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Water Cooler Talk & Beyond: Understanding and Improving Deliberation and Dialogue in the
Modern American Workplace

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ABSTRACT

As the workforce demographics of the United States continue to change, so too will the dynamic and culture of the American workplace. A new generation of workers carrying different values from their progenitors finds themselves at odds with the modus operandi of workplaces past. As this disparity between values and reality increases, the new workforce will find themselves increasingly disengaged at their jobs, eventually progressing into what we know as “quiet quitting”. If we are to prevent this wave of mass burnout, we must find a new way to ensure employee engagement. The Engagement Machine is the proposed solution to this ever-worsening phenomenon: a feedback loop scaffolded by several top-of-the-line empirical and theoretical insights, primarily studying John Gastil’s Democracy Machine and principles of democratic deliberation, Craig Pearce and Jay Conger’s theory of shared leadership, Men, Vercic, and Ruck’s principles of employee listening and dialogue, and Andrea Felicetti’s work on democratization within firms. All of these insights serve to maximize the chance for employees to feel engaged, respected, and involved in their workplace. Through a careful study of the epistemic theory of deliberation, as well as analysis of the most recent scholarship in the fields of business ethics, the Engagement Machine also carries with it air-tight empirical evidence that attests to its validity as a solution.

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Introduction

The workplace in the United States is changing rapidly, the suit-and-tie, clean-cut cubicles of the past are fading away. The “old guard” of American workers, the baby boomers, are cycling out of the workforce at astonishing rates. Baby boomers now only make up 6.6% of the workforce as of 2020.¹ Conversely, workers aged 25-54 make up relatively equal parts of the U.S. workforce - approximately 21% each - as of 2020. Ages 25-34 make up 22.7% of the workforce, ages 35-44 make up 21.1% of the workforce, and ages 45-54 make up 20.0% of the workforce. The workforce is diversifying in gender and racial makeup as well. Men make up 56.4% of all full-time workers and women make up 43.6%.² Compared to the gender makeup of years and especially decades past, a near-equal gender makeup is a remarkable development. The overwhelming majority of men and women of all races in the United States are employed full-time as well, adding up to the most holistically diverse workplace in American history.

Millennials are poised to become the face of the modern American workplace, not just the face though, but the body and the soul. Millennials are ~21% of the workplace as of 2020, but their share will grow as the older generations filter out, just as the baby boomers did. This poses an interesting conundrum for employers in the United States, who now must wonder if their existing workplace policies will fit with millennials as well as they did for the baby boomers. There are many organizations and labor scholars in the United States that hold to the belief that in order to fully unlock the potential of millennials, workplace rules and policies will

¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (n.d.). *Labor force share, by age group, 1998, 2008, 2018, and projected 2028*. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics from <https://www.bls.gov/emp/graphics/2019/labor-force-share-by-age-group.htm>

² Department of Labor. (n.d.). *Full-time / part-time employment*. United States Department of Labor. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/wb/data/latest-annual-data/full-and-part-time-employment#Percent-distribution-of-workers-employed-full-time-and-part-time-by-sex>.

need to be altered.³ This belief is not unfounded, millennials bring distinctly different values from their older counterparts. Baby boomers, overall, embraced competitiveness, and had a distinct focus on climbing the ranks of whatever organization they were in, with little regard to work-life balance. Conversely, millennials are far more open and accepting of diversity in their workplaces, they are more capable and willing to use “advanced communication and information technologies” and are far more comfortable working in teams. Many workplaces are set up in a way that is not conducive to teamwork, and that can lead to unhealthy work environments for millennials, who value participation and communication.⁴

Perhaps the most exciting change in values from baby boomers to millennials is the emphasis on engagement that millennials bring to their workplace philosophy. Engagement is defined as a “positive, fulfilling, and work-related state of mind”.⁵ A shift of focus to engagement is exciting for numerous reasons, the most notable being the benefits it can have for an organization. Labor relations scholar Nancy Schullery, in her piece *Workplace Engagement and Generational Differences in Values* published in 2013, discussed exactly this. Schullery stated the importance of high-engagement environments right away, writing that “high engagement has been linked with improved employee retention, product quality, and improved customer service, resulting in increased customer satisfaction and loyalty”.

If employee engagement is so central to millennial workforce participation, what workplace factors influence engagement? Schullery has an answer for this too, writing that

³ Myers, K. K., & Sadaghiani, K. (2010). Millennials in the Workplace: A Communication Perspective on Millennials’ Organizational Relationships and Performance. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 25(2), 225-238. doi:10.1007/s10869-010-9172-7.

⁴ Oandasan, I. (2007). Teamwork and Healthy Workplaces: Strengthening the Links for Deliberation and Action through Research and Policy. *HealthcarePapers*, 7(Sp), 98-103. doi:10.12927/hcpap..18686..

⁵ Schullery, N. M. (2013). Workplace Engagement and Generational Differences in Values. In *Business Communication Quarterly* (Vol. 76, Issue 2, pp. 252–265). SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1080569913476543>.

“researchers found the most important engagement drivers were the employee’s relationship with the immediate supervisor responsible for “managing [the employee’s] performance” and the employees’ own “career opportunities” for advancement in the company (Gilbert, 2011, p. 2)”. When most people think of engagement, the above factors are not what they envision. Chances are that people imagine the Google Headquarters, large-scale workplaces with all sorts of gadgets and gizmos to balance “work” and “play”. As Schullery demonstrated in the above quotations though, that type of performative engagement is just not going to cut it for a majority of millennials today. Schullery herself says it best: “they [millennials] want to learn, to be challenged, and to understand the relationship between their work and the overall mission of the organization. They want... some flexibility in where, when, and how they work”.

What are the consequences for the American workplace and its workers if employers and managers do not update their practices to accommodate the modern workforce? The most reasonable fear to have is widespread employee burnout. Burnout, from a labor/human resources (LHR) standpoint, consists of three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a lessened sense of personal accomplishment.⁶ When these symptoms are made manifest, it can spell big trouble for the organizations that let it run rampant. Workers who are burnt out show less work satisfaction and occupational commitment, which translates to a stark decrease in productivity and output.

Case Study: The Quiet Quitting Movement

To further impart the urgency with which burnout must be addressed, there is no better example to analyze than the emerging “Quiet Quitting Movement”. Quiet quitting, as a basic

⁶ Miller, K. I., Ellis, B. H., Zook, E. G., & Lyles, J. S. (1990). An Integrated Model of Communication, Stress, and Burnout in the Workplace. *Communication Research*, 17(3), 300-326. doi:10.1177/009365090017003002

definition, is when an employee decides to do the absolute bare minimum while at work. These “quiet quitters” do the exact amount of work they need to do in order to not get reprimanded or terminated, but they have given up all intention of upward mobility and refuse to take on any work that is not absolutely essential. At first glance, it is easy to write off quiet quitters as lazy, unmotivated, or entitled, but such a dismissal from managers and other stakeholders may actually worsen this problem. This is for a very simple reason, the quiet quitting movement is not simply workers not wanting to work. It is, in fact, born from a wave of serious workplace discontentment stemming from the covid-19 pandemic. Labor researchers Sandro Formica and Fabiola Sfodera, in their piece *The Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting paradigm shifts: An overview of current situation and future research directions* (2022) uncovers the connection between the quiet quitting movement and the phenomenon known as the “great resignation” of 2021.⁷ As the covid-19 pandemic spread through the United States and the rest world at record rates, an overwhelming majority of workers (71% according to Pew Research Center) were sent home and forced to telecommute.⁸ The uncharted waters of the virtual workplace led many, according to Fabiola and Sfodera, to think critically about their work arrangements: “during this prolonged time of isolation, employees had the opportunity to think about their work and reflect on how to get a fresh start, once the pandemic era would be over”. And in the spring of 2021, when millions of workers in the United States were asked to voluntarily return to work, many refused; and by the end of 2021, over 47 million Americans voluntarily quit their jobs.⁹

⁷ Formica, S., & Sfodera, F. (2022). The Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting paradigm shifts: An overview of current situation and future research directions. In *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management* (Vol. 31, Issue 8, pp. 899–907). Informa UK Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2022.2136601>

⁸ Mitchell, T. (2022, March 23). *Covid-19 pandemic continues to reshape work in America*. Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project. Retrieved March 2, 2023, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2022/02/16/covid-19-pandemic-continues-to-reshape-work-in-america/>.

⁹ Fuller, J., & Kerr, W. (2022). *The Great Resignation Didn't Start with the Pandemic*. *Harvard Business Review*. Harvard Business Publishing. <https://hbr.org/2022/03/the-great-resignation-didnt-start-with-the-pandemic>

This astonishing show of mass worker discontentment signaled a change in workforce behavior, workers were becoming more emboldened, more agitated, and more willing to take direct action in protest of working conditions they find to be unsatisfactory. The workers who did not quit after being asked to return came back to find workplaces that did not adapt to the pandemic sufficiently. Minimal wage raises, little-to-no changes in medical leave or time off policy, and lack of attention to hybrid work options were just a few of the hurdles these returning workers ran into. All of this comes down to the way that managers arranged their workplace post-pandemic, managers who made their employees feel undervalued or underappreciated began to experience a rapid increase in employees losing engagement in the workplace, or worse, becoming actively disengaged¹⁰. Recent workplace polling data suggests the causes that current scholarship cites for the rise of quiet quitting are the same causes for workplace disengagement mentioned in the above section. Jim Harter of Gallup (2023) found that amongst the leading reasons for disengagement at work were clarity of expectations, connection to the mission or purpose of the company, opportunities to learn and grow, opportunities to do what employees do best, and feeling cared about at work.¹¹ Furthermore, toxic workplace cultures, lack of advancement opportunities, mistreatment from managers, and stubborn reliance on outdated workplace policies are all contributors to. It stands to reason, then, that quiet quitting is the manifestation of widespread workplace disengagement. To put it in other words, it is a symptom of the disease that is a stagnant workplace. As workplaces fail to evolve, and employees grow more and more dejected, rates of quiet quitting steadily rise. That is the stage we are in now, with

¹⁰ Formica, S., & Sfodera, F. (2022). The Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting paradigm shifts: An overview of current situation and future research directions. In *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management* (Vol. 31, Issue 8, pp. 899–907). Informa UK Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2022.2136601>

¹¹ Harter, J. (2023, February 3). *U.S. employee engagement needs a rebound in 2023*. Gallup.com. <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/468233/employee-engagement-needs-rebound-2023.aspx#:~:text=This%20pattern%20continued%20into%202022,and%20four%20points%20from%202020.>

an estimated 18% of workers actively disengaged, up two points from 2021 and a startling four points from 2020. If the underlying causes of employee disengagement and discontentment are not addressed, this percentage of actively disengaged employees - this percentage of quiet quitters - will continue to rise until it overtakes the percentage of engaged employees.

