ENGAGING BANYAN’S HIGH PERFORMING CONSULTANTS

By

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We accept this Thesis as conforming
To the required standard

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ABSTRACT

Banyan Work Health Solutions is a national provider of rehabilitation case management services. Banyan’s workforce are mainly independent contractors, and its structure is virtual. In 2012, Banyan experienced its highest growth ever, and also set ambitious targets for the next five years. Banyan assumed that high engagement would lead to high results, and wanted to understand what factors promoted high engagement in its top-performing Work Health Consultants. Through the use of action research, and specifically through the deployment of an engagement survey and focus groups, this inquiry identified factors promoting engagement in that community. Research sub-questions related to determining the current state of engagement and actions Banyan could take to enhance engagement. Findings confirmed high engagement in general, but low engagement in lower-tenure consultants. Recommendations suggested Banyan’s leadership continue to focus on effective practices, and supplement these with specific initiatives for new consultants. This study was of minimal risk and adhered to RRU Ethical Guidelines.
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CHAPTER ONE: FOCUS AND FRAMING

In this chapter, I will provide context for the current inquiry. Specifically, I depict Banyan Work Health Solutions (Banyan) as an entrepreneurial and innovative company, which operates at the center of a complex interplay of forces. I define the main research question and sub-questions, and outline how I came to be interested in this particular topic. I outline the significance of this inquiry to a variety of stakeholders and possible consequences of not studying these issues now.

Banyan is a provider of rehabilitation case and claims management services for employers and insurers across Canada. The business was founded in 1995 and is owner-managed. Independent contractors constitute some 80% of the personnel and the other 20% are regular full-time employees (Moore C., 2011a). Banyan’s providers of rehabilitation case and claims management services are known as Work Health Consultants (WHCs). Most are independent contractors to the company. The company’s structure is “virtual”: the majority of individuals telecommute from home offices nationally. Because of this virtual structure, electronic technologies, both mainstream and innovative, are widely deployed (Tafti, Mithas & Krishnan, 2007).

Although not specifically defined by Banyan, engagement in the organization is perceived as the degree to which its contractors and employees feel committed to the organization, and are willing to strive for superior individual and organizational performance. There has been a sense at Banyan that the levels of engagement, specifically in its WHC community, were negatively impacted by a variety of factors preceding 2012, the year of this inquiry (L. DiDiodato, personal communication, September 2011). During this period, an unsuccessful merger in the Quebec region, the loss of Banyan’s largest client, the securing of
a new, even larger and highly demanding client, and massive growth as a result of this new client, caused much instability. Banyan also set ambitious growth and diversification targets for the subsequent three to five years. The leadership appreciated the need for fully engaged stakeholders to achieve these targets.

To gain more in-depth insight into the extent and impact of these issues, and to formulate strategies going forward, Banyan requested me, as Banyan’s leader of Strategic Projects for Talent Management, to investigate. In October 2011, I conducted an in-depth analysis of various Human Resources issues in the organization. I began calculating the company’s first metrics around retention and tenure and I was given the company’s employee engagement survey results for 2010. The information gleaned from my analysis, the staff turnover metrics and information from the employee engagement survey pointed to two critical issues. There appeared to be a lack of engagement in the WHC community. This lack of engagement was evidenced by a below-average response rate by the WHCs to the engagement survey, eliciting only three out of a total of 55 responses, and an above-average WHC turnover rate at the company, fully 28% out of the total turnover for all personnel of 30% annually. Further, qualitative and engagement-survey data reflected dissatisfaction with Banyan’s communication practices (Banyan, 2010). From these insights emerged Banyan’s desire to improve engagement in the WHC community.

My personal interest in this inquiry was three-fold. I remain the only internal resource fully dedicated to human resources (HR) and talent management. As such, it is my job to improve people-related processes and outcomes. As student and researcher, I was in an ideal position to gather from WHCs the information I needed to achieve these desired HR
outcomes. Finally, I am an engagement enthusiast. This inquiry allowed me to immerse myself in this field.

This inquiry addressed the question, What factors drive engagement in Banyan’s high-performing WHCs? The sub-questions in support of the primary question were:

1. What is the current state of engagement of Banyan’s high-performing WHCs?
2. What current organizational practices do WHCs feel support engagement and should be continued into the future?
3. What new organizational practices do WHCs feel should be implemented at Banyan to support engagement?

Significance of the Inquiry

The purpose of this inquiry was to study WHC engagement at Banyan. The focus was specifically on Banyan’s high-performing WHCs. These individuals play strategic roles in Banyan’s future and are earmarked retention targets. The intention of this research was to identify organizational factors potentially driving engagement in the sample community. A further intention was to formulate strategy from the findings, and to create an environment at Banyan featuring improved feelings of engagement in this community. The benefits of increased workforce engagement have been widely documented and at Banyan were expected to positively impact the company, its WHC community, and Banyan’s clients.

Carter (2010, p. 14) claims that companies demonstrating high engagement outperform those with low engagement. Macey and Schneider (2008) confirm that engagement is a “causal antecedent of organizationally relevant behaviours and outcomes” (p. 13). Therefore, benefits for Banyan of increased engagement levels could include an improvement in productivity, higher profits (Gallup, 2009, cited in Roth, 2010, p.12) and
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decreased staff turnover (Wildermuth & Wildermuth, 2008, p. 50). Banyan needs to retain its high-performing WHCs if the company is to achieve its goals for the next five years.

Banyan’s WHCs could enjoy personal benefits of increased engagement in greater feelings of self-confidence and self-efficacy (Carter, 2010, p.14), and feelings of being involved, informed and part of a wider community (Roth, 2010, p.12). Further, Banyan’s WHCs may derive benefits from decreased turnover. Turnover puts added demands on those who remain, who may experience increased workloads, exhaustion, and decreased morale (Arthur, 2001; Brewster, Carey, Dowling, Grobler, Holland & Warnich, 2004; Kim, 2005). In summary, the creation of an engaged work environment that fosters retention of staff might reverse some of these trends and improve wellbeing of the WHCs themselves.

