to generate a hypothesis and test it. Qualitative data provided insights that helped create the hypotheses about cause and effect relationships. The fourth reason why this research design was utilized was that one type of data informed and guided the following collection of data. It allowed for the appropriate development of research strategies and tools. The next argument of why a mixed method design was used for this study was that it provided a resolution of puzzling findings. In a quantitative examination, different results can appear inconsistent. However, incorporating qualitative data assisted the investigator with identifying underlying reasons which helped the researcher make sense of data. Finally, a mixed method research design provided the triangulation of data. Triangulation helped the investigator make a better supportive case for insightful findings if both qualitative and quantitative data were used to produce those conclusions (Leedy, 2018).

#### **Research Question**

The objective of this study was to determine who and what can be done at UGED to increase staff engagement. The research question was the impetus for collecting the perceptions, thoughts, and beliefs of University employees. The collection of data involved interviewing managers and directors at UGED. In addition, an analysis of the Gallup Engagement Survey

conducted at the University from 2011-2018 was completed. The purpose for conducting a thorough investigation of the survey data was to search for possible reasons as to why staff engagement became idle over time.

### **Hypothesis 1**

Improved staff participation in University wellness programs will enhance worker engagement. The dependent variable for this hypothesis is staff engagement. The independent variable examined for this hypothesis is improved staff participation in the University's wellness programs.

### **Hypothesis 2**

Enrolling staff in University professional development programs will improve human capital engagement. The dependent variable for this hypothesis is staff engagement. The independent variable examined for this hypothesis is enrolling staff in University professional development programs.

### **Operational Definitions**

#### Wellness Programs

Workplace wellness schedules are defined as organized, employer sponsored programs. These curriculums are in place to support employees and, in some cases, their families in order to embrace and sustain behaviors which decrease health risks, enhance quality of life, boost personal effectiveness, and add to the organization's bottom line (Berry, 2010).



### Employee Engagement

“The term employee engagement relates to the level of an employee's commitment and connection to an organization. Employee engagement has emerged as a critical driver of business success in today's competitive marketplace. High levels of engagement promote retention of talent, foster customer loyalty, and improve organizational performance and stakeholder value” (SHRM 2017).

### University of Greater Expedia, Dell (UGED)

UGED is a member of a communal University structure which is part of Greater Expedia's public higher education program. UGED is one of ten campuses that fall under the direct control of an independent governing work-group known as the Board of Administrators. It is comprised of 18 members (University of Greater Expedia, 2018). Unlike the nine other campuses of this collection, UGED is the only campus which does not offer undergraduate education programs. It caters its resources to graduate students and professionals in the area of health and medical sciences.

### Professional Development

“Professional development is the continuous process of acquiring new knowledge and skills that relate to your profession, job responsibilities or work environment” (UGnet, 2018).

### Improved Staff Participation

Improved staff participation is defined as advancing free will among workers of the organization to associate and take interest in something versus taking action based on direction from their direct supervisors (Business Cases Studies, 2018).

### Enrolling Staff

Enrolling staff is a period of time when employees of an institution elect to attend and be part of a specific program (SHRM, 2018).

### Improve/Enhance Human Capital/Worker Engagement

“Improve Human Capital Engagement” and “Enhance Worker Engagement” are used interchangeably in this research paper. As previously mentioned in this essay, this verbiage is in direct reference to working staff. Working staff are employees of a company or institution.

### **Data Collection Plan Overview**

Data was collected through electronic questionnaires and surveys, Gallup survey data. Participants responsible for providing data were staff members and managers. Managers were contacted by the researcher and asked to participate in the questionnaire. The University provided the Gallup survey data. UGED disseminated electronic survey links to all staff employees via their UGED email accounts during 2011-2018. Each year when surveys were completed, the results were e-mailed and shared with University staff.

### **Population Sampling Strategy**

The participants of this research were both staff members and managers at UGED. Staff

members were selected because they are the focus of this research; specifically, their levels of engagement towards their respective career positions and the organization. Managers are also part of the sampling population in light of the fact they too play a key role in staff engagement. They are responsible for administering an organization and have the most direct influence on working members of the firm. For these reasons, both staff and managers were considered subject matter experts and the best resources for primary and secondary data collection relevant to this study.

## **Procedure**

For this study, data were collected using two avenues of approach. The first was the collection of secondary data. Data consisted of UGED's Gallup Engagement Survey results for a specific department in the University. The engagement survey uses a Likert scale. The Likert scale was developed in the 1930's and continues to be one of the most highly used instruments in social, psychological, and human-factors research (Parker, 2002). A Likert scale offers respondents anywhere from 5 to 9 pre-coded responses. For this specific survey, 5 pre-coded responses were made available: Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree. The purpose of this format is to allow the participants to express how much they agree or disagree with a specific statement; it taps into the cognitive and affective elements of attitudes (McLeod, 2008). Using a Likert scale allows quantitative data to be analyzed and summarized using a median which makes information in a survey easy to interpret. The survey results that were collected range from 2011-2018. Unfortunately, survey results for years 2012 and 2016 were not available as the University did not participate during those years. Primary data were collected through an open-ended electronic questionnaire. The questionnaires were delivered and returned via the University's secure e-mail server. This delivery method was used because it

allowed for privacy, security, deterred scheduling conflicts, and facilitated a means to collect information that is more detailed. There were eight questions in total. The reason for not exceeding eight questions was to capture the participant's commitment to participate and to avoid respondent fatigue.