What, then, is the solution to employee disengagement? How are managers and the employers they work for expected to reconcile the way that human resources and labor relations has been performed for the last 70 years with the rapidly changing values and diverse makeups of the modern American workplace? I posit that what the American workplace needs is a facilitation mechanism for engagement. Something that can be implemented in workplaces all across the country to encourage and ultimately generate employee engagement. The Engagement Machine is the culmination of all the theoretical concepts discussed in this piece. Every concept, every theory, every statistic is building the structure and the case of the Engagement Machine. And once all of the pieces have come together, it will form a structure that is greater than the sum of its parts. But first, as is only appropriate, this will begin with core principles.

Principles of Democratic Deliberation

At its core, Democratic Deliberation is all about structuring and maintaining productive dialogue. Dialogue is “any conversation animated by a search for understanding rather than for agreements or solutions. It is not debate, and it is not mediation”.¹² Dialogue is meant to enlighten each interlocutor’s understanding of the topic at hand, as well as gain insight into how they structure their own viewpoints and view the perspectives of others.

In his book *Political Communication and Deliberation*, political scientist John Gastil lays

¹² Gastil, J. (n.d.). Communication as Deliberation. *Communication As...: Perspectives on Theory*, 164-173. doi:10.4135/9781483329055.n18.

out two processes for democratic deliberation, those being the analytic and social processes. Within those two processes, there are specific factors that must be taken into account in some capacity in order for democratic deliberation to be successful. These two processes and details thereof are shown in figure one (fig.1) as shown below.

<i>General Definition of Deliberation</i>	<i>Specific Meaning for Conversation/Discussion</i>
<i>Analytic Process</i>	
Create a solid information base.	Discuss personal and emotional experiences, as well as known facts.
Prioritize the key values at stake.	Reflect on your own values, as well as those of others present.
Identify a broad range of solutions.	Brainstorm a wide variety of ways to address the problem.
Weigh the pros, cons, and trade-offs among solutions.	Recognize the limitations of your own preferred solution and the advantages of others.
Make the best decision possible.	Update your own opinion in light of what you have learned. No joint decision need be reached.
<i>Social Process</i>	
Adequately distribute speaking opportunities.	Take turns in conversation or take other action to ensure a balanced discussion.
Ensure mutual comprehension.	Speak plainly to each other and ask for clarification when confused.
Consider other ideas and experiences.	Listen carefully to what others say, especially when you disagree.
Respect other participants.	Presume that other participants are honest and well intentioned. Acknowledge their unique life experiences and perspectives.

Fig.1 Key Features of Deliberative Conversation and Discussion

Andrea Felicetti provided his own definition of specifically deliberative democracy, in their piece *A Deliberative Case for Democracy in firms* - which will be discussed at length later in this paper. Felicetti’s definition is as follows: “deliberative democracy considers argument and communication among equals as the driving forces behind democratic engagement”.¹³ Felicetti also then goes on to say that deliberative communication should not be affected by any sort of coercion, that it should enable individuals to engage in self-reflection about their beliefs, connect

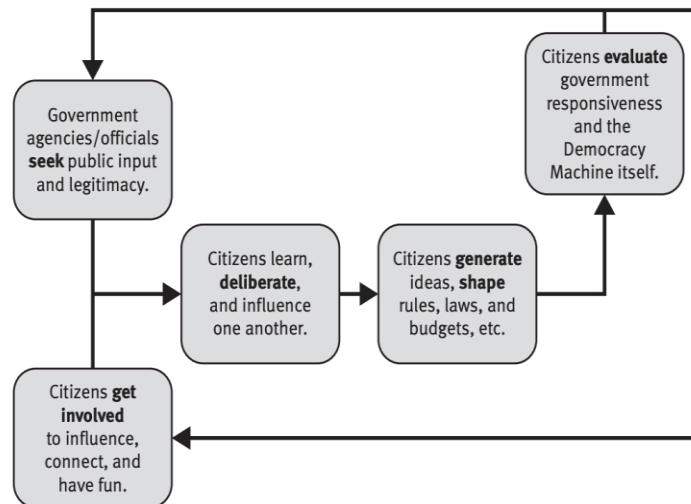
¹³ Felicetti, A. (2016). A Deliberative Case for Democracy in Firms. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 150(3), 803-814. doi:10.1007/s10551-016-3212-9

discussions to general principles relevant to the discussion, and creates reciprocity amongst the participants. However, in order for deliberative democracy to be able to be implemented in the modern American workplace, we would need a set structure that workplaces could follow.

The Democracy Machine

While formally meant to be used to promote civic engagement, especially in elections and town halls, John Gastil’s Democracy Machine serves as a crucial model with which we can understand what is needed in order to improve the modern American workplace. In his own words “the Democracy Machine would exist as an online portal that links together extant forms of engagement, both online and in-person, to maximize their reach and impact. By interconnecting complementary forms of civic learning, engagement, and influence, the Machine itself would improve the quality of public input, the responsiveness of the rules and laws shaped by it, and the very legitimacy of government”.¹⁴ The Democracy Machine consists of five distinct steps that form a feedback loop of civic engagement.

FIGURE 1. A SKETCH OF THE LONG FEEDBACK LOOP IN THE DEMOCRACY MACHINE



¹⁴ Gastil, J. (2016). Building a Democracy Machine: Toward an Integrated and Empowered Form of Civic Engagement. *Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation*. https://ash.harvard.edu/files/ash/files/democracy_machine.pdf.

Fig 2. The Democracy Machine

The first step is “government agencies/officials seek public input and legitimacy”, this is what begins the Democracy Machine, because government officials must want to have public input and legitimacy in order to put the steps in motion. The second step is “citizens learn, deliberate, and influence one another”, once put into the deliberative process, citizens can start taking in new information, which can then be used to generate further discussions. The third step is “citizens generate ideas, shape rules, laws, and budgets, etc.” As the citizens are empowered to deliberate, and as they begin to influence one another, they create their own unique ideas. These entirely unique ideas, if they are approved by the other members of the deliberation, start being implemented or at least proposed as rules, laws, and other provisions. The fourth step is that “citizens evaluate government responsiveness and the Democracy Machine itself”. This step is fairly self-explanatory, as the participants utilize the Democracy Machine and work with the government that implemented it, they form opinions about both of the aforementioned subjects and can give feedback. The fifth and final step filters into both the fourth and second steps: “citizens get involved to influence, connect, and have fun”. As the Democracy Machine operates, citizens get more incentivized to participate. These incentives come in the form of social connections made through deliberations, the feeling of fulfillment that comes with your ideas being realized, and sometimes even tangible monetary or credit rewards. In Gastil’s own words, this is how the Democracy Machine operates:¹⁵

Through an iterative process, the Machine distills citizen input into precise and well-reasoned recommendations, which go back to the government office that initiated the process. That same office feeds

¹⁵ Ibid

back into the Machine its response to the input and follows up later, in weeks, months, or even years, with assessments of the efficacy of the adopted policy. Through the Machine, the citizens who helped shape the recommendations learn of the government policy choice and its downstream consequences. Ultimately, the Machine asks citizens to assess the government's responsiveness and the wisdom of its judgment. (This process will sometimes hold a mirror to the citizens themselves, should they ultimately deem their own input to have been ill-advised.) Agencies found to be responsive and effective get a discount for the cost of their next consultation. If the government disregards the decisions made by citizens, the Machine provides a verifiable record of public judgment that could be used to hold officials accountable.

The Democracy Machine is a remarkably effective framework for which to create civic engagement, but it cannot necessarily be applied to workplaces as is. The framework of the Democracy Machine and the style of theoretical scaffolding provide the perfect blueprint for its adaptation. In other words, the skeleton of the Engagement Machine has been constructed.

Why Deliberation?

Before we elaborate further on what democratic deliberation can do for the American workplace, there is an assumption inherent in this argument that must be addressed. It has been assumed that deliberation, and the principles of democratic deliberation, will lead those who utilize it to make better decisions. In other words, it has been assumed that deliberation has epistemic value, or value as something that is a true, justified belief, or something that leads to truer beliefs.¹⁶ But how do we know this for certain? Fabienne Peter, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Warwick, proposes an intriguing solution to this question. In their piece *The procedural epistemic value of deliberation* (2012), Peter aims to prove that deliberation does not just have epistemic value but procedural value as well, and that the two come together quite effectively.¹⁷ Procedural value when it comes to deliberation, according to Peter, can be defined as the ethical quality of a deliberative effort. Deliberations with procedural value often identifiable by the building of reciprocity, mutual accountability, and equal respect amongst interlocutors. All of which are in line with the principles of democratic deliberation and the values that the democracy machine wishes to impart to its users.

Procedural Value

Furthermore, procedural value also has an expanded definition that may be useful for our understanding of this concept. In a publication about the ethics of COVID-19 responses (2020), the Department of Health of the Government of Ireland created an ethical framework for procedural value that is quite impressive.¹⁸ They identify reasonableness, transparency,

¹⁶ *Epistemic Value*. Internet encyclopedia of philosophy. <https://iep.utm.edu/epistemic-value/>

¹⁷ Peter, F. (2012). The procedural epistemic value of deliberation. *Synthese*, 190(7), 1253–1266. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-012-0119-6>

¹⁸ An Roinn Sláinte. (2020). PROCEDURAL VALUES FOR DECISION-MAKING IN A PANDEMIC. Department of Health of Ireland.

inclusiveness, responsiveness, and accountability as “features of any decision-making process which claims to be publicly justifiable”. These features are further elaborated on as encompassing the following sub-traits.