Finally, Banyan’s clients also stand to gain from highly engaged WHCs. Wildermuth and Wildermuth (2008) show that high engagement is positively correlated with improved customer satisfaction. This is confirmed by Bennoit-Williams (2011) who makes reference to Heskett, Jones, Loveman, Sasser and Schlesinger’s (2008) Service Profit Chain model, demonstrating that employee engagement is “foundational (…) to enhancing) customer satisfaction” (p. 10).

Had this inquiry not proceeded, and should Banyan not be able to positively impact engagement in the WHC community, the organization may continue to lose critical and rare skills at a rate of 28% per annum (Moore C., 2011a). Factoring in replacement costs of between 150% and 250% of annual salary (Arthur, 2001, p. 220; Ramlall, 2004, p. 63), such losses are expensive and negatively affect profitability.

Banyan has set an ambitious agenda for the next five years. This agenda includes doubling the revenues and becoming the employer of choice in the industry (Banyan, 2011b).
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Should this inquiry and subsequent policy formulation on engagement not happen, Banyan could continue to lose intellectual capital and organizational learning capability, which are critical to support the agenda (Senge, 2009, p. 299).

**Organizational Context**

Many contextual factors contribute to and mitigate Banyan’s engagement challenges. These are related to Banyan’s structure, resourcing model, culture, strategy and philosophy.

Banyan is mostly a virtual business. Of its headcount of roughly 200, about two dozen individuals work in bricks-and-mortar offices; the rest telecommute from their homes. Managing such a dispersed workforce presents challenges, and technologies have been innovatively implemented to enable communication, collaboration and teamwork. Banyan’s consultants enjoy the flexibility associated with these arrangements, yet they also report feelings of isolation and loneliness (Moore, C., 2011b).

Banyan has enjoyed substantial flexibility and cost advantages by using the independent contractor model. However, this contractor model has been a mixed blessing in terms of engagement. Positively, contractors are vendors to Banyan, the client, and continued revenue-generating relationships promote discretionary effort as a marker of engagement (Moore, C., 2012). Negatively, some of Banyan’s independent contractors feel discontented because of work insecurity and earnings fluctuations due to changing client demands (Moore, C., 2011a).

Banyan has a very specific organizational culture. The business is highly entrepreneurial, and new ideas and innovative thinking are encouraged (Moore, C., 2011a). It is also relatively non-hierarchical, in that individuals are trusted to do their work appropriately with only minimal organizational oversight. The leadership team operates
openly and with high integrity, honesty and ethics, and expects staff to do the same. These are all factors improving engagement at Banyan (Banyan, 2010).

In 2009, the Banyan leadership team made a strategic decision to grow the business aggressively through increased marketing efforts and pressure on sales. As the company started growing, the culture started changing (Moore, C., 2011b). Some individuals felt uncomfortable with Banyan’s shift away from a “family” culture towards a more corporate culture, resulting in person-culture conflict (Argyris, 1964, cited in Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 126) and disengagement (Banyan Strategic Projects Discovery Report, 2011).

At a leadership conference in April 2011, Banyan launched its new guiding philosophy of “Kaizenovation”, which “marries the best of innovation (game changing initiatives) [sic] and kaizen (a focus and practice aimed at constant improvement) [sic]” (Banyan, 2011b, p. 3). Saks (2006) advocates for “an environment that allows members to experiment and try new things” (p. 605) as a positive influence on engagement. While still in its early stages, Banyan’s adoption of such a philosophy may mitigate low engagement.

**Systems Analysis of the Inquiry**

“A system is composed of parts, but we cannot understand a system by looking only at its parts” (Wheatley, 1999, “Change: The Capacity of Life”, para. 9). “Systems thinking looks at relationships, connectedness, process, and the whole and patterns of a system” (Ackoff, 2010, “Definitions”, para. 9). Similarly, the issue of WHC engagement at Banyan cannot be understood in isolation. Instead, Banyan’s WHC engagement resides at the centre of a complex interplay of forces emanating from various systems (Figure 1). The primary influencers derive from Banyan’s market and technological environments. Secondary influencers stem from cultural and societal environments.
Banyan’s WHCs operate within the parameters of two different systems, namely healthcare and insurance. The WHCs’ daily reality is the need to cope with the tension created by the competing interests of these two systems. According to Ackoff (2010), systems are designed to achieve specific outcomes. The healthcare system is designed to achieve the physical and mental recovery of injured or ill workers. The insurance system is designed for profit maximization. On many occasions these are opposing forces.

Figure 1: A system of WHC engagement

Banyan is further impacted by factors in the insurance system. The industry consists of three large and a few smaller entities (Banyan, 2012). The bulk of Banyan’s revenue stems from one of the big three. Because of the close relationship between Banyan and this insurer, the two other large insurers are reluctant to retain Banyan’s services. This impacts WHCs in two ways. First, longstanding Banyan WHCs remember a similar situation in the
company’s history, where the-then major client cancelled Banyan’s contract resulting in large-scale downsizing, restructuring and layoffs. A potential repetition of this scenario makes individual WHCs unsettled. Second, Banyan is beholden to the current major client, resulting in extreme variations in workload, and subsequent variation in WHCs’ earnings, causing WHC instability, insecurity and anxiety.

The technological environment has also affected Banyan’s WHCs of late. New software offerings have prompted both Banyan and Banyan’s largest client to introduce computerized case-management systems. These IT systems, although an organizational boon in terms of information management, are forcing WHCs into defined workflows, and are clearly highlighting WHC effectiveness in terms of key metrics. WHCs may find these new disciplines and amplified scrutiny of their performance intrusive.