### **Data Processing and Analysis**

In this study, quantitative and qualitative data were utilized and examined. The reasoning behind the decision to use a mixed method approach was because data is more comprehensive (Center for Innovation in Research and Teaching, 2019). This mixed method approach included numbers, statistics, and narrative. The data from the Gallup surveys over the period of 2011-2018 were the results from a specific department at UGED that was identified under a fictitious name: Department ABC. The reason for the alias name was to protect the confidentiality of the human subjects who participated in the Gallup Staff Engagement Surveys. The actual identity of the sample population in the Gallup survey were made known only to the professors of the learning course and kept confidential. Individual interviews were conducted with a sample size of four managers and directors. Furthermore, similar to those who participated in the Gallup Staff Engagement Surveys, the names and positions of senior managers were kept confidential. Their identities were made known only to the professors of the learning course.

### **Internal and External Validity**

Internal validity in this study was reinforced by showing that changes in dependent variable #1 (will enhance worker engagement) is caused by independent variable #1 (improved staff participation in University wellness programs). In the same related vein, internal validity of was further strengthened by changes in dependent variable #2 (will improve human capital

engagement) being attributed to independent variable #2 (enrolling staff in University professional development programs).

### **Dependent and Independent Variables**

In order to show a strong case of causality between both dependent and independent variables, three criteria must be met: 1- cause proceeds the effect, 2- cause and effect must correlate, and 3- no third variable is involved (Prochaska, 2013). With respect to external validity, this was dependent on conclusions that were drawn from the dependent and independent variables. If causality was proven, then the results of this study can be applied to other departments in the University and outside organizations. Using triangulation of data to provide a common understanding about the conclusions is valuable because it is a way of assuring validity (Leedy, 2018).

### **Limitations**

For this study, it will not be possible to measure the effectiveness of wellness programs and professional development on the sampling population being reviewed. In order to do so, these would require additional research efforts which extend outside of the period allotted for to production of this paper.

### **Conclusion**

Now that the research methodology for this study has been made transparent, this study will now transition to examination of the data collection results. This must be done in order to report the research findings. Moreover, it is required as to provide a conclusion and recommendations on how to improve staff employee engagement.

## Chapter 4: Results and Findings

### Objectives of the Results and Findings:

This study investigated the question: *what can management do to increase staff engagement?* As a starting point for further investigation, primary and secondary data were collected. Primary information was collected via electronic questionnaires. A total of 12 managers and directors were asked to participate in a questionnaire composed of eight open-ended questions. Four of the twelve managers and directors responded to the form. To protect the identity of the questionnaire participants, survey takers were issued pretend names. For the purpose of reporting and analyzing their responses to the questionnaire, participants were identified as Participant 1, 2, 3 and 4. Questions 1-4 of the questionnaire focused on university wellness programs. Questions 5-8 targeted managers' perceptions of professional development programs sponsored by UGED. Secondary data was collected via Gallup Engagement Surveys and were conducted by UGED staff members. The Gallup survey data ranged from 2011-2018 and consisted of 12 questions. These questions were part of a hierarchy which were clustered into four key areas that measure engagement: basic needs, management support, teamwork, and growth. In order to measure attitudes and opinions of staff members towards engagement, a five-tier Likert scale was used to collect and weigh participant's responses. The objective of collecting data via questionnaires and surveys was to gather and measure information in a methodical manner to answer the stated research question, test hypotheses, and determine what UGED management can do to increase levels of staff engagement.

**Overview of Results: Questionnaire**

The questionnaire (Appendix A) collected information from managers and directors on the topics of wellness and professional development programs offered by the University. The questionnaire was disseminated and collected by e-mail. Out of the twelve personnel asked to participate in the questionnaire, four responded (33%).

**Questionnaire 1: Participant 1**

The first interviewee felt he would not make a good respondent for the questionnaire. However, Participant 1 shared his thoughts outside of the questionnaire. This person stated he addressed wellness programs with their team through unofficial channels and did not make use of UGED's wellness programs. While Participant 1 claimed he was aware of his team's needs, accommodations were made when necessary and appropriate. Participant 1 claimed to have managed their workforce's tasks effectively to the point that staff members were able to leave their work at the office and enjoy their time away from their workstations. Due to the nature of Participant 1's business field, this person felt the University did not have adequate resources to offer professional development outside of basic level courses. When his team required additional opportunities to advance themselves, Participant 1 looked outside the University for professional development.

This administrator handled matters related to wellness and professional development based on their personal beliefs of what is best for staff. As a subject matter expert in their field, this may very well be the case in light of the fact different business teams have unique needs. However, by doing so individual basic needs were neglected. This in turn had negative effects on the foundation of the employee engagement hierarchy and overall staff engagement.