- Minimising Harm: Protection from physical/psychological/social/economic harm
- Proportionality: The least restrictive measures required to achieve the goal should be utilized
- Solidarity: collective commitment to carry the costs to support others and promote the common good
- Fairness: Resources that should be distributed fairly, effectively, and in ways that recognize the moral equality of all persons
- Duty to Care: Obligation to alleviate suffering, restore health, and respect the rights and dignity of every person
- Reciprocity: Support those who face a disproportionate burden in protecting the public good; take steps to minimize the risk and burdens
- Privacy: Any disclosure [of private information] should be limited to that which is absolutely necessary to avoid serious harm to others

At this point, the parallels between the procedural and ethical value of deliberation and the values espoused by democratic deliberation and the Democracy Machine should be ever more apparent. It would appear that at least ethically speaking, democratic deliberation does have procedural value. This brings us back to Peter’s work, who utilizes procedural value to demonstrate the epistemic value of deliberation.

Epistemic Standpoints in a Deliberative Context

Peter describes multiple standpoints, each of which carries with them its own

implications in deliberative contexts. Understanding the standpoints that are applicable to workplace deliberation will help us better understand the factors that create epistemic and procedural value within that context. The heart of deliberation, according to Peter, rests in disagreements. Collective deliberation is based on disagreements, and how participants respond to each other in the face of those disagreements is how we determine the epistemic value of the deliberation.¹⁹ The first standpoint germane to deliberation in the workplace is the second-person standpoint. At this stage, responses from both parties in the deliberation move past first-order logic or evidence and into the realm of morality. While both participants in a workplace deliberation may be epistemic peers - meaning they perceive themselves as equally likely to be wrong - deliberations in the workplace almost never arise from questions or situations where one interlocutor is simply mistaken, as a first-order discussion would necessitate. Workplace accommodations, schedules, benefits, leave, and accessibility are all topics in which the solution rests in a gray area, a spectrum of possible solutions with both moral and practical value. When it comes to the second-person standpoint, Peter falls back upon the work of Yale philosophy professor Stephen Darwall, who wrote an extensive manuscript on the subject. Darwall's *The Second Person Standpoint* (2009) articulates that moral responsibility and the interpersonal responsibility that interlocutors have to each other is an essential part of "avoiding moral wrongdoing".²⁰ Peter's initial explanation of the second-person standpoint with regard to deliberative efforts is thus:

The second-person standpoint in the context of moral reasons is a web of four concepts—reason, claim, practical authority, and accountability—in which each entails the others. Someone's valid claim gives

¹⁹ Peter, F. (2012). The procedural epistemic value of deliberation. *Synthese*, 190(7), 1253–1266. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-012-0119-6>

²⁰ Darwall, S. L. (2009). *The second-person standpoint: Morality, respect, and Accountability*. Harvard University Press.

someone else a reason to act accordingly. My claim, for example, that you move your foot from on top of mine, gives you a reason to do so. And it does so because we mutually acknowledge our authority in cases like that, i.e. I have a right to make claims of this sort on you (and vice versa). This web characterizes the relationship between moral agents and exhaustively explains, according to Darwall, the normative grip of each of the component concepts. What is distinctive about the second-person standpoint is that it locates the source of normativity in the relationship between moral agents—not in individuals as such (first-person standpoint) and not outside of their relationship (third-person standpoint).

It is important to draw the distinction between what is a second-person standpoint and what is a third-person standpoint with respect to deliberation. In a second-personal deliberation, our practical reasons (i.e. moral reasons) for engaging in the deliberations come from the relationship between the interlocutors: the moral value of a perspective/outcome, and the authority of each interlocutor including any disparity thereof. The second-personal standpoint is less studied and less discussed than the third-person perspective, but it is an essential facet of successful deliberation, as will be explained shortly.

The third-personal standpoint is where we move on from practical and/or moral reasons to epistemic reasons, but what does this mean? Recall back to the very beginning of this section, epistemic value was defined as the value of a belief/facet of knowledge being true. This “truth” value is essential to understanding epistemic value, especially as it relates to deliberation. While first-order logic is first-personal, and practical/moral reasons are second-personal, the truth cannot be anything other than third-personal. Truth does not depend upon the relationship between interlocutors, and the truth is not confined to the perspective of the individual, as first-order logic/evidence would be. This is a dichotomy that Peter references when she writes on Darwall’s epistemic study; the dichotomy between practical and/or moral reasons and epistemic reasons comes from a difference in authority: the second-person perspective dictates that people

recognize each other as “self-originating” their valid claims, or in other words, they themselves are the source of true information. This form of authority is called “command” authority. On the other hand, epistemic reasons, i.e the third person perspective, dictates that the source of authority and the source of truth in a deliberation lies outside of the interlocutors. The individuals engaged in such a deliberation make appeals to authority outside of themselves - usually a set of values that may or may not be shared amongst the individuals - as a dictation of truth. This is referred to as “counsel” authority, but it may also be referred to as “testimony” authority when presented through the aforementioned medium. When an individual is engaging in a testimony, either in a courtroom or in a workplace meeting, for example, they are appealing to an authority outside of the relationship between them and their counterpart (or as many members of the deliberation as are present). The relationship between the interlocutors certainly matters with regard to epistemic authority, those second-personal influences and reasons are not to be ignored. However, the interlocutors’ reasons for believing or not believing the evidence/claims of the testifier are not entirely confined within their relationship and are therefore third-personal as well as second-personal.

Does Deliberation Have Epistemic Value?

Now that the theoretical scaffolding has been laid regarding epistemology and its place in deliberation, the time has come when we can finally reach an educated conclusion on whether or not deliberation has epistemic value. We have already established that as long as a deliberation abides by the principles of ethical decision making listed earlier, that deliberation will have procedural value. Epistemic value does not fall far behind, and through the careful study of all of

the facets listed above, Peter formulates three criteria by which one may determine whether or not a deliberation has epistemic value:²¹

- Respect of epistemic equality - interlocutors recognizing each other as peers
- Willingness to enter deliberation and to explicate one's beliefs
- Uptake - how well the receiver understands the intention of the speaker's words

The first criterion ensures that the interlocutors do not put undue weight on their own beliefs simply because it is their belief, participants in the deliberation must acknowledge their mutual capacity to be right and wrong. The willingness to admit fallibility and openness to adjusting one's beliefs is essential to the deliberative process. The second and third criteria set up and execute the deliberation. The second criterion kicks off the process by requiring that each interlocutor present their evidence and justification for holding the belief they do, this then allows for that belief and the evidence thereof to be analyzed in its entirety. When all interlocutors involved do this, we successfully orient the deliberation towards uncovering truth and moving all participants towards more accurate beliefs. The third criterion, uptake, allows the interlocutors to respond and engage with their counterparts more effectively. If each interlocutor can receive and interpret evidence, testimony, and claims of their counterparts, that will ensure that they respond at a level of understanding that fuels further deliberation and conversation.

As we extend our knowledge of democratic deliberation to the workplace, we ought to keep these criteria and epistemic standpoints in mind. Deliberations are a remarkably effective way to reach better decisions and uncover beliefs that most conform to the truth. Every deliberation, especially in the workplace, should move to further this goal. It is safe to say,

²¹ McDonald, L. (2020). Your word against mine: The Power of Uptake. *Synthese*, 199(1-2), 3505–3526. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-020-02944-1>

broadly speaking, that deliberations do have epistemic value. While epistemic value can arise naturally through the deliberative process, participants and organizers of deliberations can take concrete steps and follow deliberate frameworks to give their deliberation the best chance possible at developing epistemic value.

Where Do We Stand Now?

As the aptly-chosen header to this section asks: where do we stand now? Given the current state of the American workplace, and the ideas and models we have explored thus far, how can we use this to solve the deliberation problem in the workplace? As it stands right now, workplaces are horribly non-deliberative, “surely one of the great ironies of the modern world is that democracy, imperfect as it is in the political realm, seldom extends to the workplace”²². Gastil also comments on this irony: “consider how rarely an office deliberates on matters of grave importance”.²³ When a workplace needs to decide where to open a new location, or they are considering changing contract stipulations, there is an opportunity there to deliberate with the body of workers that will ultimately be impacted by those decisions. The opportunity for deliberation does not end at large decisions though, “a workplace misses an opportunity for deliberation whenever a person is fired as a vendetta [or] a marketing plan is adopted on the reputation of its author”. Opportunities for deliberation are everywhere, and missing those opportunities can have dramatic consequences for those organizations. Labor scholars Brandts and Cooper remind us that “if a firm earns low profits because of coordination failure among its employees, the management and shareholders suffer as well”.²⁴ Not to mention the possibility of burnout which has been discussed earlier. Please do not believe that the mission for democracy and deliberation in the workplace rests purely on the side of labor, there are real monetary and efficiency benefits for managers and employers who work towards it. Katharine Miller

²² Cheney, G. (1995). Democracy in the workplace: Theory and practice from the perspective of communication. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 23(3), 167-200. doi:10.1080/00909889509365424

²³ Gastil, J. (n.d.). Communication as Deliberation. *Communication As...: Perspectives on Theory*, 164-173. doi:10.4135/9781483329055.n18

²⁴ Brandts, J., & Cooper, D. J. (2007). It's What You Say, Not What You Pay: An Experimental Study of Manager-Employee Relationships in Overcoming Coordination Failure. *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 5(6), 1223-1268. doi:10.1162/jeea.2007.5.6.1223

comments on the productivity and efficiency bonuses that come from effective communication and deliberation when she writes “the more participation allowed employees, the more likely they will be able to get a clear understanding of what is expected and what is rewarded”.²⁵ And communication is truly key in ensuring worker engagement and productivity; financial incentives have been routinely proven to be less important to younger workers when compared to communication.²⁶

The formal thesis of this paper, then, is thus: a structured process by which employees and supervisors can deliberate on matters of importance will be needed if the modern American workplace is to fully maximize its democratic potential. Perhaps obviously, this is referring to the idea that has been at the center of this piece: the Engagement Machine. This structured process will utilize the values of democratic deliberation, shared leadership, and employee communication to increase engagement, satisfaction, participation, and workplace performance.