“There are no isolated events in systems. Everything connects with everything else” (Oshry, 2007, “The Invisible Histories Of The Swims We Are In”, para. 1). Accordingly, a shift in the demographic of Canada’s active workforce and the increase of knowledge work in the economy may impact Banyan. A joint research report by Banyan and Medavie Blue Cross Life (Vandenhurk & Alladina, 2011) highlights two demographic shifts in Canadian social systems that will affect Banyan in general, and WHC engagement specifically. The first is the aging workforce, which presents both short-term opportunities and long-term challenges. In the short term, workplace-related injuries and incidents are statistically more likely in the older cohort, resulting in increased business for Banyan and WHCs. However, short-term and long-term disability insurance cover stops at age 65, meaning a significant loss of business for Banyan as Boomers reach this milestone age. Further, with a shift from physical work to knowledge work, rehabilitation emphasis will need to also shift from
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physical health to mental health. This may place some strain on Banyan’s WHCs, the overwhelming majority of whom come from physical-health backgrounds.

National culture is the “sum total of beliefs, rituals, rules, customs, artifacts and institutions that characterize a population” (Ivancevich & Matteson, 2005, p. 38). Issues of national culture, especially in francophone Canada, have an impact on Banyan’s business. Recent research (Fraser, 2011) has shown that cultural factors impact the prevalence of short- and long-term disability claims. In Quebec, individuals are approximately twice as likely to take disability leave as in the ‘Rest of Canada’ (ROC). Most of these claims in Quebec fall into the mental health category. This presents opportunities for increased work for WHCs, but also presents increased needs for mental-health-rehabilitation skills.

Finally, Banyan’s internal systems, specifically communication and management systems, have collided with cultural value systems in Quebec. Banyan has a physical presence in Quebec, and much of the company’s new business growth in 2012 came from that region, but Banyan struggled to align business processes and identities between its traditional operations in ROC and Quebec. Cultural faux pas, miscommunications and misunderstandings created a sometimes adversarial environment between Quebec stakeholders and ROC, resulting in non-compliance with company internal systems by some Quebecois, and strongly impacting engagement in both regions.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the set of circumstances and factors that may influence the issue of WHC engagement at Banyan. Banyan is a highly entrepreneurial, innovative and responsive organization. This culture has led to the adoption of some possibly-unique processes and technologies. The organization structure is mostly virtual, and the workforce is
mostly contracted. Banyan’s dependence on one large client has caused ongoing unpredictability. Competing systems factors potentially create tension amongst WHCs.

In the following chapter, I will conceptualize engagement, drawing on the academic and practitioner literature. In subsequent chapters, I will continue by outlining the inquiry approach used to study WHC engagement at Banyan. This document will conclude by presenting findings, conclusions and recommendations related to the engagement of WHCs at Banyan.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Banyan long ago made the assumption that an engaged workforce would be instrumental in achieving the type of results the organization has planned for its future. Such assertions have been widely promoted by both scholarly literature and popular media. In late 2010, Banyan committed to investing significantly in the engagement of its workforce. Banyan retained me in October 2011 with the specific mandate to maintain and enhance engagement within the organization; the company also invested in social media technologies to assist collaboration in their virtual environment. In this chapter, I turn to the literature to understand whether an engaged workforce really does produce superior performance results. And if so, what specific mechanisms drive the kind of engagement that leads to superior performance.

Models of Engagement

There is little consensus around defining the concept of employee engagement. Kahn (1990) first conceptualized engagement as “the harnessing of organizations’ members’ selves to their work roles. When engaged, employees employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances” (Kahn, 1990, cited in Stringer, C., 2007, p. 17).

A review of the engagement literature (Gruman & Saks, 2011; Jeung, 2011; Ram & Prabhakar, 2011; Shuck, 2011; Shuck & Reio, 2011; Slatten & Mehmetoglu, 2011; Welch, 2011; Wollard & Shuck, 2011) reveals support for the notion that engagement has cognitive, affective and behavioural components. Shuck and Reio (2011) explain cognitive engagement as deriving “from the employee’s appraisal whether his or her work is meaningful and safe
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(...), as well as whether they have adequate resources” (p. 422), emotional engagement as “the emotional bond [the employee] feels towards [their] place of work” and “having a sense of belonging” (p. 423), and behavioural engagement as “discretionary effort [which is] an employee’s willingness to go above minimal job responsibilities” (p. 423).

Many authors have attempted to explain how cognitive, affective and behavioural engagement develops. Kahn (1990, cited in Gruman & Saks, 2011; Jeung, 2011; Ram & Prabakar, 2011; Shuck, 2011; Shuck & Reio, 2011; Slatten & Mehmetoglu, 2011; Welch, 2011; Wollard & Shuck, 2011) suggested that three psychological conditions serve as antecedents of personal engagement. These are psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety and psychological availability. Psychological meaningfulness “is achieved when people feel worthwhile, valuable, and that they matter” (Gruman & Saks, 2011, p. 126). Meaningfulness is said to be influenced by task characteristics, role characteristics and work interactions. Psychological safety is associated with “reliable, predictable social environments that have clear boundaries of acceptable conduct in which people feel safe to risk self-expression” (Kahn, 1990, cited in Gruman & Saks, 2011, p. 126). Psychological safety is impacted by interpersonal relationships, group and intergroup dynamics, management style, and norms. Psychological availability is associated with the “physical, emotional and psychological resources people bring to their role performances” (Gruman & Saks, 2011, p. 216). May, Gilson and Harter (2004, cited in Gruman & Saks, 2011) confirmed that “meaningfulness, safety and availability were significantly related to engagement” (p. 126).