Questionnaire 2: Participant 2

Unlike Participant 1, the second interviewee provided responses to each question. Participant 2 stated he believed in work life balance and considered wellness programs to be a reliable vehicle for providing that. This person had not taken advantage of wellness programs offered by the University, but commented that he had only taken advantage of discount programs. Participant 2 did not feel executive management placed an emphasis on staff members' wellbeing. On a personal level, this person did not make any effort to publicize wellness programs to his direct reports, but did acknowledge he needed to do a better job to promote them. When asked what he considered the purpose of professional development programs to be, the response was for employees to develop their professional skills. This person actively searched for development opportunities for themselves and had a supervisor who supported his growth. Participant 2 promoted professional opportunities to his staff and recently approved a staff member's participation for a masters Excel course. When asked how the organization promoted professional development, he commented that communication of these opportunities were spotty at best. For that reason, Participant 2 actively reminded his direct supervisor their working team must become more engaged with enhancing their job skills.

This leadership billet holder showed awareness of the benefits associated to wellness and professional development programs and supported them. Participant 2 acknowledged there were issues with not only management not driving the initiative to promote these programs, but also with themselves. This person admitted to being part of the problem which a good starting point if one wants to implement change in this arena. This area manager acknowledged the issues and held himself accountable.



Questionnaire 3: Participant 3

Participant 3 followed Participant 2 in trace by providing answers for each inquiry in the questionnaire. This person felt wellness programs were for any person that wanted to maintain good health. He stated the best features of the sponsored wellness programs was that there was a wide variety of programs to choose from, the programs were conveniently scheduled so staff members could participate, and that these programs are highlighted through university e-mail notifications. Participant 3 felt professional development programs were designed to assist staff members to pursue greater knowledge of their current positions or to pursue a career in management. The superintendent attended at least one professional development a year and encouraged anyone who wanted to improve their knowledge of their current position or considered going into management to participate in these employer sponsored programs. Participant 3 stated staff members were made aware of professional development programs through various e-mails, their direct supervisor, and other members of the management team.

Participant 3 showed appreciation for wellness and professional development programs. This person supported the employer's initiative of offering these packages to workers. Although, these programs were seen in a positive light, the methodology of creating awareness to the working community could use more promotion than just e-mail reminders and word-of-mouth.

Questionnaire 4: Participant 4

Lastly, Participant 4 considered wellness programs were designed to promote, maintain, and improve the physical and mental health of staff and others associated with the firm. He considered the best features of wellness programs were they were widely available, affordable, and accessible to all hands. Members of the organization were encouraged to participate through

posters and e-mail notifications. Participant 4 person did not participate in promoting these programs as much as he should. Furthermore, Participant 4 stated that as issues or challenges arise throughout the course of normal business, he may suggest possible programs. However, this was more reactive than proactive. He considered the purpose of professional development programs were to help staff acquire new skills that aided their careers. This person participated in at least one development program each quarter and discussed these program opportunities with subordinates during their mid-year reviews and annual performance evaluations. Opportunities were also presented to staff on an ad-hoc basis when challenges presented themselves. Participant 4 further promoted these programs when he received e-mail notifications and reiterated their importance.

Participant 4 showed knowledge of and valued wellness and professional development programs. Outside of e-mails and posters, the organization failed to promote these programs to staff as much as the firm could have. Participant 4 favored and promoted professional development programs at a higher frequency than wellness programs.

### **Significant Key Findings: Interviews**

Based on all four questionnaires, management viewed wellness and professional developments to have value. There was an organizational effort to increase awareness and levels of staff participation in the programs. This effort came in the form of e-mails, posters, and word-of-mouth. These forms of promotion were all good tools which management could have used to spark conversations with staff regarding wellness and professional development programs. There was little or no follow-up on management's part to promote these programs.

## Overview of Results: Gallup Survey

The Gallup Engagement Survey questions were designed to capture a participant's perception towards basic needs, management support, teamwork, and growth in the workplace. The 12 survey questions were as follows: Q1- I know what is expected of me; Q2- I have the materials I need to do my work right; Q3- At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day; Q4- In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing great work; Q5- My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person; Q6- Someone at work encourages my development; Q7- At work, my opinion seems to count; Q8- The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important; Q9- My associates or fellow employees are committed to doing quality work; Q10- I have a best friend at work; Q11- In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress; and Q12- This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.

Question 1 was related to the understanding of one's work and how success is measured in the context of the success of the organization. It is the acknowledgement of how what one person is supposed to be doing fits in with what everyone else in the firm is supposed to be doing. It is more than only knowing what tasks are required to do your job. Question 2 was associated to one's ability to have access to the resources required to complete a job-related task. Resources include tools, essential training to use systems and tools, workflow policies and procedures, a clean and safe working environment, and the absence of distractions. Question 3 was related to the utilization of innate abilities, skills, and job knowledge. It involved matching individual preferences and competencies to what is required in a person's job role. Question 4 referred to the recognition you received from your direct supervisor and others at work. Recognition could be public, private, written, or verbal. Question 5 targeted positive