Deliberation and Democracy in the Workplace

The first step to creating the Engagement Machine is to demonstrate the importance of democracy in the workplace. For a long time, the workplace has been seen as a sort of “democracy-free zone” in which the values of our nation bow to the gods of shareholder value and minimum standards. But “in mass democracies, the prospect of deliberation cannot be limited to state institutions only”.²⁷ Thus, workplace democracy needs to be popularized and implemented in order to foster democratic attitudes in both employees and managers. Workplace democracy does not need to be managers and employees sitting side-by-side in Aristotelian town

²⁵ Miller, K. I., Ellis, B. H., Zook, E. G., & Lyles, J. S. (1990). An Integrated Model of Communication, Stress, and Burnout in the Workplace. *Communication Research*, 17(3), 300-326. doi:10.1177/009365090017003002

²⁶ Brandts, J., & Cooper, D. J. (2007). It's What You Say, Not What You Pay: An Experimental Study of Manager-Employee Relationships in Overcoming Coordination Failure. *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 5(6), 1223-1268. doi:10.1162/jeea.2007.5.6.1223

²⁷ Felicetti, A. (2016). A Deliberative Case for Democracy in Firms. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 150(3), 803-814. doi:10.1007/s10551-016-3212-9

halls arguing over the food in the cafeteria. At its very core, workplace democracy is simply workers gaining greater control and influence over their firms, and that can take many forms. As it so happens, workplace deliberation is one form of workplace democracy and the one we will be focusing on from here out. Workplace deliberation “embeds the traditional and basic idea of workplace democracy with workers’ democratic control of firms, and the quest for greater participation of workers in the decisions of firms”.²⁸ Workplace deliberation emphasizes the importance of even the most basic communication between workers and workers, workers and managers, and managers and managers. Cynthia Estlund shows just how often employees interact with one another: “coworkers interact not only in doing the job itself but also at the beginning and end of the workday, during breaks, in locker rooms and restrooms, and at the proverbial water cooler”.

Ensuring that employees know that their interactions matter on a day-to-day basis is a crucial first step to getting them comfortable with deliberating. Far too often are employees hesitant - or even worse, scared - to speak their minds about the issues of their workplace, or to even talk to their managers at all. Managers and employees must engage in active listening to those with them, below them, and even above them, in order to continuously reinforce these values. This can happen on an individual level, or influencers in workplaces can try to implement the idea more concretely, whichever seems more viable for the workplace in question.

Introducing Shared Leadership

The next step in building the Engagement Machine is to at least understand, if not attempt to implement, shared leadership in some capacity. Leadership, in a broad-brush sense, includes “the generation of solidarity among members of the organization and commitment to common

²⁸ Estlund, C. L. (2000). Working together: The workplace, civil society, and the law. *Georgetown Law Journal*, 89(1), 1-96.

goals”.²⁹ Shared leadership, then, is “the notion that individuals within a group can share leadership functions”.³⁰ Shared leadership posits that “the fastest growing organizational unit is the team” and for workplaces to truly improve and become more motivated, productive, and engaging, teams must be prioritized³¹. Researchers Myers and Sadaghiani provide further support to the importance of teams by positing that “semiautonomous and self-managed work teams have become commonplace in organizations because they enhance innovation, increase productivity, and they often lower personnel costs”.³² Furthermore, millennial workers are likely to be actively involved, fully committed, and contribute their best efforts to the organization when their work is performed in a collaborative workgroup or team.

To that end, shared leadership provides a “forum for members with complementary skills to collaborate in a creative enterprise involving a degree of deliberation, problem-solving, mutual adjustment, and coordinated performance”. This idea goes directly into what we have discussed before with the importance of communication and participation. Social scientist Michael Drescher breaks down the key activities of shared leadership as involving “interacting with others within the group and is manifested in behaviors such as communicating, influencing, making suggestions, and holding people accountable”. If you might recall, this sounds quite similar to step two of the Democracy Machine, where citizens deliberate and influence one another. This is the unique part of shared leadership, “whereas empowering leaders give members control over their own tasks and build their confidence, shared leadership involves

²⁹ Gustavsen, B. (1985). Workplace Reform and Democratic Dialogue. *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 6(4), 461-479. doi:10.1177/0143831x8564004.

³⁰ Drescher, M. A., Korsgaard, M. A., Welppe, I. M., Picot, A., & Wigand, R. T. (2014). The dynamics of shared leadership: Building trust and enhancing performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 99(5), 771-783. doi:10.1037/a0036474.

³¹ Conger, J. A., & Pearce, C. (2003). *Shared leadership: Reframing the hows and whys of leadership*. Sage.

³² Myers, K. K., & Sadaghiani, K. (2010). Millennials in the Workplace: A Communication Perspective on Millennials' Organizational Relationships and Performance. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 25(2), 225-238. doi:10.1007/s10869-010-9172-7.

members having influence over each other. Consequently, shared leadership is about accepting one another as leaders as opposed to being self-empowered by a single leader”. Shared leadership, in this sense, is part of the Democracy Machine as it applies to the workplace. This fact, consequently, makes it a part of the Engagement Machine. As idealistic as it may sound, shared leadership has been proven effective in the cases in which it was tested. Drescher found that “positive shared leadership change was significantly related to positive change in group trusting behavior”. Shared leadership helps employees to trust each other more and work in teams more effectively, which will help the Engagement Machine operate much more smoothly. Shared leadership also tends to work best with leaders with an assertive leadership style, an assertive leadership style is defined as “a person who understands the need to respect others, listens to others, but also voice their own opinions”.³³

³³ Scherrer, L. (2016). *Leadership communication and employee engagement* (Order No. 10252190). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses A&I; Social Science Premium Collection. (1851276345)

Putting it all together: The Engagement Machine

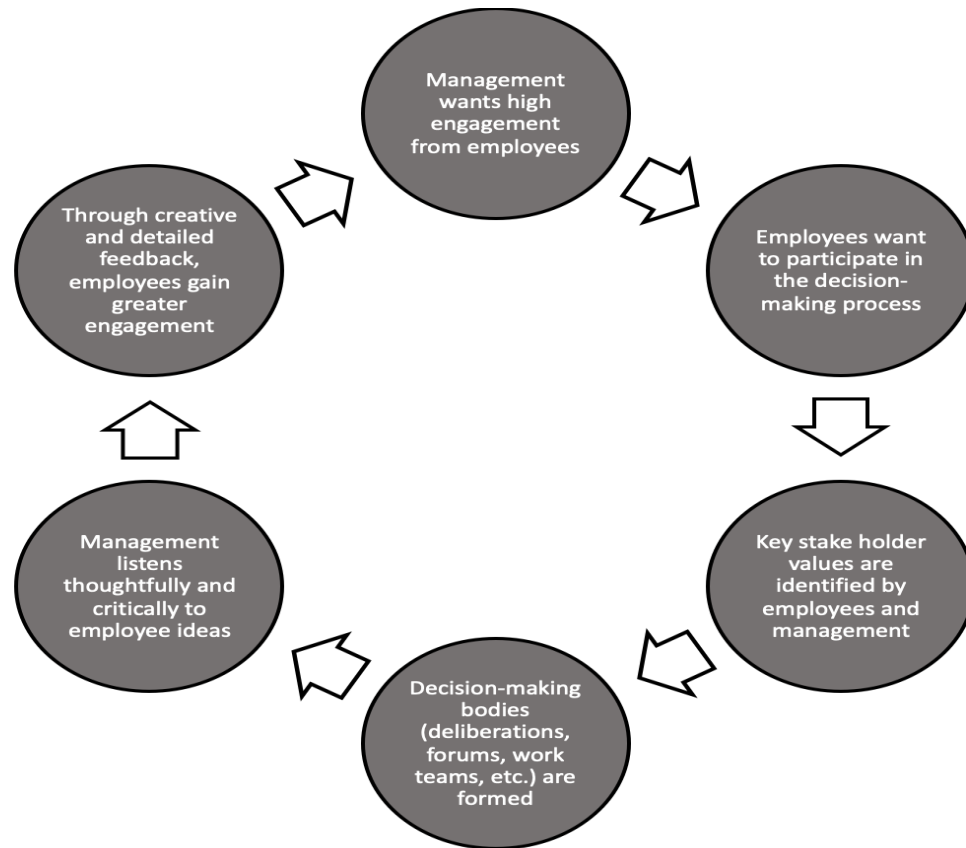


Fig 3. The Engagement Machine Feedback Loop

The Engagement Machine is a feedback loop with the following structure: Step number one on the Engagement Machine is “management wants high engagement from employees”. As discussed earlier, the modus operandi of the modern American workplace should be maximizing engagement. For organizations that have had a history of coordination failures, or work mistakes caused by ineffective communication, influence from management is even more important in producing the desire for engagement. Bradts and Cooper found that “an external agent, such as a manager, can play a central role in helping an organization overcome a history of coordination

failure”.³⁴ Step number two is that employees want to participate in the decision-making process, as has been demonstrated before.

Step number three is that “key stakeholder values are identified by both employees and management”. The subjects of deliberations need to be identified in order for deliberations to take place, of course. What matters to both employees and managers? What values do managers and employees share? Estlund once again contributes to this discussion by bringing up that “daily interaction with a relatively diverse set of co-workers creates some shared concerns – concerns about working conditions, pay and benefits, the organization of work, the quality of the work product, and the economic health of the enterprise”.³⁵ Do they care about trust? Are both groups looking to change the recognition process? Where do their priorities differ? Do employees care about higher wages and do managers care about cutting costs? Do managers value obedience and do employees value openness? And of course, any of these can be argued in the inverse. The crux of the matter is that the Engagement Machine needs things to deliberate on for the metaphorical cogs to start turning and generating this loop.

Step four is that “decision-making bodies (deliberations, forums, work teams, etc.) are formed”. This is perhaps the most mercurial part of the Engagement Machine because there are myriad ways in which decision-making bodies can manifest themselves. They can be traditional deliberations, where a group of people share a common space and discuss a given topic. They can be full workplace forums with parliamentary procedures regulating speaking times, speaking topics, etc. They can be work teams that are assigned to tackle specific topics, “task forces” of

³⁴ Brandts, J., & Cooper, D. J. (2007). It's What You Say, Not What You Pay: An Experimental Study of Manager-Employee Relationships in Overcoming Coordination Failure. *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 5(6), 1223-1268. doi:10.1162/jeea.2007.5.6.1223

³⁵ Estlund, C. L. (2000). Working together: The workplace, civil society, and the law. *Georgetown Law Journal*, 89(1), 1-96

sorts.