Kahn’s approach identifies conditions that are antecedents of personal engagement, but does not explain the underlying processes that actually create personal engagement. To
understand how engagement develops “requires more than a list of potential antecedents of engagement; rather the underlying mechanism must be identified and explained” (Meyer & Gagné, 2008, cited in Rothman & Rothman, 2010, p. 10). Rothman and Rothman advocate for the application of Ryan and Deci’s (2002, cited in Rothman & Rothman, 2010) self-determination theory to study this mechanism. According to Deci and Ryan (2008), there is a “set of universal psychological needs that must be satisfied for effective functioning and psychological health” (p. 183). These are the needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness. Ng, Ntoumanisanis, Thorgerson-Ntournani, Deci, Ryan, Douda and Williams (2012) define competence as the “feeling of being effective in producing desired outcomes and exercising one’s capacities”, autonomy as the “perception of being the origin of one’s own behaviour and experiencing volition in action”, and relatedness as the “feeling of being respected, understood and cared for by others” (p. 327).

engagement as they relate to self-determination theory.

A further approach to explaining engagement is Bakker and Demerouti’s (2007) Job Demands – Resources (JD-R) model. Job demands refer to “physical, psychological, social or organizational features of a job that require sustained physical and/or psychological effort” (Gruman & Saks, 2010, p. 126). Job resources are “physical, psychological, social or organizational features of a job that help achieve work goals, reduce job demands, and stimulate personal growth, learning and development” (Gruman & Saks, 2011, p. 126).

According to the JD-R model, job demands are related to burnout. Job resources are said to support engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, cited in Gruman & Saks, 2011, p. 127).

Complementing the JD-R model, Ludwig and Frazier (2012) suggest, “behavioural engagement should be the research construct of interest because it is observable and is most directly related to human performance and the bottom line” (p. 77). Supported by Daniels (2009, cited in Ludwig & Frazier, 2012) who argues that “a key variable that drives all organizational outcomes is human behaviour” (p. 77), Ludwig and Frazier (2012) advocate for an Organizational Behaviour Management approach to driving engagement.

Accordingly, engagement is achieved through positive reinforcement of engaged behaviours, availability of necessary job resources, management behaviours, including ensuring task clarity and goal setting, and allowing individuals some degree of autonomy (Ludwig & Frazier, 2012, pp. 77-79).

Engagement is largely measured through surveys (Ram & Prabhaker, 2011). The literature suggests the availability of a variety of engagement surveys in the market, of varying psychometric soundness. Rich et al.’s (2010) Job Engagement Scale, Schaufeli et al.’s (2002) Utrecht Work Engagement Scale and the Gallup Workplace Audit seem the most
psychometrically sound (Jeung, 2011). Many authors however caution that “reliance on one type of methodology for assessing both predictor and outcome constructs has been shown to be a source of systematic error in behavioural research” (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003, cited in Weidert, 2011, p. 2). Further, “the use of a single survey administration assumes employee engagement is stable over time and thus can be captured in one assessment event, rather than a state that varies over time, which requires multiple capture events” (Weidert, 2011, p. 2).

Much agreement exists in the literature around the positive results of high employee engagement (Carter, 2010; Drake, 2012; Gallup, 2009; Roth, 2010; Weidert, 2011; Wildermuth & Wildermuth, 2008). Engaged employees have been shown to have lower rates of absenteeism, turnover, theft of employer’s property, safety incidents, and work quality defects. Companies with engaged workforces enjoy increased productivity and profitability, and improved competitiveness and innovation.

**Organizational antecedents of engagement**

Saks (2006) noted that, though engagement has been widely written about and practised in the business sphere, “there has been surprisingly little academic and empirical research” (p. 601). Gruman and Saks (2010) argue “an integration of the ideas regarding the psychological and resource antecedents of engagement suggests that the performance management process should provide employees with resources that will promote engagement by fostering the psychological conditions that precede it” (p. 127). It therefore seems to be the case that engagement could be enhanced by organizational processes that meet the three needs defined by self-determination theory, namely the needs for relatedness, autonomy, and competence. The meeting of these three needs in turn positively impacts cognitive
engagement, emotional engagement, and ultimately behavioural engagement or discretionary effort.

A review of the literature uncovers a plethora of organizational antecedents to engagement. Wollard and Shuck’s (2011) review of 265 articles identified 42 antecedents to employee engagement, which were grouped into organizational and individual categories. Organizational antecedents have been found to have high predictive validities of engagement through empirical correlations with the fulfillment of Ryan and Deci’s (2002, cited in Rothman & Rothman, 2010) three universal needs, and the creation of Kahn’s (1990) three psychological conditions of engagement. The influence of compensation on engagement concludes this sub-section.

Many studies have identified organizational processes that lead to the satisfaction of the three universal needs competence, relatedness and autonomy. In their study, Rothman and Rothman (2010) found that growth and learning opportunities, autonomy and organizational support are strong predictors of employee engagement, “possibly because these factors satisfy employees’ needs for competence and autonomy” (Rothman & Rothman, 2010, p. 10). Support from supervisors and colleagues “might affect engagement because these factors might satisfy employees’ needs for relatedness” (Rothman & Rothman, 2010, p. 11).

The Towers Watson (2007-2008) Global Workforce Study uncovered the top 10 drivers of engagement as they relate to Ryan and Deci’s (2002, cited in Rothman & Rothman, 2010) three universal needs. According to that study, needs of relatedness were met through senior managers’ sincere interest in workers, an organization’s reputation, responsiveness to customer concerns, and corporate social responsibility initiatives, and senior managers’
actions to ensure the survival of the organization. Needs for autonomy are met by granting employees appropriate levels of decision-making authority, and allowing employees a degree of influence over work, products, services and processes. Needs for competence are met through enabling opportunities for employees to improve their skills and gain new knowledge, and by enabling access to career advancement opportunities.