relationships, teamwork, and commitment in the work setting. It measured the interest levels of those who work with a person in regards to the worker's personal life and activities. Question 6 measured professional development. It included finding roles or positions that fit a worker's skills, talents, and knowledge. This support could be informal, voluntary, self-selected, and mutually agreeable between two people. Question 7 monitored if the participant of the survey was frequently asked for their opinions on subject matter and if those suggestions were taken into consideration when decisions are made. This means the participant felt he had access to communication channels across different levels of the organization. Question 8 focused on the ability of one to identify with the organization's mission. It looked at the ability for someone to understand how their job fit into the overall scheme of things and that it contributed to the firm's business objectives. Question 9 measured whether the person believed their team was committed to quality. It investigated the honest and complete communication surrounding quality issues. This question looked at the worker's understanding the level of respect for each other's work efforts and the understanding of one another's work. Question 10 investigated the sense of a staff member's affiliation with someone in the workplace. It looked at whether or not a relationship existed where information could be shared to help others when support was needed. Was there someone at work who watched out for him and vice versa? Question 11 addressed if a person at work expressed how you were performing at your job, how you were perceived, and where your work was leading. Lastly, question 12 looked at whether or not a person had been given the chance for self-improvement. It gauged if a person felt they were genuinely learning and making progress at the work they do. This could have been done in a variety of ways such as training courses, opportunities to learn new things, and different ways to work more efficient (UGED Learning and Organization Development, 2018). The combination of all 12 questions

formed the hierarchy of employee engagement (Figure 2). Questions 1-2 were clustered to study a participant's basic needs in the workplace. Questions 3-6 focused on management support while questions 7-10 measured teamwork. Finally, questions 11-12 looked at an individual's perception for growth opportunities (Figure 2).

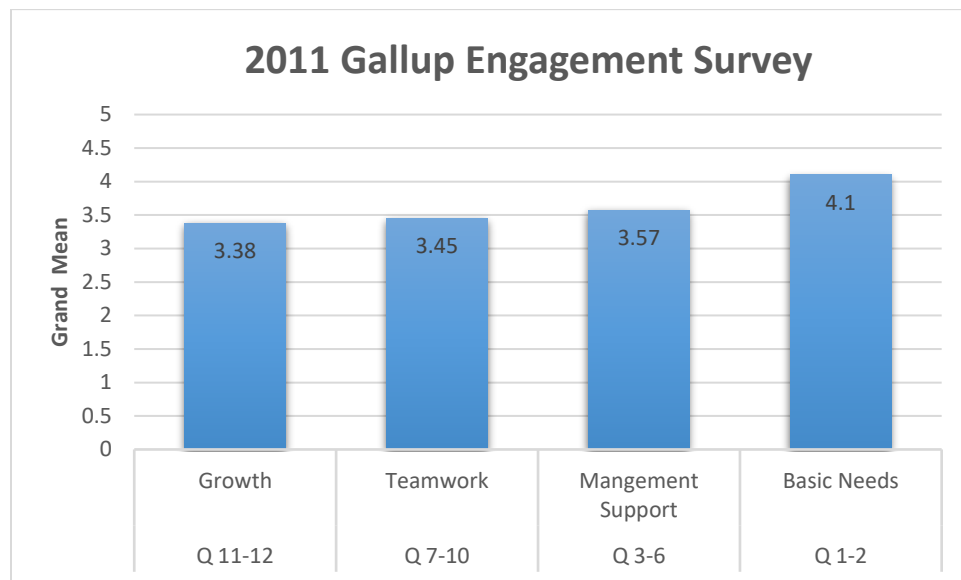


(Figure 2)

#### Gallup Engagement Survey Results for 2011

The results of the initial Gallup Engagement Survey conducted in 2011 produced a critical starting point for addressing levels of worker engagement at Department ABC. Obtaining initial data for this long-term endeavor allowed administrators to better understand where their strengths and weakness existed with respect to the organization meeting their staff

members' basic needs, support from management, the level teamwork at the firm, and ability for workers to grow professionally. Showcased in Figure 3 are the 2011 grand means for each category of questions clustered into the Gallup Engagement Hierarchy shown in Figure 2. Basic needs for staff members scored the highest when compared to other categories. A grand mean 4.1 out of 5 was reported. Management support came in second with a score of 3.57 out of 5, followed by a 3.45 out of 5 for teamwork. Pulling up the rear was growth. Growth scored a grand mean score of 3.38 out of 5.



(Figure 3) N=88

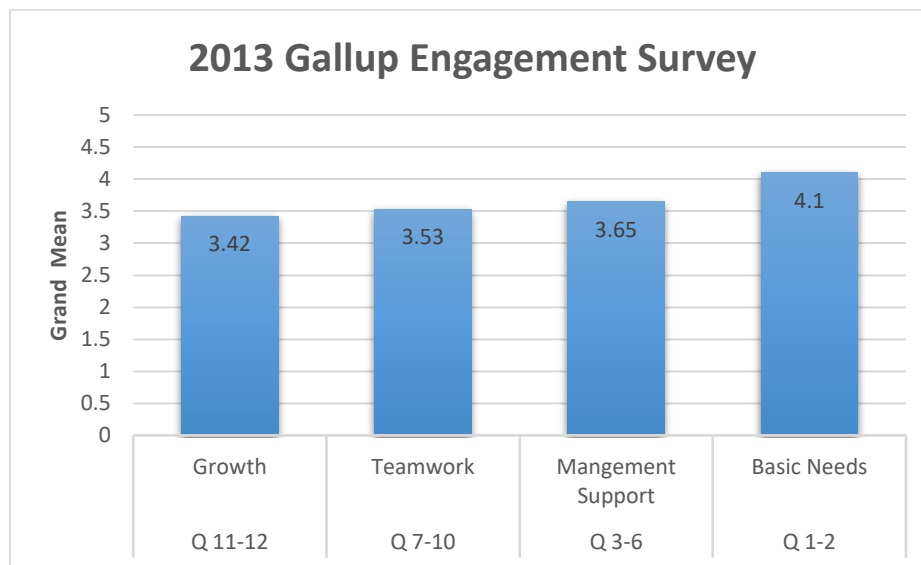
### Analysis

Based on the information above, Department ABC showed good initiative with providing staff the necessary materials required to perform their duties. The organization also performed well when it came to employees understanding work performance expectations. Management support, teamwork and support required further attention. Management needed to provide more

recognition of staff efforts to increase levels of engagement. Staff did not feel their opinions in the workplace mattered. As a direct result, Department ABC received a low score for teamwork. The organization also needed to focus more attention on providing opportunities for workers to develop current job skills and seek new training to advance their careers.