Step five is that “management listens thoughtfully and critically to employee ideas”. Even if the ideas generated by the Engagement Machine are innovative and extraordinary, they will ultimately be useless if they are not taken in earnest by management. The main role of management is to “perform leadership”, and leadership in this sense is shared leadership, so they should be open and receptive to the ideas of their employees and their teams.³⁶

The sixth and final step of the Engagement Machine is that “through creative and detailed feedback, employees gain greater engagement”. Ideally, by being able to deliberate on issues that matter to them and receiving thoughtful feedback on their ideas, employees will feel like they are meaningfully participating in workplace decisions. This should increase their sense of engagement in the workplace, which will further incentivize managers to keep generating engagement, which starts the loop over again.

Behind the concrete details of the Engagement Machine lies a deep theoretical scaffolding, the brunt of which is Men, Vercic, and Ruck’s five core principles of workplace listening and five core principles of workplace dialogue. The five core principles for listening to employees are as follows:³⁷

- Openness: good listening requires an open mind.
- Planning: good listening is the result of thorough planning across the organization.
- Distributed leadership: listening needs to be led at multiple levels.

³⁶ Gustavsen, B. (1985). Workplace Reform and Democratic Dialogue. *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 6(4), 461-479. doi:10.1177/0143831x8564004.

³⁷ Men, L. R., & Vercic, A. T. (2021). *Current trends and issues in internal communication: Theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.

- Empathetic and creative feedback: good listening involves creating impactful and emotive feedback approaches.
- Humanity: good listening is rooted in a humanistic approach to communication and change.

The five dimensions of workplace dialogue are as follows:³⁸

- Mutuality: The acknowledgment that organizations and publics are inextricably linked.
- Propinquity: The willingness and capacity of publics to express their demands to the organization, and the latter's ability to consult the former regarding matters of mutual interest.
- Empathy: The atmosphere or environment required for fruitful dialogue.
- Risk: The fact that the outcome of a dialogic process may be unpredictable.
- Commitment: The parties to the dialogue must be truly committed to real conversation.

It is important to note that these ten principles need not be analyzed in depth for the Engagement Machine to be properly implemented. These ten principles are the guiding influence behind how the Engagement Machine manifests in employer/employee relations, so it is much more important to focus on what the employee's experience is with their employers actively listening. The justification for the inclusion of these ten principles shall be included here. For employers to create the engagement machine, they must exhibit or value some form of mutuality, given the interconnectedness of the desires of workers and the well-being of the organization for which they work. Also, in order to be able to give empathetic and creative feedback, they have to

³⁸ Ibid.

be open to the discussions at hand. The deliberations must be led at multiple levels, thereby requiring distributive leadership; and the participants must have the capacity to express their demands to the organization from which they work, thereby needing propinquity. The risks involved with opening up public deliberation must be dealt with and accepted if the benefits of deliberation are to be a possibility. The risks can be managed with good planning and a commitment to follow through on the ideas that management and employees agreed upon. All ten of these dimensions flow into and out of one another, weaving a tapestry of common principles that should be used to guide not only the Engagement Machine but the quest for workplace democratization generally. Special attention should be given to the principles of distributed leadership and propinquity, as they will be referenced in greater detail when the Engagement Machine is tested against prevailing scholarship (see page 33).

Barriers to Implementation

As with any workplace system, it cannot function if it is not implemented properly. While the benefits of the Engagement Machine, I feel, far outweigh any costs of implementation, that does not mean that there are no barriers that may slow down or stop it altogether. The first main barrier to implementation is determining what form the deliberative bodies take. In a traditional workplace, the Engagement Machine would take place in an in-person setting with groups of people face-to-face no matter what the details of the exact body are. However, in 2021, the traditional workplace is beginning to transition into a digital one. More employees than ever are working from home, or working in a hybrid setting, both due to the Covid-19 pandemic but also to eliminate commute times, take care of family members, etc. Doing the Engagement Machine in a fully online format would certainly be doable, but the demographics of the modern American workplace are what create the barrier to that. On the whole “internet users are

disproportionately younger, as is typical of any new communication technology”.³⁹ While the younger generations filing into the workplace may have no problems picking up an online system of deliberation, the older generations that have become more than accustomed to their workplaces being tactile, may be slow to adapt. The inability, or unwillingness, to learn and adapt to an online system of deliberation may stall participation in the Engagement Machine, leading to fewer ideas being presented, less feedback being given, and less engagement being generated. At its very worst, excessive stalling of the Engagement Machine may lead to frustration amongst employees and managers (due to lack of results, wearing down of patience, etc.).

If workplaces can effectively acclimate their employees to an online system of deliberation, such as video-chat deliberation or online software that tracks and manages ideas, participants, etc, there are actually some wonderful benefits to be gained from that. Italian labor researcher Gianluca Schiavo, wrote that social media and online technologies “can help organizations engage with their employees and promote knowledge sharing between groups of employees (Leonardi and Vaast, 2017)” but, this benefit only develops when the “culture and leadership of an organization embraces open communication and participation (Parry and Solidoro, 2013)”.⁴⁰ Tying this idea back to the Engagement Machine, the way that a workplace would ensure the embracing of participation is for there to be a “strong personal interest in the topic under discussion, inducing intrinsic individual motivation, which can in turn lead to active participation”. As has been stated earlier in this paper - and seems to be an overarching theme in

³⁹ Gastil, J. (n.d.). Communication as Deliberation. *Communication As...: Perspectives on Theory*, 164-173. doi:10.4135/9781483329055.n18.

⁴⁰ Schiavo, G., Villafiorita, A., & Zancanaro, M. (2019). (Non-)Participation in deliberation at work: A case study of online participative decision-making. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 34(1), 37-58. doi:10.1111/ntwe.12127

this research - making sure that all parties involved have a vested interest in the establishment, participation in, and success of the deliberative process is crucial.

There is a case study from 2019 on the efficacy of online deliberation/decision-making, Gianluca Schiavo's *(Non-)Participation in Deliberation at Work: A Case Study of Online Participative Decision-Making* analyzes the continuous discussion of internal policy that occurred within a firm in Italy that employed 550 knowledge-based workers. In this study, Schiavo lays out the phases by which an online deliberation system may be created and utilized, they are as follows:⁴¹

The initial *ideation phase* had the aim of collecting possible alternative solutions and comments. This phase was originally planned to last for two weeks but it was extended to three because after two weeks the discussions were still very lively, and it was difficult to identify viable proposals. The ideas that emerged in the first phase were then selected and refined in the second phase (*refinement phase*). The start of the second phase was marked with an email from the team encouraging participants to focus on directing discussion towards definition of practical solutions. The team also summarized the ideas that had emerged up to that point and each idea was re-posted on the online platform as a separate thread in order to continue discussion in a more structured manner (participants could still propose additional ideas as new threads). Polls were used again in this second phase. Finally, after another two weeks the discussion was terminated because the HR department needed to reach a decision on the issue. It is worth noting that participants joined the platform using their corporate email addresses and posts were not anonymous.

Schiavo's findings were that "interest is a driver for participation, but it does not explain active participation... participation, either active or passive, positively influences the understanding of the issue, and satisfaction with the outcome is not related to participation, but it may support participation in future initiatives". While Schiavo's findings were mostly inconclusive, they do provide greater evidence to support the idea that making employees and

⁴¹ Ibid

managers interested in deliberation is especially important when it comes to online deliberative systems.

The other barrier to implementation would be the work environment of the individual firms that are attempting to utilize the Engagement Machine. Felicetti details the various kinds of workplace environments that one can experience, and how they impact the deliberative process. In her own words, “one could imagine firms as standing along a continuum. At one end, there are those organizations that grant workers substantial decision-making power. On the other, those with a managerial hierarchy in which shareholders have strong decisional power and workers have none”.⁴²

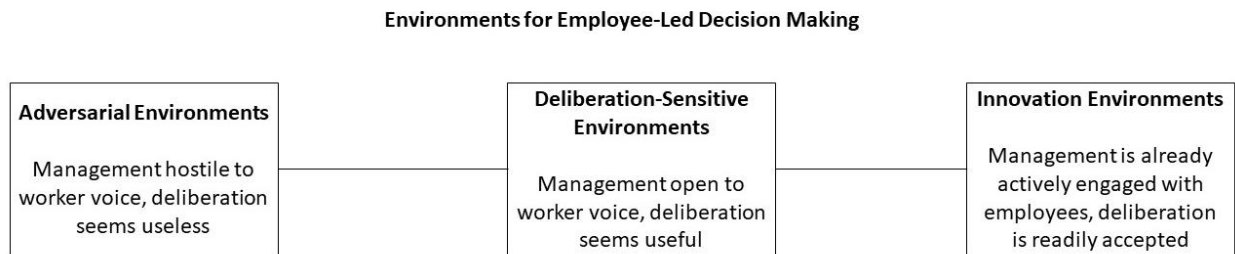


Fig. 4. Felicetti’s Environmental Continuum

Above, a visual representation of the continuum Felicetti referred to can be found. The worst-case scenario would be if a given firm has an adversarial work environment. Adversarial environments make it harder for democratic deliberation to emerge in firms, in these situations, management shuts down employee voice and acts with hostility towards the ideas of workplace democracy or worker participation. Bjorn Gustavsen conducted a case study on industrial democratization in Norway, and the problems they ran into with adversarial labor conditions.

⁴² Felicetti, A. (2016). A Deliberative Case for Democracy in Firms. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 150(3), 803-814. doi:10.1007/s10551-016-3212-9

The main issue of the Industrial Democracy project in Norway was that changes “had a tendency to get stuck on relatively low levels of management”⁴³. Workplace democratization was appealing to general workers and lower-level managers, but the process froze once the higher-level, adversarial managers shut it down. The recruitment of new work sites was also a very slow process for a similar reason, word spread quickly of the effort and the managers of the worksites prepared themselves and stopped the efforts preemptively in a lot of situations. However, even in these adversarial environments, hope is not lost. Felicetti found that, eventually, “democratic entrepreneurs” will emerge and assist in making deliberation happen, how long that may take is the question.