Gagné and Forest (2008) discuss job design as an “important organizational lever that impacts engagement through work related need satisfaction” (p. 225). Job design, task characteristics, role characteristics and work interactions have been found to influence the psychological condition of meaningfulness (Kahn, 1990, cited in Gruman & Saks, 2011, p. 126). In their study, Ram and Prabhaker (2011) showed that “jobs high on core characteristics provide employees with motivation to be more engaged” and that “job characteristics were positively related to engagement” (p. 50). These findings are consistent with Saks’ (2006) conclusions. Slatten and Mehmetoglu’s (2011) study found support for Schaufeli, Bakker and Van Rhene’s (2002) conclusion that particularly “job autonomy is a predictor of work engagement” (p. 93), aligning with self determination theory.

Numerous studies have shown the correlation of organizational antecedents to the successful creation of conditions of psychological safety, meaningfulness, and availability. May et al. (2004, cited in Gruman & Saks, 2011) found “job enrichment and role fit “were positive predictors of meaningfulness; rewarding co-worker and supervisor relations were positive predictors of safety (…); and resources available was a positive predictor of psychological availability” (p. 126). Job resources … can come from the organization (e.g. pay, career opportunities, and job security), interpersonal and social relations (supervisor and co-worker support, and team climate), the organization of work (e.g. role clarity ad participation in decision making), and from the task itself (e.g. skill variety, task identity, task significance,


The research of Jeung (2011), Ram and Prabhaker (2011), Rothman and Rothman (2010), and Saks (2006) supports the notion that perceived organizational support and perceived supervisor support are positively related to engagement. According to organizational support theory (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986, cited in Ram & Prabhaker, 2011) “employees develop beliefs regarding the extent to which their organization values their contribution and cares for their wellbeing” (p. 50). Saks (2006) describes supportive organizations as “environments that allow members to experiment and try new things and fail without fear of consequence” (p. 605). Saks (2006) and Kahn (1990, cited in Ram and Prabhaker, 2011, p. 50) argue that supportive organizational relationships and supportive management relationships lead to conditions of psychological safety, which in turn is argued to be an antecedent of engagement.

The literature shows mixed results for the effect of compensation and reward systems on engagement. A meta-analysis by Deci, Koestner and Ryan (1999, cited in Gagné & Forest, 2008) established that the “net effect of reward on free choice behavior was moderately negative” (p. 227). In that analysis, tangible rewards were shown as particularly negative influencers. Pink (2009, cited in Giancola, 2010) argues, “financial incentives limit creativity [and] work best for people in routine jobs with few intrinsic rewards” (p. 26) and, citing the Towers Watson Global Workforce Study (2007-2008), points out that none of the top ten identified drivers of engagement are financial. Ram and Prabhaker (2011) concur,
stating “extrinsic rewards are more important in organizations where work is routine and bureaucratic” (p. 50), but, drawing on Social Exchange Theory, found support for their hypothesis that extrinsic and intrinsic rewards were positively related to engagement (p. 54). The key to whether compensation increases or decreases engagement seems to be in the design of the compensation model.

**Individual antecedents of engagement**

Individual antecedents of engagement are defined as “constructs, strategies and conditions (...) applied directly to or by individual employees and (...) believed to be foundational to the development of employee engagement” (Wollard & Shuck, 2011, p. 433). Of all individual antecedents, the perception of doing meaningful work and self-efficacy were identified as the highest predictors of engagement.

Kahn (1990, cited in Shuck & Reio, 2010) conceptualized cognitive engagement as the individual’s perception of the meaning in their work. Meaning can be defined in a variety of ways. According to Fairlie (2011), meaning is related to “issues of life meaning, purpose and coherence” (p. 519). Meaningful work is “realizing one’s life purpose, values and goals through work; having a social impact through work; and feelings of personal accomplishment” (Fairlie, 2011, p. 517). C. Stringer (2007) defines meaningful work as “the value of a work goal in relation to the employee’s own ideals and standards” (p. 15). Meaningful work is related to Maslow’s concept of self-actualization (Stringer, 2007, p.16). Meaningful work leads to an ability to feel passionate about work” (Boverie & Kroth, 2001, cited in Stringer, 2007, p. 16). Whatever the definition, meaning seems related to the concept of purpose and experienced in relation to a set of personal values.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the connection between employees’ perceptions
of doing meaningful work and high engagement. Kahn (1990, cited in Fairlie, 2011) argued that employees are engaged “when their ‘preferred self’ is manifested in the workplace” (p. 510). May, Gilson and Harter (2004, cited in Fairlie, 2011) reported “a correlation of .63 between Kahn’s dimension of meaningfulness and engagement” (p. 510). Fairlie’s (2011) own study found that meaningful work “was the strongest unique predictor of engagement” (p. 516). Both Stringer’s (2007), and Rothman and Rothman’s (2010) studies confirm that meaningfulness is the strongest predictor of engagement.

Self-efficacy is defined as “the belief that one can perform a task or set of behaviours successfully” (Bandura, 1986, cited in Mencl, Tay, Schwoerer & Drasgow, 2012). Self-efficacy therefore is linked to feelings of competence. Self-efficacy is important to organizations because it not only “predict(s), but also follow(s) engagement” (Chaudhary, Rangnekar & Barua, 2012, p. 378). Chaudhary et al. (2012) recommend designing self-efficacy-based interventions to enhance feelings of engagement. Drawing on the work of Bandura (1997), it is said that such strategies could include enabling enactive mastery experiences where employees have the chance to practice their task (Chaudhary et al., 2012, p. 379), and providing training specific to the task (Mencl et al, 2012, p. 378), positive performance feedback, and encouragement (p. 379). Chaudhary et al. (2012) encourage open and transparent communication throughout (p. 379).