### Gallup Engagement Survey Results for 2013

As the 2011 Gallup survey provided a solid foundation to assess engagement strengths and weaknesses of Department ABC, the results received from 2013 (Figure 4) allowed members of management to determine if their efforts to improve staff engagement over the years had been effective. The results shown in Figure 4 below showed an increase in each category with the exception of one, basic needs. Staff basic needs remained unchanged and idled at 4.1 out of 5. Management support and teamwork both increased by .08 of a percent. Management support increased from 3.57 to 3.65, while teamwork climbed from 3.45 to 3.53. Growth did not do as well, but increased from 3.38 to 3.42.



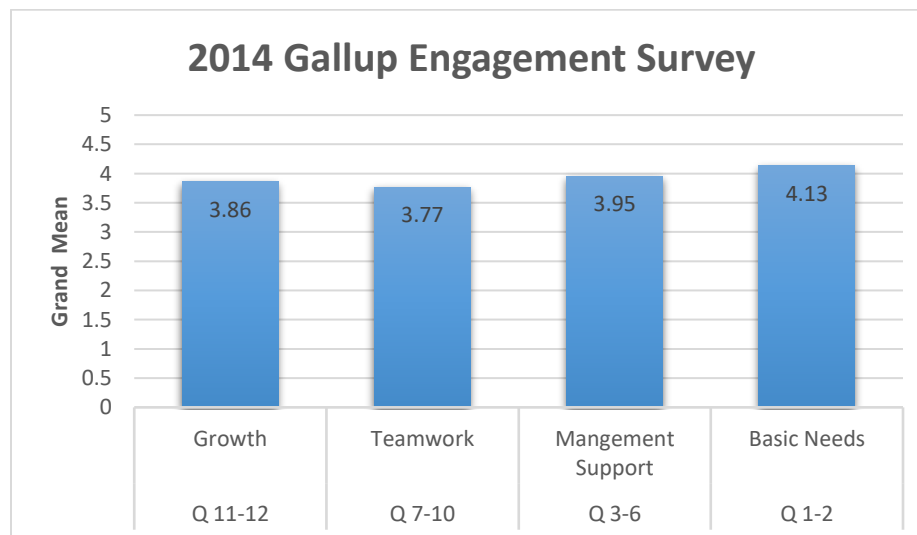
(Figure 4) N=83

### Analysis

The survey results for 2013 in Figure 4 showed improvement with engagement levels in growth, teamwork, and management support. These three categories scored higher than the original scores reported in 2011. Based on this information, management made a conscious effort to address these three engagement needs. Basic needs for Department ABC idled, however. Overall, the organization made good progress for 2013.

### Gallup Engagement Survey Results for 2014

The Gallup survey results for 2014 showed another positive trend in employee engagement levels (Figure 5). Basic needs rose from 4.1 in year 2013 to 4.13 in year 2014, a small increment of .03 of a percent. Management support increased by .30 of a percent from the previous year, 3.65 to 3.95. Teamwork score 3.77 in 2014. This increased by .24 of a percent based on the previous year's score of 3.65. The biggest leap for year 2014 came from the growth category. The grand mean for growth increased by .44 of a percent increasing from 3.42 to 3.86.



