

Отримано: 24 жовтня 2025 р.

Прорецензовано: 2 листопада 2025 р.

Прийнято до друку: 6 листопада 2025 р.

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ORCID-ідентифікатор: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2411-8911>DOI: [http://doi.org/10.25264/2311-5149-2025-39\(67\)-57-63](http://doi.org/10.25264/2311-5149-2025-39(67)-57-63)Leśniewski M. A. Motivational managers and increasing employee engagement – a theoretical perspective. *Наукові записки Національного університету «Острозька академія» : серія «Економіка» : науковий журнал*. Острог : Вид-во НаУОА, грудень 2025. № 39(67). С. 57–63.

УДК: 331.1

JEL-класифікація: M12, M54

Michał Adam Leśniewski,*PhD, Higher School of Business – National Louis University (WSB-NLU)***MOTIVATIONAL MANAGERS AND INCREASING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT –
A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

This article investigates the theoretical relationship between the role of a motivating manager and the enhancement of employee engagement as a primary driver of organizational dynamism. It is substantiated that modern managers must transcend traditional task-oriented roles to actively foster team engagement through social and emotional incentives, which are frequently more valued by subordinates than purely financial rewards. The research explores the "motivating manager" as a multi-faceted concept essential for building institutional trust, promoting cross-functional cooperation, and cultivating a positive organizational climate. Specific managerial actions are identified that encourage employees to identify with corporate goals and undertake proactive behaviors, thereby minimizing barriers to engagement and translating effort into measurable results.

Methodologically, the study is based on a comprehensive review of specialized literature and contemporary digital academic publications. It underscores that a motivating manager and a committed workforce are inseparable components in generating organizational value and building a sustainable competitive advantage in the modern market. The findings contribute to the conceptual framework of human resource management by highlighting how "soft management" techniques – such as effective communication, empathy, and psychological support – directly increase overall organizational effectiveness. Ultimately, the study concludes that organizations prioritizing their professional image and internal culture are obligated to adopt leadership styles that emphasize employee engagement. This theoretical perspective provides a robust foundation for developing management strategies aimed at strengthening the human capital of competitive enterprises.

Keywords: motivational manager, employee engagement, soft management, organizational dynamism, theoretical perspective.

Михал Адам Лесневський,*PhD, Вища школа бізнесу,**Національний університет Луїса***МОТИВАЦІЙНІ МЕНЕДЖЕРИ ТА ПІДВИЩЕННЯ
ЗАЯВЛЕНОСТІ СПІВРОБІТНИКІВ – ТЕОРЕТИЧНА ПЕРСПЕКТИВА**

У статті аналізується теоретична роль менеджерів у формуванні зацікавленості співробітників, підкреслюючи, що зацікавленість вилівається з факторів, пов'язаних з робочим місцем, включаючи управлінські дії. Менеджери можуть підвищити зацікавленість за допомогою соціальних та емоційних стимулів, які іноді цінуються більше, ніж фінансові. Ключові управлінські дії включають: створення атмосфери, побудову довіри та підтримку співпраці. Ці дії заохочують співробітників ідентифікувати себе з цілями компанії та вживати додаткових заходів. Ефективне управління з боку менеджера мінімізує бар'єри для зацікавленості, перетворюючи їх на результати роботи.

Ключові слова: мотиваційний менеджер, зацікавленість співробітників, теоретична перспектива.

Problem Statement. In the face of a rapidly changing labor market, employee engagement has become a key factor in determining the success and competitiveness of an organization. Modern companies are increasingly recognizing that a loyal and motivated team is an invaluable asset, translating into higher productivity and innovation. In this context, the role of the manager is undergoing a significant evolution, from a traditional supervisor to a mentor and leader who inspires action.

The aim of the article is to provide a theoretical analysis of how a motivational manager influences the level of engagement of his or her subordinates. An introduction to this issue requires reference to the basic theories of motivation that have shaped management thinking over the decades. Examining the theoretical perspective allows us to understand the psychological and social mechanisms underlying engagement, as well as how managers can consciously influence them. It is particularly important to compare classical theories of motivation with newer concepts of employee engagement. In this context, W. Schaufeli's concept, which distinguishes three dimensions

of engagement – vigor, dedication and absorption – provides a solid basis for analysis. The article will examine how individual elements of the motivational manager model correspond to the dimensions of engagement according to W. Schaufeli. This will make it possible to determine what specific actions a manager can take to effectively build engagement in a team, rather than relying solely on external motivation. The aim is also to demonstrate that effective engagement management goes beyond standard techniques and requires the manager to have a deep understanding of the psychology and needs of the employee. Finally, the paper will summarize the implications for management practice of the theoretical approach to the role of the motivational manager in the process of increasing employee engagement.