The next type of environment along the continuum are deliberation-sensitive environments. In deliberation-sensitive environments, deliberation and workplace democracy is already seen as useful, helpful, or even necessary. This allows the democratization process to happen incrementally as opposed to suddenly. The Engagement Machine would have a good chance at getting implemented in this sort of environment, albeit gradually, perhaps it would start with small-scale deliberations on relatively inconsequential issues.

The last type of workplace environment along the continuum is the innovation environment. Innovation environments are organizations that already exhibit “markedly innovative and ethical” business practices, as such, they are particularly ripe environments in which to establish democratically deliberative processes. This is the theoretical best-case scenario of the Engagement Machine. Seeing as though the Engagement Machine is a markedly different workplace model, a workplace already open and used to accepting and adopting such ideas would of course make for the smoothest implementation.

⁴³ Gustavsen, B. (1985). Workplace Reform and Democratic Dialogue. *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 6(4), 461-479.
doi:10.1177/0143831x8564004

Testing the Engagement Machine Against Prevailing Scholarship

As a final soiree into what the true potential of the Engagement Machine is, it seems only pertinent to analyze how it stands up to the most cutting-edge scholarship in leadership and management. The subject of leadership and management is vast, and comparing the Engagement Machine to all facets of prevailing scholarship would take an exorbitant amount of time. As such, this section will focus on an area of leadership and management that is seeing stellar amounts of growth in both interest and applicability: ethics.

In the same vein as workplace engagement, working conditions, and the like, the influx of the younger generations into the workforce has brought with it an interest and concern for the ethical practices of businesses. The same can be said for the consumer base that a company wants to target. A company creating a quality product is not enough anymore for a growing number of consumers, a Society and Business Review study by John Tsalikis, Bruce Seaton, Phillip L. Shepherd, and Michelle van Solt found that there is a positive and growing positive consumer sentiment towards ethical business practices.⁴⁴ They also found that the attitudes of consumers towards the state of ethical business practices fluctuates heavily based on the respondents' political leanings. These findings are specifically with regards to who is in the office of the President, left-leaning consumers felt more positive about the state of business ethics when a Democratic is president, and the inverse was true with right-leaning consumers. It is worth noting, though, that this study had a sample size of around 1,000 respondents. So while their findings cannot be treated as definitive, they still offer a glimpse at the shifting sympathies of the American consumer.

⁴⁴ Tsalikis, J., Seaton, B., Shepherd, P. L., & van Solt, M. (2018). The impact of the US government policies on consumer perceptions of business ethical behavior. *Society and Business Review*, 15(1), 21–25. <https://doi.org/10.1108/sbr-09-2018-0100>

Back in the realm of the workplace, though, we find a much different metric for judging the ethical nature of companies. As it stands now, the best regarded metric for rating a company's ethical value is the Ethisphere evaluation framework; created by an organization of the same name, the Ethisphere Evaluation Framework evaluates companies on five key dimensions: governance, leadership and reputation, culture of ethics, ethics and compliance program, and environmental and social impact. Scores are allotted to these five dimensions, the sum of which is that company's ethics quotient (EQ) which is how Ethisphere ranks the companies it that evaluates. Governance is 15% of the ethics quotient and takes into consideration oversight, governing principles, and risk management. Leadership and reputation is 10% of the ethics quotient and takes into consideration legal compliance, awards and accolades, and ethical reputation. Culture of ethics is 20% of the ethics quotient and takes into consideration efforts to establish ethical tone across the company, as well as the methods and outcomes of establishing an ethical climate. Ethics and compliance program is a whopping 35% of the ethics quotient and analyzes the specific program for ethics and compliance therewith that a company has implemented. This takes into consideration factors such as the program's structure and resources, the oversight and attitudes of management, detection and enforcement policies and their success rates, and the disciplinary actions taken against violators thereof. Environmental and social impact makes up the final 20% of the ethics quotient and takes into consideration community involvement, corporate philanthropy, sustainability and corporate responsibility, and environmental stewardship.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ *Methodology*. World's Most Ethical Companies. (2023). from <https://worldsmoethicalcompanies.com/methodology/>

While at first explanation the Ethisphere evaluation framework may not seem entirely relevant to determining the viability of the Engagement Machine, a quick glance of whom Ethisphere was given awards and recognition to makes the connection more apparent. Apple, AT&T, Deere & Company, Microsoft, Pepsico, Pfizer, and Workday were all on the list of Ethisphere's 2022 honorees.⁴⁶ If the biggest companies, most profitable companies, and most innovative companies of today fit within the rigorous standards of Ethisphere's evaluation framework, then the Engagement Machine ought to be a model that facilitates and enhances ethical behavior. In order to measure this, the Engagement Machine must at least fall within the values outlined by Ethisphere, as well as demonstrate that through its execution more ethical decisions may be reached.

In the theoretical scaffolding of the Engagement Machine, the key principles of employee listening are openness, planning, distributed leadership, empathetic and creative feedback, and humanity. The five dimensions of workplace dialogue as are follows: mutuality, propinquity, empathy, risk, and commitment. These were discussed in much greater detail in the section where they were first introduced, but for the purposes of testing the Engagement Machine against this framework, two key values and dimensions stand out as points of focus. Distributed leadership and propinquity are the primary considerations when it comes to the Engagement Machine's ethical potential.

⁴⁶ 2023 world's most ethical companies list. World's Most Ethical Companies. (2023, March 13). from <https://worldsmoethicalcompanies.com/honorees/>

Distributed leadership is the idea that active listening needs to happen at all levels of leadership, from the C-Suite to the shop floor so to speak. An organization that demonstrates ethical behavior should be listening to its employees at all levels, because employees must communicate with management and be listened to about unethical behaviors they wish to report. It is not enough for employees to just be listened to though, management must also be willing and able to respond to the concerns of employees. That is why propinquity is the other key value in this assessment. In the context of the workplace, it refers to how comfortable employees are bringing up subjects of importance to management, and how willing management is to engage with employees on those matters of mutual importance.⁴⁷ According to the Ethics and Compliance Initiative's 2020 report, roughly 8 out of 10 workers in the United States reported unethical conduct after observing it in their workplace.⁴⁸ These positive trends in the willingness of employees to speak up against unethical behavior bode well for the potential benefits of distributed leadership a la the Engagement Machine; the Engagement Machine grants employees a forum with which to identify unethical behavior, propose methods of addressing said behavior, and receive 360 degree feedback on those propositions.

The Engagement Machine appears to have passed the test of the most rigorous ethical evaluation standards for companies today. While it would be greatly preferable to see how the Engagement Machine would operate in one of the world's most ethical companies (as previously determined by Ethisphere) and measure the impact it has on the prevalence of ethical behavior or

⁴⁷ Men, L. R., & Vercic, A. T. (2021). *Current trends and issues in internal communication: Theory and practice*.

⁴⁸ 2021 *Global Business Ethics Survey*. Ethics and Compliance Initiative. (2022, October 20). from <https://www.ethics.org/global-business-ethics-survey/#non-member-download>

reporting/addressing of unethical behavior, such experimentation is impossible at juncture. The information provided in the Barriers to Implementation section looms large over this analysis as well. The same workplace continuum (see fig.4) that affects the Engagement Machine affects the prevalence of ethical behavior/ethical frameworks in the workplace as well. With all that being said, the Engagement Machine's theoretical scaffolding and prevailing research data on ethical decision-making show that the Engagement Machine still stands as a facilitator of ethical conduct and a deterrent of unethical conduct.

Conclusion

The Engagement Machine is a culmination of several different empirical and theoretical insights; from John Gastil's Democracy Machine to Craig Pearce and Jay Conger's shared leadership, to Men, Vercic, and Ruck's principles of employee listening and dialogue. The Engagement Machine, at its core, is made of the best parts of the most recent research regarding how to engage employees and create more democratic workplaces.

As the younger generations continue to take over the modern American workplace, they bring with them their own unique ideas, values, and perspectives. And, on the whole, these ideas, values, and perspectives are in conflict with those of the older generations who have dominated leadership positions in the workplace up until about 10 years ago. As such, the modern American workplace requires a paradigm shift towards the values of the younger generations if we are to avoid mass employee burnout and disengagement, which would spell disaster for employee and employer alike. This paper found that the main values younger generations bring to the workplace are communication, participation, and engagement. Younger workers want to understand what they are doing, they want to have a say in it, and they want to feel good about why they are doing it.

Democratic deliberation, the process by which conversations are conducted with the purpose of ensuring mutual enlightened understanding and consensus, serves as the bedrock by which workplace democracy is built. The emphasis placed upon the importance of individual and group conversations as a conduit for growth fits right into what younger generations value in the work experiences. The Democracy Machine, a model by which democratic deliberation may emerge in a feedback loop, provides a step-by-step process that can be followed in order to achieve democratic deliberation. Thus, a workplace adaptation of the Democracy Machine is the

most effective way to bring workplace democracy (and democratic deliberation along with it) to the modern American workplace.

What are the implications of this research? If the Engagement Machine is a way to bring the American workplace into modernity and make it a more democratic, collective system, then workers at all levels should begin to try to move their workplaces in that direction. Ideally, workers should start to have more conversations with their coworkers and managers about literally any topic, as the familiarity and dispensing of the tension surrounding having workplace conversations is quite important. As these conversations become more frequent, workers should move topics in more complex and work-related directions, assuming that they are not in an adversarial workplace. In an adversarial workplace, workers should try and come together without management's input and present the idea of increased deliberation to their managers. The "democratic entrepreneurs" would take the lead in this case, as stated before.

The Engagement Machine would not be implemented overnight, it would be a gradual process of increasing the scope and complexity of conversations and groups. Once the deliberations reach the point where they cover key stakeholder values amongst the participants, and the feedback given to employees is well thought out and given with the intention of engaging with employees' ideas, then a workplace can say that they are operating with an Engagement Machine-type process.

The main limitation of this research, and these aforementioned implications, is that they are purely theoretical. The Engagement Machine exists in a purely theoretical context, and the outcomes and implications of it are educated conclusions, but still not empirically tested. However, it is important to note that this does not lessen the value of the insights and conclusions stated here. It is simply an area of exploration that is closed off to the Engagement Machine as of

current. Given more time and resources, a workplace would be constructed in a secluded environment with participants acting as workers and managers, respectively. Then, after a control run, the Engagement Machine would be introduced and then we could observe how it changes workplace conversations and outcomes. While it would be most optimal to test it out in a true workplace, the chances of a company accepting it are slim, and the confounding variables that often come about with observational studies are something to worry about.