(Figure 5) N=73

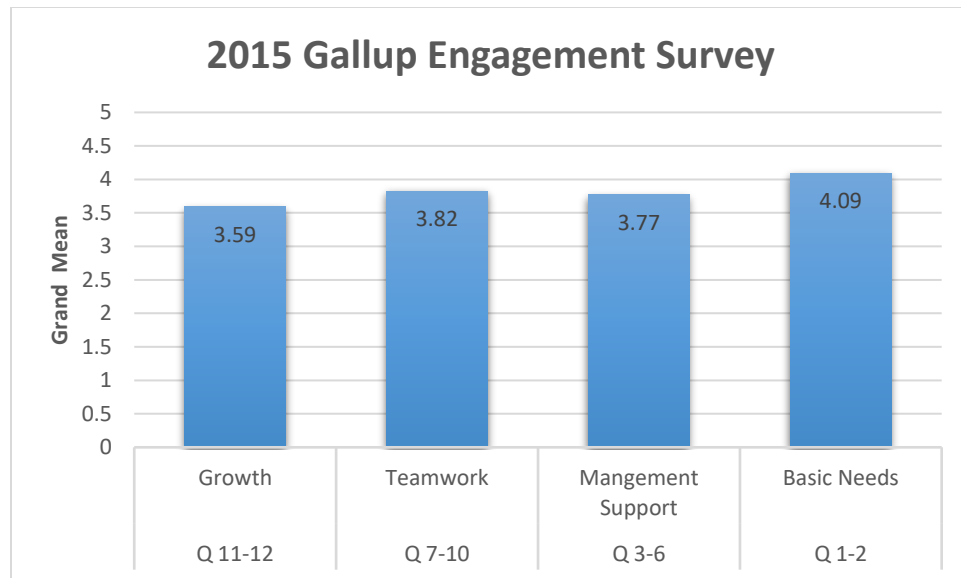


### Analysis

Management continued to make progress with staff engagement levels in 2014. Unlike 2013 where progress only took place in 3 out of 4 categories, all engagement blocks of the hierarchy saw positive results. Clearly, Department ABC had been actively driving the initiative to increase worker commitment. Employees appeared to have better access to the necessary tools to address their job responsibilities and managers were encouraging staff to do their best and receiving recognition for it. In addition, comradery in Department ABC was moving in a favorable direction and workers felt they were receiving more career growth opportunities.

### Gallup Engagement Survey Results for 2015

2015 survey results showed a decline in staff engagement in all but one category, teamwork (Figure 6). Basic needs declined from 4.13 to 4.09, a decrease of .04 of one percent. Management support followed the downward trend. Levels of engagement in this category decreased by .18 of one percent resulting in a drop from the previous year's rating of 3.95 to 3.77. Growth suffered a loss of .05 of one percent. This brought down the grand mean from 3.86 to 3.59. Growth had the largest decline out of all the engagement categories, .27 of one percent. Teamwork continued to accelerate in 2015 by a margin of .05 of one percent resulting in a grand mean of 3.83 out of 5.



(Figure 6) N=87

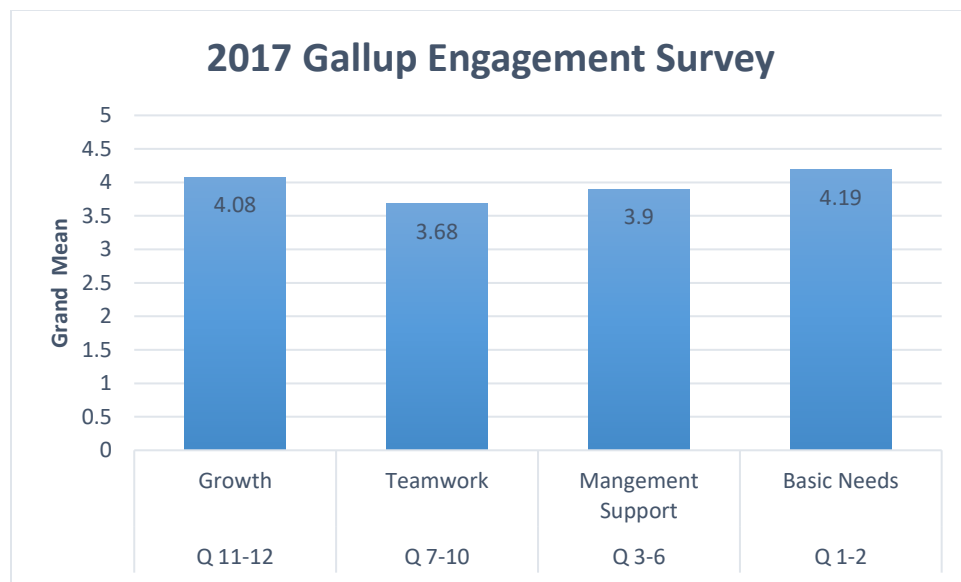
### Analysis

The survey results for 2015 displayed a genuine need for concern. With the exception of teamwork, all categories plunged into decline. Clearly, Department ABC had failed to stay focused on engagement initiatives. Unfavorable results surfaced because staff felt they were not receiving praise for work efforts and supportive services for workers to advance professionally in the organization had declined. Furthermore, management had failed to be receptive to work related feedback from their direct reports and communicate these concerns throughout the organization.

### Gallup Engagement Survey Results for 2017

Survey results for 2017 were the exact opposite of those in 2016. While teamwork in rose in 2016 and the other three engagement categories fell, 2018 showed Teamwork had dropped by .14 of one percent while all other three engagement categories increased (Figure 7).

The new grand mean for teamwork was 3.82. Basic needs rose by .10 of one percent resulting in a rating 4.19 out of 5. Management support displayed a positive increase of .13 of one percent. This increased engagement levels in this area to 3.9 out of 5. Lastly, growth had an upward spurt of .49 of one percent. This was the highest increase out of all four categories for 2017, 4.08 out of 5.