Analysis of Recent Research and Publications. Contemporary theoretical and empirical research in Poland and abroad in the field of Management and Quality Sciences has focused, among other things, on motivation in management, concentrating on the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, remote working, generational differences (especially Generation Z) and the role of trust and personalization in motivating employees. Each of these studies has its own conditions in terms of motivation, including that of the motivating manager. Considering the availability of research and publications, it is worth familiarizing oneself with studies directly or indirectly related to motivational managers. In their study, authors A. Szymczyk and P. Połonowska presented how managers dealt with motivating employees during the COVID-19 pandemic, while analyzing changes in the methods of motivation used in the face of remote work. Both the pandemic and remote working require not only standard motivation tools (classical motivation) but also contemporary motivation tools (contemporary motivation). [Szymczyk, Połonowska, 2021, 49-61]. Another publication by A. J. Paszkiewicz and A. Wasiluk presented research on the work motivation of Generation Z, analyzing the variables that influence their approach to work and expectations of managers, which is important for contemporary motivational managers [Paszkiewicz, Wasiluk, 2022, 240-260]. Also worth mentioning is a publication by M. A. Leśniewski and S. Morawska, which presents the functioning of human resources with an emphasis on organizational culture and employee engagement, which in turn are linked to motivational management. [Leśniewski, Morawska, 2007]. The challenges faced by motivational managers are also reflected in the work of the ADP Research Institute, which is responsible for the annual global 'People at Work' survey. They analyze trends in the world of work, including key motivational factors for employees that must be taken into account by motivational managers when making decisions [32]. Another research team is Randstad Workmonitor, whose annual studies emphasize that trust in managers (supervisors) and flexible working models are very important for work motivation, which influences the role of managers as motivators in building trust and a friendly, motivating organizational culture [33].

Presentation of the main research material. One of the functions of management in human resource management is motivation, which, according to A. Pietroń-Pyszczek, can be defined as the intention to do something in order to achieve something [Pietroń-Pyszczek, 2007, 45]. According to J. Reykowski, motivation is defined as a psychological mechanism that triggers and organizes human behavior aimed at achieving a specific goal, which constitutes its internal force. This force consists of drives, instincts and states of tension, which are referred to as mechanisms of the human organism. Its magnitude determines a person's overall psychophysical activity, mobilization and willingness to undertake more difficult tasks and take risks [Reykowski, 1977, 35]. It can be said that motivation is a kind of mechanism, process or intention always associated with the pursuit of a specific goal. Clearly, goals and motivation are closely related, because motivation is shaped by the goals that individuals strive for, and without goals there would be no motivation.

Professional motivation is categorized into two aspects depending on the needs, expectations and values of individuals. Most often, it is divided into external and internal motivation. Table 1 presents a description of internal (endogenous) motivation and external (exogenous) motivation.

Table 1
Classification and characteristics of motivation

Internal motivation shapes stimuli that arise spontaneously and cause individuals to behave in a certain way or move in a certain direction. Such stimuli may include responsibility (the feeling that work is important), the opportunity to use and develop skills, challenging work, and a love for the work being done, i.e. when work becomes an individual's passion.
External motivation consists of rewards or punishments, i.e. instrumental values that are only a means to achieve values/goals. They act as an incentive to take action that is rewarded in some way (e.g. a pay rise, praise, promotion) or allow one to avoid punishment (a pay cut or suspension, criticism, demotion).

Source: own work based on [10, 16].

Motivation theories help subordinates choose the right motivational process in such a way that feedback loops are created, whereby the organization achieves its goals while satisfying the needs of its employees [Leśniewski,

Berny, 2012, 451-462; Leśniewski, Morawska, 2012]. What is more, they explain and examine the mechanisms that subordinates use when performing their duties.

In the literature on the subject, the most common and popular classification of motivation theories distinguishes between two groups: need theories (content) and process theories. Table 2 presents the division and characteristics of need theories and process theories.