Self-efficacy is important “because it is positively related to the adjustment of newcomers to an organization” (Saks, 1995, cited in Weidert, 2011, p. 12). Gruman and Saks (2011) found that “socialization tactics were related to person-job fit perceptions, positive emotions, and self-efficacy, which were all in turn positively related to newcomer engagement” (p. 396). Van Maanen and Schein (1979, cited in Gruman & Saks, 2011) define
socialization tactics as “the ways in which the experiences of individuals in transition from one role to another are structured for them by others in the organization” (p. 386). Van Maanen and Schein (1979, cited in Gruman & Saks) identified six socialization tactics, namely collective versus individual, formal versus informal, sequential versus random, fixed versus variable, serial versus disjunctive, and investiture versus divestiture (pp. 386-387).

Jones (1986, cited in Gruman & Saks, 2011), found that:

… social tactics (investiture and serial) [sic] may be most important because they provide the social cues and facilitation necessary during learning processes. He predicted that content tactics (sequential and fixed) [sic], which have to do with the content of the information given to newcomers, would be the next strongest predictor of adjustment, followed by context socialization tactics (collective and formal) [sic], which concern the way in which organizations provide information to newcomers (p. 387).

Amongst the many personal antecedents of engagement, perceptions of doing meaningful work and an individual’s self-efficacy stand out as the most impactful.

Particularly relevant to Banyan’s current context is how these may apply in a virtual structure.

**Engagement in Virtual Organizations**

Review of the literature makes it clear that most studies of engagement were conducted in bricks-and-mortar organizations. In contrast, Banyan is a virtual organization, where workers are not under one roof but telecommute from home offices across the country. As the number of virtual workers grows, traditional management becomes less relevant (Fuller et al., 2007, cited in Miller 2012, p. 45). Distance can make many recommended management practices “nearly impossible to perform” (Lombardo, 2011, p. 4). Innovative practices need to be leveraged by leaders to drive engagement and enhance organizational effectiveness (Tafti et al, 2007). This section explores particular influences of and considerations for
engagement in virtual environments, placing particular emphasis on the role of communication.

**Influence of telecommuting and remote work on engagement**

Teleworkers are defined as “mobile workers who are involved in any alternative work arrangement performed electronically by one person, or between or among two or more people, away from a central location” (Raiborn & Blutler, 2009, cited in Lombardo, 2011, p. 1). Telecommuting has both advantages and disadvantages. Advantages include improved opportunity at work-life balance, reduced commuting times, less stress, less sick time, increased job satisfaction and better retention (Mulki et al., 2009, cited in Miller, 2012, p. 45). Disadvantages of telecommuting include feelings of isolation, fewer teambuilding opportunities, a sense that opportunities for advancement are limited (Mulki et al., 2009, cited in Miller, 2012, p. 45), and perceived lack of feelings of belonging (Lombardo, 2011).

Telecommuting can have both positive and negative influences on engagement. Christensen argues (2011) that telecommuting creates “invisible employees” (p. 133) who feel isolated from their peers (Gainey, Kelley & Hill, 1999; Lafferty & Whitehouse, 2000). Shekhawat and Markandeya (January 14, 2009) concur, stating telecommuters have little connectivity to the wider organization and may therefore demonstrate a sense of disengagement.

The literature seems however to be overwhelmingly in favour of telecommuting as positive contributor to engagement. Hill, Miller, Weiner and Colihan (1998) found that telecommuting had no detrimental influence on individuals’ levels of morale, and Gainey et al. (1999) concluded that telecommuting improved employee retention, which is an indicator of engagement. A Kenexa Research Institute study, surveying some 10,000 U.S. workers,
reportedly found that telecommuters outscoed office-based employees on dimensions of pride in their organization, confidence in the organization’s future, overall job satisfaction, and satisfaction with senior management (“Research from the Kenexa Research Institute”, August 15, 2007). A pilot project conducted by the City of Ottawa allowing city bylaw-enforcement officials to telecommute resulted in a 17% improvement in productivity, decreased absenteeism and increased engagement (Chianello, June 11, 2011).

**The role of communication in engaging teleworkers**

Mulki et al.’s study (2009, cited in Miller, 2012) identified some key challenges to remote employment. These included overcoming isolation, a lack of face-to-face communication, and the lack of visibility (p. 44). Lombardo (2011) concurs, citing feelings of isolation and lack of sense of belonging as major challenges for remote workers. Jacobs (2008, cited in Miller, 2012) notes a sense of belonging as the “foundation for and generator of trust on which knowledge sharing, collaboration and indirect forms of control are dependent” (p. 45). The remote worker’s challenge, according to Jacobs (2008, cited in Miller, 2012) is to build a sense of belonging while at the same time overcoming remoteness.

Many strategies have been identified to address these issues, although no standard model seems to exist to predict engagement drivers in all situations. The two most prevalent strategies involve cultivating organizational identification among remote workers, and implementing effective communication practices. Jacobs (2008, cited in Miller, 2012) calls for strategies that “emphasize employees’ identifying themselves as part of the group despite their remoteness”, claiming “organizational identification is more important among remote employees” (p. 45). Millward et al. (2007, cited in Miller, 2012) refers to the need to create
feelings of “psychological proximity” (p. 46). Communication plays a critical role in building organizational identification, especially in remote workers (Miller, 2012, p. 46).

Communication remains one of the largest challenges for remote employees (Orner, 2010, p. 1). According to Bindl and Parker (2010, cited in Welch, 2011), “internal communication (…) is an organizational practice with the potential to effectively convey the values of the organization to all employees, and involve them in the with the goals of the organization. Such practices result in more engaged employees” (p. 339). Welch (2011) investigated internal communication as an “organizational condition facilitating engagement” (p. 336). Assuming that leadership is an antecedent to engagement (Pugh & Dietz, 2008, cited in Welch, 2011, p. 338), Welch (2011) promotes Wiley, Kowske and Herman’s (2010) contention that “communication is the ability of leadership to drive engagement” (p. 388).