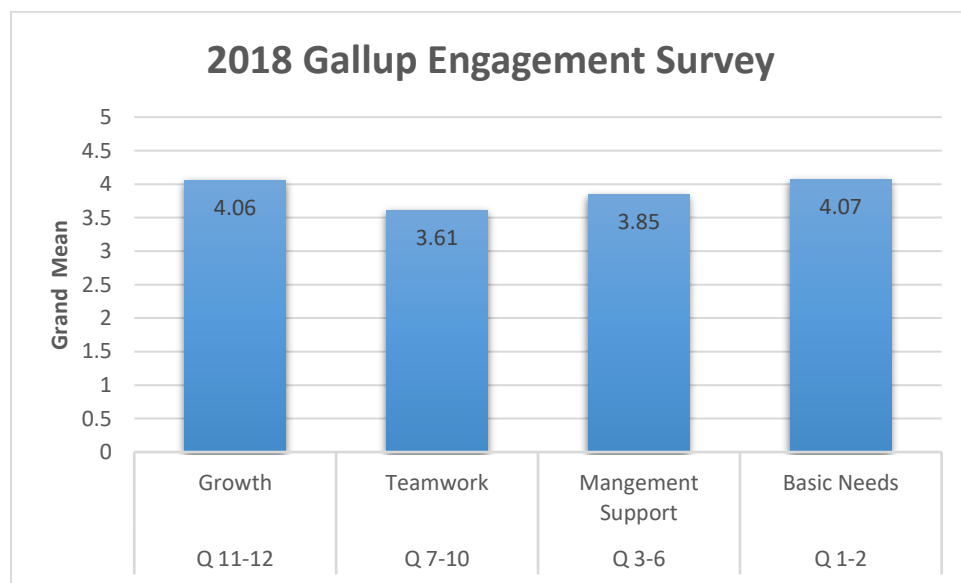
(Figure 7) N=87

### Analysis

Decision makers of the organization were receptive to the unfavorable Gallup survey results of 2016. Department ABC recessed their situation, identified areas of need, and enacted an action plan. The firm recovered from their downfall in 2015 with the exception of one category, teamwork.

### Gallup Engagement Survey Results for 2018

The final Gallup Engagement Survey conducted was in 2018. 2018 showed unfavorable results in all categories (Figure 8). Growth had a small decline of .02 of one percent resulting in a grand mean of 4.06 out of 5. Basic needs fell by .12 of one percent. Numbers in this category fell from 4.19 in the previous year to 4.07 for 2018. Management support and teamwork followed the negative trend. Management support fell by .05 of one percent and teamwork fell .07 of one percent. The 2018 grand mean for management support ended in 3.09 out of 5 and teamwork resulted in a final score of 3.68 out of 5.



(Figure 8) N=87

### Analysis

Department ABC struggled with staff engagement levels in 2018. Basic needs, management support, teamwork and growth all declined. While this appeared negative, the organization still held good scoring positions for growth and basic needs. The department

required consistency in its staff engagement practices. The data from 2011-2014 proved the institution knew how to drive worker commitment levels, however. Leadership failed to make staff engagement a top priority.

### **Significant Secondary Data (Gallup Surveys) Findings**

Based on the findings of the questionnaire, managers of Department ABC acknowledged the value of both wellness and professional development programs. Furthermore, all participants of the questionnaire participated in these packages. Although these resources were being utilized by management, the organization as a whole did the bare minimum to promote them. While the institution used e-mail announcements, posters, and word of mouth as the primary advertisement tools, it was not enough to make a significant impact with respect to overall participation. More support and engagement is required on management's part.

The Gallup survey proved the organization's leadership was fully capable of driving and increasing staff engagement. From years 2011-2014, the grand means for categories of the employee engagement hierarchy (basic needs, management support, teamwork, and growth) all increased or remained consistent. There was not a single drop in productivity. After 2014, Department ABC experienced instability with maintaining consistent levels of staff commitment to the organization. In 2018, staff engagement plateaued and the organization needed to look for other opportunities to make improvement.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations**

This chapter provides conclusions and recommendations supported by the findings of the research investigation. The study took place over a sixteen-week period and used a mixed method approach. During the investigatory timeline, the researcher studied the question: what can UGED management do to increase staff engagement? The researcher attempted to provide solutions by studying a collection of engagement surveys from 2011-2018, Gallup survey data.

Two hypotheses were developed as proposed solutions. The research hypotheses examined in this study were:

1. Improved staff participation in University wellness programs will enhance worker engagement.
2. Enrolling staff in University professional development programs will improve human capital engagement.

To test these hypotheses, the researcher developed and disseminated a questionnaire to UGED managers and directors. These questionnaires consisted of eight open-ended questions. Four questions were tailored to University wellness programs. The remaining questions were focused on employer sponsored professional development programs. While the research conducted had limitations, valuable can be extracted from this research.

## **Conclusions**

### Conclusion 1

Staff engagement initiatives were created with the purpose of developing an inclusive, supportive working environment and increasing levels of staff commitment. Based on the Gallup survey results for years 2011-2014, the institution showed positive progress with addressing staff members' basic needs, supporting human capital, establishing comradery, and facilitating a learning culture where staff could expand their careers. Addressing all categories of the employee engagement hierarchy is critical to increasing levels of staff engagement. From 2015 to 2018, worker engagement fluctuated and became unstable. In 2018, the firm made a public announcement that staff engagement levels had plateaued and alternatives must be sought for improvement. This research study discovered that managers and directors initially approached this project in an effective manner, but as time progressed, the impetus of carrying progress forward diminished. Managers and directors were not held accountable by executive leadership for their assigned duties of driving staff engagement in the workplace. Leadership at the executive level failed to supervise managers and directors.