Table 2
Classification and characteristics of need theory and process theory

Content theories define needs as a fundamental element of motivation and focus on factors that stimulate, trigger or initiate individual behavior (e.g. A. Maslow, F. Herzberg, C. Alderfer, D. McClelland).
Process theories focus on how people make decisions about their behavior, rather than just what motivates them. These theories explain how thoughts, beliefs and expectations influence the direction, intensity and persistence of an individual's actions (e.g. V. Vroom, J. S. Adams, E. Locke, B. F. Skinner).

Source: own work based on [2, 4, 8, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18].

Motivation theories fall into two main categories: content theories, which focus on what motivates, and process theories, which explain how motivation works. Content theories, such as A. Maslow's hierarchy of needs or F. Herzberg's two-factor theory, assume that human behavior is driven by the pursuit of specific needs, from basic needs to self-actualization. These theories focus on identifying the internal factors and needs that motivate people to act. Process theories, on the other hand, including Vroom's expectancy theory and Adams' equity theory, analyze the mechanisms by which people make decisions about their actions. They focus on how beliefs, expectations and perceptions of fairness influence the direction and intensity of motivation. While content theories give managers insight into which motivators to use, process theories indicate how to apply them to achieve optimal results. The two approaches complement each other, offering a comprehensive view of the complex process of motivating employees in an organization.

A manager can be defined as a person at the head of an organization who makes decisions and creates strategies for the employees under their supervision in such a way that they meet the set goals. The work of a manager can be described as performing certain roles or carrying out groups of activities that are associated with their position [Liberacki, 2011, 153-163].

According to empirical research conducted by H. Mintzberg, every manager in an organization undertakes activities in areas known as interpersonal, informational and decision-making, where they perform several roles. In the interpersonal area, the roles focus on establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships, which bring a number of positive benefits. Taking on informational roles involves searching for information [Dziekański, 2012, 387–403], constantly expanding knowledge about the functioning of the company, as well as keeping up to date with news and events in the industry in which it operates. Decision-making roles refer to choosing certain behavioural options from among many available possibilities [Zakrzewska-Bielawska, 2012, 34-35].

A motivational manager is someone who can effectively motivate their team to achieve high results for the organization. They do this through their personality and the actions and habits they have developed, which are essential in their position. The ability to listen, not just hear, and to communicate, not just give orders, is the key to success in a properly functioning organizational structure. What is more, people in managerial positions should have the right character traits. Table 3 presents the general character traits of managers.

Table 3
General characteristics and traits of managers

1. Interpersonal and communication skills
Communication skills: Managers must convey information, expectations and goals clearly and concisely.
Empathy: The ability to understand and empathize with employees' emotions is key to building trust and positive relationships.
Emotional intelligence: Allows you to manage your own emotions and understand and influence the emotions of others.
Openness and honesty: Being transparent and honest in your dealings with your team builds authority and loyalty.
2. Leadership and decision-making skills:
Self-confidence: A manager must be confident in their abilities and decisions, which translates into the trust of the team.
Responsibility: An effective manager takes responsibility for their decisions, both right and wrong.
Decision-making ability: Managers must be able to analyze information and make the right decisions, often under time pressure.
Ability to delegate tasks: Trusting the competence of the team and delegating authority, rather than micromanaging, demonstrates a mature approach.
3. Attitude and approach
Focus on development: Both personal and that of employees. Willingness to continuously learn and invest in team development.
Flexibility and resilience: Ability to adapt to a dynamic business environment and cope with pressure.
Strategic thinking: Focus on long-term goals and acting with a vision for the future.

Integrity and moral principles: Acting in accordance with values and ensuring fair treatment of the team.

4. Work organization skills

Time management: Effectively organizing one's own work and that of the team in order to achieve goals within the set deadline.

Conflict resolution skills: Efficient and diplomatic resolution of disputes within the team, which has a positive impact on the working atmosphere.

Source: own work based on [21-24, 27, 28].