Citing Carl Holland’s (1940) model of communication, Orner (2010) notes that two of the four categories of persuasive communication are influenced by remote working environments, namely the message and the channel. Orner (2010) argues that message characteristics are diminished, and transfer of complex information is impacted through the use of electronic communication channels such as email (p. 19). Orner (2010) also notes that “remote workers do not have the luxury of obtaining non-verbal cues” (p. 42). Therefore, the author argues that managers should learn to use voice inflection, tone and speed of speech as indicators of emotions to compensate (Orner, 2010, p. 42). The author further argues that managers should also give remote workers their full attention and not multitask while on a conversation (Orner, 2010, p. 42). Miller (2011) argues that, to address issues of remote work effectively, employees and managers should “establish a pattern of communication to clarify expectations, strategize solutions and share best practices” (p. 45). Wilson et al.
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(2008, cited in Orner, 2010) notes that frequency of communication can increase perceptions of proximity. Finally, Maznevski and Chudoba’s study (2000, cited in Lombardo, 2011) found that effective remote teams had a “better fit between the level of decision process and the richness of the communication medium” (p. 45). Specifically, email, fax and phone calls were better at gathering information; longer phone calls and conference calls were better at solving problems; and face to face meetings were best for generating ideas and making comprehensive decisions (Maznevski & Chudoba, 2000, cited in Lombardo, 2011, p. 45).

Staples et al. (1999, cited in Lombardo, 2011) conclude “for remote workers to be effective, they need managers who are good communicators [and] able to use information technology to aid communication” (p. 44). To drive remote work effectiveness, Staples (1999, cited in Lombardo, 2011) argues for training of both managers and remote workers. Managers are to be developed in effective communication, listening and information technology skills. Teleworkers are to be effectively socialized into their roles to enhance remote work self-efficacy.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed the literature not only relevant to engagement in general, but engagement specifically in virtual organizations, such as Banyan. The literature seems overwhelmingly supportive of engagement as a driver of desirable organizational outcomes. However, no standard model seems to exist to predict engagement drivers in all situations. Instead, organizations with highly engaged workers have successfully created an idiosyncratic blend of processes that push engagement in each specific environment. The following chapter will outline the methodology used to investigate which of Banyan’s processes successfully propel engagement in that environment.
CHAPTER THREE: INQUIRY APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the approach taken to study the question, What factors drive engagement in Banyan’s high-performing WHCs?, and the sub-questions:

1. What is the current state of engagement of Banyan’s high-performing WHCs?
2. What current organizational practices do WHCs feel support engagement and should be continued into the future?
3. What new organizational practices do WHCs feel should be implemented at Banyan to support engagement?

Specifically, I discuss and justify the use of the action research (AR) methodology, as well as sampling practices. I also outline how data were analyzed, and ethical considerations addressed.

Inquiry Approach


According to Zuber-Skerritt (2012), AR typically consists of:

… a spiral of cycles (…) with four major phases or moments: planning, acting, observing and reflecting. Planning includes problem and situation analysis and development of a strategic plan; action refers to implementation of the plan; observation includes evaluation of the action by appropriate methods and techniques; and reflection means reflecting on the three previous phases (…) as well as on the
learning outcomes for the individual participants, the team as a whole and the work organization or community where participants are conducting the research. This in turn may lead to identifying a new problem or problems, and hence a new cycle of planning, acting, observing and reflecting (pp. 10-11).

The Study Conduct subsection below outlines how these four phases were completed in this particular inquiry.


First, AR is a participative and collaborative process, where the researcher becomes a “co-worker doing research with and for the benefit of the ‘participants’ concerned with the practical problem” (Zuber-Skerritt, 2012, p. 8) This approach fitted well with my role as leader of strategic projects at Banyan. The purpose of my role at Banyan is to drive positive change within the organization. Specifically, my personal objective is to promote engagement through a variety of initiatives. Dick (2012) states that “strong participation generates commitment to collective action” (p. 41). From this I conclude that I can only be successful at my role of promoting engagement of Banyan’s WHCs sustainably into the long term through the active collaboration of the individuals whom the organization intends to engage.

Second, AR is used to generate practical approaches to a specific issue. The purpose is to “lead to practical immediate improvement during and after the research process” (Zuber-Skerritt, 2012, p. 8). At the time of this inquiry, Banyan had some specific business requirements. These included the need to start achieving ambitious long-term growth and diversification targets, the need to ensure that WHCs cope with the unpredicted increased
workload during this growth year, and the need to retain key individuals for both cost-reduction and capacity-building reasons. The findings and recommendations of this study were designed to support these business imperatives, and highlight possible strategies to promote engagement-led growth, innovation and diversification.

Third, AR is appropriate when the situation is complex or turbulent. At such times, according to Dick (2012), “resilience becomes more important, permitting more effective local adjustment to the demands of the moment” (p. 40). AR, and its derivative, action learning, “contribute to all four of the dimensions of resilience: the foresight to anticipate and prepare for future troubles; the agility to respond quickly to the unexpected; the robustness to sustain damage without collapse; and the ability to recover quickly and effectively if collapse does occur” (Dick, 2012, p. 41). Banyan’s recent history bears witness to turbulence and complexity. Because of contextual and systems factors discussed in Chapter One, work volumes are unpredictable and can fluctuate in short time-frames from extremely low to extremely high, and vice versa. The unexpected 2012 growth year was welcomed, but Banyan’s leadership anticipates the pendulum to swing in the other direction in 2013. Throughout this instability, WHCs continue to be expected to adapt to changing volumes while maintaining exceptionally high levels of customer service. Use of the AR approach was anticipated to start a process of building resilience in the population at Banyan mostly impacted by the turbulence.