### Conclusion 2

This study focused on employer sponsored wellness programs to address the following hypothesis: improved staff participation in wellness programs will enhance worker engagement. The research conducted in this study on wellness programs proved that programs such as these have a direct relationship to staff engagement. LuAnn Heinen, vice president at the nonprofit National Business Group on Health, gives further support to the position of wellness programs and their effect on staff engagement. According to Heinen, "Health and well-being are part of a

broader workforce strategy that seeks to impact business outcomes such as recruitment, retention, customer satisfaction, and employee engagement” (Miller, 2018). In alliance with Morton (2005), "Talent management is integral to engaging employees in the organization." According to Page (2019), wellbeing consists of three components: psychological wellbeing, workplace well-being, and subjective wellbeing. Wellness programs addressed all three of these components. Staff engagement includes wellbeing, which consists of psychological wellbeing, workplace well-being, and subjective wellbeing (Robertson, 2010).

### Conclusion 3

The second hypothesis of this study targeted professional development programs to investigate the following: enrolling staff in employer sponsored professional development programs will improve staff engagement. Professional development programs were used by the organization to ensure their staff continue to enhance and develop their business practices throughout their careers (Chikari, 2015). The research conducted in this investigation included the analysis of a past survey conducted by Deloitte (2005) of 1,396 human resource practitioners from over sixty countries. This survey discovered that an institution's ability to retain and attract new human capital were perceived as the two most important worker management issues facing companies. This also kept company employees engaged. Furthermore, in order for professional development programs to be effective, training and learning schedules require a participant to get involved, take charge, and plan their development process. According to Caniëls (2018), employees with growth mindsets are more susceptible to be engaged with their work. Furthermore, the benefits derived from learning and training are not one sided. Employers also profit when human capital participate in professional development programs. Institutions



directly benefit from the new skills acquired by staff as workers implement them into their daily assigned duties and tasks (Rilley, 1981).

## **Recommendations**

Based on the information collected by this research investigation, the following recommendations are suggested for increasing levels of staff engagement in the organization. By implementing these recommendations, it is believed the company's engagement initiative and the creation of an inclusive and supportive working environment can be accomplished.

### Recommendation 1: Accountability

Beginning in January 2020, managers and directors should be held directly accountable for staff engagement levels.

### Narrative

Management is the most important variable affecting the workers' engagement (Hawrysz, 2015). Managers and directors have direct control of effecting the culture of an organization through their actions. Management should be required to participate in quarterly training courses to learn critical components of fulfilling human needs in the workplace. The framework for these components can be found in the Gallup Engagement Hierarchy (Figure 2). The components are basic needs, management support, teamwork, and growth. Successful completion of these training courses should be part of management's annual performance reviews, which are used to evaluate yearly equity compensation and an administrator's ability to secure employment with the organization.

### Recommendation 2: Wellness and Professional Development Programs

By the end of 2020, committee should be developed to investigate, organize, and restructure all wellness and professional development programs sponsored by the organization. Based on the information from this research, the organization alone does very little to promote these programs and managers do not have the bandwidth to take on additional responsibilities. E-mail notifications, posters, and word-of-mouth have minimal effect on creating awareness and increasing participation.

#### Narrative

The purpose of the committee is to investigate all wellness and professional development programs the institution offers. Members of the committee should consist of representatives from each of the company's departments and meet on a reoccurring basis. This will ensure diversity in the committee and increase the likelihood that every employee's thoughts and concerns regarding wellness and professional development programs was captured and addressed. The committee should obtain employee opinions on all available programs via survey, in person interviews, and other relevant research methods to determine which programs have high value in the working community and those that do not. Low value programs should be eliminated and financial support from the eliminated schedules should be funneled to popular ones in order to improve and expand high value programs. An action plan should be created to roll out an advertising campaign to spread awareness and increase worker participation of both wellness and professional development programs. Program participation should be monitored and continuously evaluated so strategic updates can be made. At the end of the campaign cycle,

the committee should evaluate the overall initiative, its progress, and make adjustments as needed in order to increase awareness and participation.

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## Appendix A

Thank you for agreeing to participate in a questionnaire focused on Wellness (**W**) and Professional Development (**PD**) programs offered by the University. As I mentioned in our conversation, I am completing my master's degree in public administration at Golden Gate University and I would like to get your personal perspectives on **W** and **PD** programs at UGED. This brief questionnaire should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your answers are confidential and anonymous and I will use them for completing my research analysis. Thank you for participating and helping me complete my research study.

1. What do you consider the purpose of UGED's **W** programs?
2. What are the best features about UGED's **W** program?
3. How are department staff members encouraged to participate in UGED's **W** programs?
4. How much time do you invest on publicizing current University **W** programs?
5. What do you consider the purpose of UGED's **PD** programs?
6. How frequently do you participate in UGED's **PD** program?
7. How often do you encourage someone in your department to attend UGED **PD** courses?
8. How are department staff members made aware of UGED **PD** programs?

## Appendix B

### Gallup Engagement Survey Questions

1. Do you know what is expected of you at work?
2. Do you have the materials and equipment to do your work right?
3. At work, do you have the opportunity to do what you do best every day?
4. In the last seven days, have you received recognition or praise for doing good work?
5. Does your supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about you as a person?
6. Is there someone at work who encourages your development?
7. At work, do your opinions seem to count?
8. Does the mission/purpose of your company make you feel your job is important?
9. Are your associates (fellow employees) committed to doing quality work?
10. Do you have a best friend at work?
11. In the last six months, has someone at work talked to you about your progress?
12. In the last year, have you had opportunities to learn and grow?