The modern American workplace is changing, and if we are to tap into the potential of the newest generation of workers, engagement must be prioritized. If we engage workers in their workplaces, through the Engagement Machine or not, we can turn workplaces into thoroughly democratic environments...at the watercooler, and beyond.

Annotated Bibliography

2021 Global Business Ethics Survey. Ethics and Compliance Initiative. (2022, October 20). from <https://www.ethics.org/global-business-ethics-survey/#non-member-download>. This piece from the Global Business Ethics Survey provides insightful data as to how the workplace is changing with regards to employee perception of unethical behavior. An increasingly high percentage of employees are speaking out against unethical behavior when they spot it. This data will be used to attest to the effectiveness of the Engagement Machine as a tool for addressing unethical conduct.

2023 world's most ethical companies list. World's Most Ethical Companies. (2023, March 13). from <https://worldsmoethicalcompanies.com/honorees/>. This list of the most ethical companies in the world, provided by Ethisphere, shows the sheer volume of household-name companies that follow/fit with Ethisphere's evaluation criteria. The household names of these companies will be utilized to demonstrate the importance of ensuring the Engagement Machine's compliance with said criteria. After all, if the world's largest companies are consistent with these criteria, and the Engagement Machine is not, then the Engagement Machine stands a much poorer chance of effectively being implemented at those companies.

An Roinn Sláinte. (2020). PROCEDURAL VALUES FOR DECISION-MAKING IN A PANDEMIC. Department of Health of Ireland. The Department of Health of Ireland came out in 2020 with an exceptional list of principles for ethical decision making in pandemic settings. Beyond the pandemic context though, this list serves as a guide for ethical behavior in workplace contexts more generally. As such, this list will be utilized

to establish baseline principles of ethical decision making that the Engagement Machine can conform to.

Brandts, J., & Cooper, D. J. (2007). It's What You Say, Not What You Pay: An Experimental Study of Manager-Employee Relationships in Overcoming Coordination Failure. *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 5(6), 1223-1268. doi:10.1162/jeea.2007.5.6.1223

Brandts and Cooper's study examines the role that communication from managers has in assisting work teams in overcoming coordination failure, i.e the failure to work as a team. Brandt and Cooper conclude that effective communication from managers is a more significant predictor of team success than monetary/non-monetary incentives; thereby showing the key role that well executed dialogue has in ensuring workplace cohesion and performance. This research was used to introduce the idea that communication is more important to millennial workers than financial incentives, therefore setting up the importance of a deliberation-based workplace system.

Cheney, G. (1995). Democracy in the workplace: Theory and practice from the perspective of communication. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 23(3), 167-200. doi:10.1080/00909889509365424. Cheney's research paper from 1995 discusses workplace democracy: What is it? How does it form? How does it persist or die? Specifically, Cheney's research is conducted with a focus on how communication contributes to workplace democracy both in the United States and abroad. After proving the significant impact that communication has in an effectively democratic workplace, Cheney goes on to argue for widespread workplace democracy and, as a result, widespread improvements in workplace communication. This source was used to expose the, perhaps, obvious irony that we in the United States care so much about democracy, but rarely

extend it into our working lives.

Conger, J. A., & Pearce, C. (2003). *Shared leadership: Reframing the hows and whys of leadership*. Sage. Conger and Pearce's work posits a new method of leadership for workplaces. "Shared leadership" as they call it, seeks to transform vertical leadership structures into horizontal ones. Conger and Pearce argue that shared and team based leadership is superior to traditional leadership with regards to motivation, performance, and trust. Alongside other empirical studies cited later, Conger and Pearce find support for their theory of shared leadership, finding that team-led leadership in a collaborative setting is proven effective. This source was used to introduce, explain, and contextualize the concept of shared leadership and how it fits into the idea of workplace democracy and the Engagement Machine.

Darwall, S. L. (2009). *The second-person standpoint: Morality, respect, and Accountability*. Harvard University Press. Darwall's work on the second-person epistemological standpoint is directly referenced by Fabienne Peter in her piece on epistemic standpoints that is cited here as well. Peter's work is essential to the epistemology section of this paper, and utilizing Darwall's work as a primary source as opposed to only a secondary source through Peter ensures that the information is as true to form as possible.

Department of Labor. (n.d.). *Full-time / part-time employment*. United States Department of Labor. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/wb/data/latest-annual-data/full-and-part-time-employment#Percent-distribution-of-workers-employed-full-time-and-part-time-by-sex>. This report from the Department of Labor showed demographics of the American part-time and full-time workforce, by sex and race. This source was used to display the rapidly changing demographics of the American workforce, showing its transformation towards a

monumentally diverse makeup.

Drescher, M. A., Korsgaard, M. A., Welp, I. M., Picot, A., & Wigand, R. T. (2014). The dynamics of shared leadership: Building trust and enhancing performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 99*(5), 771-783. doi:10.1037/a0036474. Building off of Conger and Pearce's original theory of shared leadership, Drescher et. al conducts an empirical study on whether or not shared leadership makes meaningful changes in trust and performance in workplaces. Drescher et. al surveys employees, monitors team output, and compares vertical leadership teams with shared leadership teams to find that shared leadership has a statistically significant impact upon trust and performance in work teams. This source assisted in further clarifying the definition of shared leadership, as well as providing empirical support for its positive claims.

Epistemic Value. Internet encyclopedia of philosophy. <https://iep.utm.edu/epistemic-value/>. This definition of epistemic value provides the basis for positing that the Engagement Machine does have epistemic value.

Estlund, C. L. (2000). Working together: The workplace, civil society, and the law. *Georgetown Law Journal, 89*(1), 1-96. Estlund's legal and philosophical writing piece highlights the key role of social dynamics and teamwork in the maintenance of America's civil institutions. Estlund argues that all forms of civic engagement, including deliberation and dialogue, are essential activities that should not be excluded from any form of life. Specifically, Estlund argues, their exclusion from the workplace is a tragically missed opportunity to engrain the principles of civic engagement into the very fiber of the American consciousness. This source was used to bring into light just how often

employees interact with each other and with their managers, and how infrequently it is thought of as a democratic process.

Felicetti, A. (2016). A Deliberative Case for Democracy in Firms. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 150(3), 803-814. doi:10.1007/s10551-016-3212-9. Felicetti's work seeks to unify the fields of business ethics and deliberative democracy, culminating in what they see as a clear-cut case for democracy in the workplace. Specifically, Felicetti focuses their attention upon deliberation within firms, and how effective deliberations can aggregate into a highly democratic workplace. Felicetti finishes their piece by tying in how deliberation in the workplace contributes to a deliberately democratic system in the government and beyond. This source provided a lot of the empirical and theoretical basis for why deliberation within firms is preferable, and achievable, and in doing so, provided the basis for why the Engagement Machine is preferable.

Formica, S., & Sfodera, F. (2022). The Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting paradigm shifts: An overview of current situation and future research directions. In *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management* (Vol. 31, Issue 8, pp. 899–907). Informa UK Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2022.2136601>. This piece by Formica and Sfodera provides a comprehensive analysis of the Quiet Quitting movement, with its origin, mediums, and consequences all being discussed. Their definition of the quiet quitting movement, dissection of its creation post-pandemic, and diagnosis of its consequences will all be utilized to make the case that the Quiet Quitting movement is a symptom of widespread employee burnout.

Fuller, J., & Kerr, W. (2022). *The Great Resignation Didn't Start with the Pandemic*. *Harvard Business Review*. Harvard Business Publishing. <https://hbr.org/2022/03/the-great->

resignation-didnt-start-with-the-pandemic [Google Scholar]. This piece provides a key statistic on the percentage of workers who did not return to in-person work when asked to by their employers. A startling 47 million Americans reportedly quit their jobs in 2021, this should signal to managers and companies all across the country that change is needed.

Gastil, J. (2016). Building a Democracy Machine: Toward an Integrated and Empowered Form of Civic Engagement. *Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation*.

https://ash.harvard.edu/files/ash/files/democracy_machine.pdf. This source provided the main model with which the Engagement Machine is based. Gastil's model of the Democracy Machine was absolutely instrumental to this research because it is the very theoretical model that I retro-fit to the workplace in order to create the Engagement Machine.

Gastil, J. (n.d.). Communication as Deliberation. *Communication As...: Perspectives on Theory*, 164-173. doi:10.4135/9781483329055.n18. In this written publication, Gastil and several other authors make the case for communication as a tool for organization and a tool for solution. Specifically within workplaces, Gastil et. al pushes the importance of deliberation in workplace settings in order to tackle big decisions, solidifying the role of deliberative dialogue as a tool for workplace growth and development. This source provided the definitions and practical understanding of what democratic deliberation and dialogue is, which was instrumental in making the case for why it should be applied to the workplace.

Gastil, J. (2008). *Political communication and deliberation*. SAGE Publications. In this written work, Gastil defines, solidifies, and clarifies all the principles of democratic deliberation and provides various examples of how they may be implemented in various contexts. Gastil's book lays the groundwork for how any leader or group thereof can create

deliberately democratic systems in their spheres of life, including workplaces. This source provided the list of processes and subprocesses included in the deliberation process.

Gustavsen, B. (1985). Workplace Reform and Democratic Dialogue. *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 6(4), 461-479. doi:10.1177/0143831x8564004. Gustavsen's research uses Scandinavia as a basis for their findings, but the theory behind their work is quite generalizable. Gustavsen argues for a "macro-orientated" approach to solving workplace issues through reforming workplace communication. One of the main ways that Gustavsen sets out to do this is through the principles of deliberative dialogue. Gustavsen puts forth and backs up a general theory of workplace engagement that uses deliberative dialogue as the lynchpin of workplace democratization. This source provided useful case study data as to the potential barriers to implementing a deliberative system in an industrialized workplace.

Harter, J. (2023, February 3). *U.S. employee engagement needs a rebound in 2023*. Gallup.com. <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/468233/employee-engagement-needs-rebound-2023.aspx#:~:text=This%20pattern%20continued%20into%202022,and%20four%20points%20from%202020>. This piece provides key statistics regarding the percentage of workers who are actively disengaged at work, a growing percentage year by year, this will be used to further establish the ever-worsening concern of our engagement slump.