No manager is perfect and cannot possess all the desired qualities to the maximum extent. The key to success in management is the continuous improvement of those attributes that are most important in a given organizational context and for a specific group of employees. Different teams require different skills from their leader – in one case, empathy and support may be key, while in another, assertiveness and the ability to make difficult decisions may be more important. Therefore, managers should regularly analyze the needs of their team and gaps in their own competencies in order to consciously invest in their development. This means that effective managers are flexible and able to adapt their management style to changing conditions and expectations. Openness to feedback from subordinates is invaluable here, as it allows for the precise identification of areas for improvement. Ultimately, it is not the possession of an ideal set of characteristics, but the ability to develop and adapt strategically that makes a manager truly effective. Continuous learning and adaptation is what distinguishes outstanding leaders in the dynamic world of business. It is a never-ending process, and instead of striving for unrealistic perfection, the focus should be on authentic development.

Defining engagement at work means focusing on it, adopting an enthusiastic attitude towards its implementation, and exceeding previously set business goals while acting in the interests of the company [Assibat, Blanche, Janvier, Monnier, 2014]. According to W. Schaufeli¹, it is a positive state of mind of an employee, characterized by experiencing vigor, absorption and dedication at work [Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, Bakker, 2002, 71–92]. There are several types of engagement. Table 4 presents the division and characteristics of passive and active engagement.

Table 4

Division and characteristics of passive and active engagement

Passive commitment understood as habit and attachment to the organization, remaining in it.

Active commitment, i.e. participating in company matters, showing initiative.

Source: own work based on [1, 14, 15].

Engaged employees are more productive because they identify with the organization's goals and put more effort into their duties. Their commitment translates into higher quality work and fewer mistakes, which directly affects the company's reputation. As a result, the organization can achieve better financial results and increase its competitiveness in the market [Przybytniowski, 2022]. A high level of employee engagement promotes innovation, as employees are more likely to share ideas and seek new solutions. It should be emphasized that engaged employees show greater loyalty, which reduces staff turnover and the associated costs of recruitment and training. Based on research by W. Schaufeli, employee engagement can be characterized by three key dimensions: vigor, dedication and absorption. These three elements contribute to a positive, satisfying and work-related state of mind. Table 5 presents the three dimensions of engagement according to W. Schaufeli.

Table 5

Three dimensions of engagement according to W. Schaufeli

1. Vigor

Description: Vigor is a high level of energy and mental resilience, strong motivation to work and perseverance in the face of difficulties.

Employee characteristics: People who are characterized by high vigor show enthusiasm and a willingness to put effort into their tasks, and see obstacles as challenges to be overcome rather than discouraging factors.

2. Dedication

Description: Dedication reflects a strong emotional commitment to work, combined with a sense of meaning, enthusiasm, inspiration and pride in the tasks performed.

Employee characteristics: The employee feels that their work is valuable and important. They identify with the company's goals and are motivated to succeed, deriving satisfaction from their contribution to the organization's development.

¹ He is a retired professor of work and organizational psychology, and his research focuses on concepts such as work engagement and burnout. He is the co-creator of the popular scale for measuring work engagement, known as the UWES (Utrecht Work Engagement Scale) – source: <https://www.wilmarschaufeli.nl/> (10.10.2025).

3. Absorption

Description: Absorption is a state of complete concentration and happy immersion in the tasks at hand, which makes time pass quickly and makes it difficult to break away from work.

Employee characteristics: The person is fully focused and dedicated to their work, which leads to a sense of fluidity and high efficiency. Work is not seen as a chore, but as a rewarding experience.

Source: own work based on [3, 5, 6].

W. Schaufeli's theory defines employee engagement as a positive and fulfilling state of mind based on three key pillars. The first is vigor, characterized by high energy levels, perseverance and a willingness to put effort into work, which distinguishes it from fatigue. Dedication, as the second dimension, consists of a strong sense of enthusiasm, inspiration and meaning in one's work, inspiring a sense of pride. The third pillar is absorption, or total concentration and engrossment in a task, in which time passes quickly. An engaged employee not only exhibits these qualities, but is also more mentally resilient to difficulties, treating them as challenges. This complex approach, encompassing physical (vigor), emotional (dedication) and cognitive (absorption) aspects, provides a more complete picture of intrinsic motivation than one-dimensional concepts. Unlike burnout, engagement is a permanent state rather than a temporary one, which translates into long-term benefits for the employee and the organization. With this approach, managers can accurately diagnose the level of engagement and take informed action to strengthen it.

The motivational manager model is a management concept that emphasizes leadership based on inspiration (inspirational leadership) rather than solely on control (controlling leadership). Its main goal is to create a work environment that naturally encourages employees to demonstrate greater commitment and efficiency. Such a manager understands that each team member has unique needs and motivations that must be taken into account. They use a range of tools to tailor their motivational strategy to the individual goals and aspirations of their employees. It is crucial to clearly communicate goals and vision so that everyone understands how their contribution contributes to the common success. In addition to financial incentives, this manager also uses non-financial factors, such as recognizing effort and enabling development. In this way, they build lasting trust and loyalty, which translates into better results for the entire organization. Ultimately, this model assumes that the manager is a mentor and support, not just a supervisor, which allows the team's potential to be fully exploited. Table 6 presents a conceptual model of a motivational manager.

Table 6

Conceptual model of a motivational manager

1. Understanding employee needs – inspirational leadership

Recognizing motivation: Managers need to understand what motivates each employee individually – whether it is remuneration, stability, opportunities for development, or perhaps autonomy. Managers need to become leaders of change, inspirational leaders.

Individualized approach: An effective manager adapts their methods to specific needs rather than applying a single universal strategy to the entire team.

2. Setting clear goals

Communicating the vision: Managers must clearly communicate the team's vision and goals and explain how each employee's work contributes to achieving them.

SMART goals: Using the SMART method (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound) helps to formulate tasks precisely.

3. Providing support and autonomy

Supporting development: Managers should actively support employees in their development by offering training and mentoring, which builds trust and loyalty.

Delegating tasks: Granting autonomy by delegating responsibility shows that managers trust their team's competence, which increases motivation.

4. Appreciation and rewards

Recognition of contribution: Managers should regularly and publicly acknowledge the efforts and successes of employees, which strengthens their sense of self-worth.

Reward system: The use of both financial (bonuses) and non-financial (awards, additional leave) rewards has a motivating effect.

5. Feedback and monitoring loop

Constructive feedback: Providing regular constructive feedback based on facts rather than emotions helps with continuous improvement.

Progress monitoring: The manager tracks progress in order to adjust motivation strategies on an ongoing basis and identify any potential problems.

Source: own work based on [7, 9, 19, 20, 26].

The motivational manager model is a cyclical process based on an individual approach to each employee rather than uniform incentives. The manager first identifies the unique needs and aspirations of their team, and then precisely defines goals that are consistent with the organization's mission. By supporting autonomy and development, as well as regularly recognizing achievements, they build trust and commitment [Rottemberg, 2021]. Another key element is a continuous feedback loop, which allows for ongoing monitoring of the effects of actions and their adjustment to changing circumstances.

Summary. This article has provided a theoretical analysis showing the relationship between a manager's management style and the level of employee engagement. In summary, it was found that an effective motivational manager does not base their actions on a single, universal strategy, but consciously adapts various motivational concepts to the needs of the team. Content theories, which identify the key needs of employees, provide the foundation for understanding their internal motivations, while process theories give managers the tools to shape behaviors and expectations. Combining these two approaches allows for the creation of a comprehensive motivation system that takes into account both the needs and decision-making processes of employees. The motivational manager model presented emphasizes the importance of continuous monitoring, empathy, and support, which are key elements in building trust. The theoretical aspects of employee engagement, based on W. Schaufeli's concept, show that it is not a one-dimensional state, but rather a combination of vigor, dedication and absorption. The key conclusion is that a motivating manager, through their actions, has a direct impact on shaping each of these dimensions. For example, by delegating tasks, they support absorption, and by showing appreciation, they build dedication. The article shows that investing in the development of managers in the area of motivational competences is an investment in human capital and the long-term success of the organization. From a theoretical perspective, effectively increasing employee engagement requires managers to be flexible and have a deep understanding of motivational psychology², behavioral psychology³ and positive psychology⁴. As a result, a well-motivated and engaged team translates into higher productivity, innovation and better financial results for the company.

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² It studies the mental and physiological processes that influence a person's readiness to take a specific action. It analyses the factors that drive human behaviour and direct it towards the achievement of goals.

³ It focuses on the study of objective, observable behaviours rather than subjective mental processes. It is based on the assumption that behaviours are the result of learning through experience, e.g. classical or instrumental conditioning.

⁴ The main premise is to focus on the positive aspects of human functioning, such as happiness, well-being, hope, strength of character and meaning in life. Unlike traditional psychology, which often focuses on disorders and dysfunctions, positive psychology explores what makes people function well.

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