McDonald, L. (2020). Your word against mine: The Power of Uptake. *Synthese*, 199(1-2), 3505–3526. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-020-02944-1>. This piece provides the definition of uptake in a deliberative context, allowing it to be understood and implemented in the context of the Engagement Machine.

Men, L. R., & Vercic, A. T. (2021). *Current trends and issues in internal communication: Theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan. Men and Vercic's study of the importance of employee voice, and how employers can listen to it effectively, shows the importance of managers and leaders in workplaces being cognizant of how they are communicating internally. These principles are then extended to cover the topic of dialogue in the workplace, and how the principles of dialogue can work with the principles of employee voice to create a cohesive internal communication system. This source provided the five dimensions of workplace listening and the five dimensions of workplace dialogue, which served as one of the main theoretical scaffolds of the Engagement Machine.

Methodology. World's Most Ethical Companies. (2023). from <https://worldsmoethicalcompanies.com/methodology/>. Ethisphere's evaluation framework and criteria serve as the bedrock for establishing the Engagement Machine as a tool for facilitating ethical behavior and discouraging unethical behavior. The Engagement Machine must be consistent with Ethisphere's guidelines as the premier ethics evaluation framework to date so that the claim that the Engagement Machine is a beneficial model for ethical development can hold water.

Miller, K. I., Ellis, B. H., Zook, E. G., & Lyles, J. S. (1990). An Integrated Model of Communication, Stress, and Burnout in the Workplace. *Communication Research*, 17(3), 300-326. doi:10.1177/009365090017003002. Miller et. al, in this culmination of various research works, seeks to uncover what role communication has to play in exacerbating or reducing employee stress and burnout. Miller et. al uncovered that when employees have efficient communication in the decision making process, specifically when they feel like they have participated in the decision making process, they perceive their stress and

burnout as significantly less taxing. This source provided evidence to support the claim that younger generation workers face burnout when they do not feel engaged in the workplace, and that regular, meaningful communication is a proven way to increase engagement.

Mitchell, T. (2022, March 23). *Covid-19 pandemic continues to reshape work in America*. Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2022/02/16/covid-19-pandemic-continues-to-reshape-work-in-america/>. This piece provides key statistics regarding the opinions and levels of engagement amongst workers post-pandemic. This data is useful in further establishing the case that worker burnout is a growing concern.

Myers, K. K., & Sadaghiani, K. (2010). Millennials in the Workplace: A Communication Perspective on Millennials' Organizational Relationships and Performance. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 25(2), 225-238. doi:10.1007/s10869-010-9172-7. Myers and Sadaghiani take on the unfavorable stereotypes of millennial workers, as well as the positive qualities they bring to their workplaces, to uncover what impact millennial workers have on their coworkers as well as the organizations they work for. The most significant difference in millennial workers to their older counterparts was revealed to be the value they place on communication and their willingness to communicate. As such, as workplace demographics continue to shift millennial, communication will need to become an increasingly important part of workplace systems. This source shed light on the most important values of millennial workers, which introduced the idea that communication and participation are paramount to millennial workplace satisfaction.

Oandasan, I. (2007). *Teamwork and Healthy Workplaces: Strengthening the Links for*

Deliberation and Action through Research and Policy. *HealthcarePapers*, 7(Sp), 98-103. doi:10.12927/hcpap..18686. While inconclusive, Oandasan's research provides a strong body of knowledge about the nature of teamwork in healthcare workplaces and how effective teamwork contributes to an overall "healthy" workplace. The author posits that teamwork and healthy workplace agendas require substantial thoughtful deliberation from employees, managers, and policy makers. This source provided empirical backing to the claim that undemocratic workplaces are, ultimately, unhealthy for those in them.

Peter, F. (2012). The procedural epistemic value of deliberation. *Synthese*, 190(7), 1253–1266. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-012-0119-6>. Fabienne Peter's work on the procedural and epistemic value of deliberation serves as the primary scholarship with which a fundamental assumption of the Engagement Machine is proven and rectified. Peter's work on epistemic standpoints and how they factor into the interlocutor's experience of the deliberation itself serves as a great framework with which to establish deliberation's epistemic value. In short, Peter's work will be utilized to prove that deliberation does in fact create better outcomes for its participants.

Raelin, J. A. (2012). Dialogue and deliberation as expressions of democratic leadership in participatory organizational change. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 25(1), 7-23. doi:10.1108/09534811211199574. Raelin makes the case that the first step to participatory organizational change is democratic deliberation and dialogue. They argue this due to the fact that in order for deliberation to be done effectively, stakeholders and key values must be identified and communicated well throughout the process, which democratic deliberation is particularly useful at achieving. Thereby highlighting the

significant role that democratic deliberation has to play in not just running workplaces, but also facilitating change within them. This source provided one of the first steps on the Engagement Machine, which is that key stakeholder values are identified among management and employees, and research to justify its significance.

Schiavo, G., Villafiorita, A., & Zancanaro, M. (2019). (Non-)Participation in deliberation at work: A case study of online participative decision-making. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 34(1), 37-58. doi:10.1111/ntwe.12127. In a case study of 550 knowledge workers testing an online deliberation program for workplace decisions, Schiavo, Villafiorita, and Zancanaro study how participation (or lack thereof) in the program impacted employees' knowledge of the decision and satisfaction with the outcome. They conclude that participation (passive or active) influences employees' understanding of the issue, but does not seem to impact their satisfaction with the outcome. However, participation in one decision-making deliberation makes employees more willing to participate in future ones, setting the stage for future deliberative systems implemented in full workplaces. This source provided research to show what a purely digital deliberative system might look like inside a workplace, and what the phases of implementing such a system might be.

Scherrer, L. (2016). *Leadership communication and employee engagement* (Order No. 10252190). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses A&I; Social Science Premium Collection. (1851276345). Scherrer tackles the question of how different leadership and communication styles affect employee engagement. While there is no set communication style that improves employee engagement in all cases, leaders can tailor their communication style to the needs of their work teams, thereby further supporting the

importance of thoughtful workplace communication. This source provided another dimension by which shared leadership can be clarified and ultimately utilized, which is that adopting an assertive leadership style is actually beneficial to employees and fellow leaders, as it increases motivation and active listening.

Schullery, N. M. (2013). Workplace Engagement and Generational Differences in Values. In *Business Communication Quarterly* (Vol. 76, Issue 2, pp. 252–265). SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1080569913476543>. Schullery addresses the apparent disconnect between the workplace values of the younger generations and the older. Finding that while older generations were more meritocratic and ambitious, younger generations care more about an engaging environment and maintaining a work-life balance.

Tsalikis, J., Seaton, B., Shepherd, P. L., & van Solt, M. (2018). The impact of the US government policies on consumer perceptions of business ethical behavior. *Society and Business Review*, 15(1), 21–25. <https://doi.org/10.1108/sbr-09-2018-0100>. Consumer perception of business ethics matters to the Engagement Machine because perceived unethical conduct can be identified and discussed via its deliberative framework. The work of Tsalikis et.al provides meaningful insights into how consumers view the likelihood of companies behaving ethically based on the political climate they find themselves in. This provides useful context to the implementation of the Engagement Machine in various political environments.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (n.d.). *Labor force share, by age group, 1998, 2008, 2018, and projected 2028*. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics from <https://www.bls.gov/emp/graphics/2019/labor-force-share-by-age-group.htm>. This report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows the share of the American workforce taken up

by age groups separated by decade. This source provided concrete evidence that as baby boomers shuffle out of the workplace, younger generations (ages 24-35) are taking up their share.

ACADEMIC VITA

Education

Pennsylvania State University, Schreyer Honors College — Projected May 2023

Bachelor of Arts in Labor and Employment Relations

Bachelor of Arts in Political Science

Relevant Coursework: HR Fundamentals for Business, Workplace Dispute Resolution, Labor Law, Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Rhetoric of Law, Democratic Deliberation

Employment History

Undergraduate Research Assistant, Penn State University — November 2020 - Present

Created and managed the chapter submission repository for the book *Handbook of Principles of Organizational Behavior (3rd edition)* on behalf of Craig Pearce, Brova Family Endowed Professor at Penn State University: receiving, categorizing, and revising 30 chapters written by renowned management scholars like Edwin Locke and Albert Bandura. Utilized and gained experience in the Workday HR software.

Retail Associate/Consultant, Express Business Center — June 2020 - August 2022

Provided exceptional customer service by listening to and resolving queries, requests, and complaints from customers. Adapted in real-time to the needs of the business, acquired competency and training in the ADP HR system, three different printers/printing softwares, and the CashMate and PostalMate softwares. Trained and supervised 5 employees as the senior most retail associate for my shift.

Political Advocacy Intern, The Sierra Club — June 2019 - August 2019

Coordinated a team of 15 volunteers from a remote setting to engage in grassroots action in their communities such as door knocking, phone banking, and literature dropping. Served as project manager for these grassroots efforts and maintained accurate online records in the activism software VAN.

Leadership Experience

Chief Justice, Phi Alpha Delta Law Fraternity International, Pre-Law Chapter — July 2020 - May 2022

Designed and implemented the mediation board for the chapter, successfully completing 3 mediations over two years between the leadership and the general body. Amended the organization's bylaws with the consent of the Executive Board, ensuring rules and regulations stay as up-to-date and fair as possible.

Undergraduate Coordinator, United Students Against Sweatshops — October 2021 - Present

Designed and distributed fliers across campus in seven strategic locations to maximize the visibility of our organization. Corresponded with 3 other student groups on campus to coordinate joint activism efforts. Organized a public event to raise awareness for the use of sweat shop labor in Penn State merchandise, which resulted in a meeting with the Vice President of Student Affairs.

Certificates and Commendations

Robert R. Kohler Memorial Award --- April 2023

Given to one Labor & Employment Relations Major at Penn State from the Lehigh Valley region of Pennsylvania who demonstrates exemplary academic achievement.

Collaborative Discussion, The Interactivity Foundation — December 2021

Demonstrated advanced aptitude in effective communication, rhetoric & argumentation, active and analytical listening, and problem solving.

Excel Training, Office 365/Microsoft 365 — December 2021

Demonstrated aptitude in entering data, formatting, printing, charts, workbooks, pivot tables, and formulas.