Finally, according to E.T. Stringer (2007), effective AR is “phenomenological (focusing of people’s actual lived experience and/or reality), interpretive (focusing on their interpretations of acts and activities), and hermeneutic (incorporating the meaning people make of events in their lives)” (p. 20). Using AR to study engagement of high-performing
WHCs at Banyan would allow us to understand WHCs’ subjective interpretations of their experiences at Banyan. It was hoped to leverage this understanding for future efforts in recruitment, professional development and job design.

To inform the tone of this inquiry, I drew on an appreciative stance derived from Cooperrider and Whitney’s (2000) Appreciative Inquiry (AI). “AI is about the coevolutionary search for the best in people [and] their organizations” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000, p. 3). My experience of Banyan’s culture has been exceptionally positive. Yet individuals at Banyan did not seem to fully appreciate their own positive stories. I therefore believed such framing to be ideally suited to Banyan by bringing positive potential to the surface and leveraging it for engagement. Specifically how the inquiry was conducted will be covered in the “Study Conduct” section below.

**Participants**

The participants for this inquiry were those WHCs displaying discretionary effort, or behaviour engagement, namely the highest-performing WHCs. These individuals were specifically chosen, to study and understand engagement in this strategic segment of Banyan’s workforce. “Interpretivist researchers tend to select each of their cases purposefully. The logic and power of purposeful sampling … [sic] leads to selecting information-rich cases for study in depth” (Patton, 2002, cited in Glesne, 2011, p. 44). I used homogenous sampling, which is a process that selects “all similar cases in order to describe some sub-group in depth” (Clark, 1999, cited in Glesne, 2011, p. 45).

Banyan’s top-performing WHCs are those with the highest absorption of new referrals, the fastest turnaround times, the highest recovery rates, and the highest quality-assurance scores. The approach I took to identify the top-performing WHCs was that a WHC should be
in the top 15% in at least three of these four criteria of top performance. Of Banyan’s total WHC complement of over 150 individuals, I identified 31 top performers.

To ensure representativeness, all 31 of these high-performing WHCs were invited to participate in both the survey and the focus groups. Invitations, in the form included as Appendix A, were sent via email; they included a link to an electronic consent form housed in Survey Monkey, included as Appendix B, which allowed individuals to accept or decline the invitation. I experienced a 45% response rate, all of whom accepted, yielding a final sample size of 14 individuals.

The selection process did not require deception, nor did it involve “undue influence”, “conflict of interest”, or “vulnerable populations” (Rowe & Agger-Gupta, 2008, pp. 4-6). To ensure informed consent, I used a template provided by RRU, included as Appendix E. I was aware that participants were not employees of Banyan; rather, they were contractors. To maximize the odds of a high response and consent rate, my sponsor agreed to pay participants their usual hourly billing rate.

**Inquiry Team**

I created inquiry teams to assist at three separate stages of this research inquiry. The invitation to participate in the inquiry team is included as Appendix G. To assist in testing survey and focus group questions I drew on members of the RRU Master of Arts in Leadership 2012/13 cohort. I chose three specific individuals because of our prior collaborations and my geographical proximity these individuals. I enlisted the collaboration of a Quebec manager, Jessica Boutin, to assist with translation in the focus group with francophone respondents. In the post-inquiry feedback and planning phase, I engaged with my sponsor, the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of Banyan, as well as with the Vice
President (VP) of Rehabilitation Solutions and the VP of Claims Support Services in Banyan. These two VPs were particularly relevant as they are both deeply involved with the community represented by the sample group. The VPs however have at all times been unaware of the identity of the participants.

**Inquiry Methods**

Inquiry methods used for this study consisted of a combination of a survey and two separate, but identically framed, focus groups. Questions for each method underwent cycles of testing and refinement before being deployed for the actual inquiry.

**Data collection tools**

**Online survey questionnaire**

Organizational surveys are defined as “a number of methods of systematically gathering data from members in the organization” (Kraut, 1996, cited in Burke et al., 2009, p. 301). Surveys can include questionnaires, and personal and group interviews. Survey feedback “gives objective data about the system’s functioning to the system members so that they can change or improve selected aspects of the system” (French & Bell, 1990, p. 171).

Many reasons exist for using surveys in AR (Nadler, 1977, cited in Burke et al., 2009; Schein, 2010; Weisbord, 2004). These are to pinpoint areas of concern, observe long-term trends, monitor program impact, provide input for future decisions, add a communication channel, perform organizational behaviour research, assist organizational change and improvement, and provide symbolic communication.

The use of a survey was appropriate at Banyan for three reasons. First, Banyan is a metrics-driven organization; data are considered more credible when derived from a metrics-based medium. Second, building engagement at Banyan is a long-term process of measuring,
analyzing, acting and refining. Surveys are ideal for determining a benchmark on an issue and measuring impacts of interventions over time (Nadler, 1977, cited in Burke, 2009, pp. 303-307). Third, “a survey may provide a useful tool for extending the data collection process to a broader range of participants” (E.T. Stringer, 2007, p. 79). Banyan’s engagement strategy will ultimately extend to include engagement of all employee groups.

Schein (2010) raises concerns about surveys. These include employers not knowing what to ask, employees not being motivated to be honest, employees misunderstanding questions or interpreting them differently, resulting data being accurate but superficial, the sample being unrepresentative, results not revealing interaction or patterning with the total system, and the unknown impact that taking the survey has on participants. This latter point is echoed by Kraut (1996, cited in Burke et al., 2009, p. 300), when he refers to surveys as a potential “hand grenade”. To mitigate these issues, I tested the survey in my Inquiry Team and added one further data-gathering method, namely the focus groups. The final survey questionnaire deployed for this inquiry is included as Appendix D.

Schein (2010) questions a survey’s ability to “reach deeper levels of shared tacit assumptions that may only reveal themselves in actual interactions” (p. 175). He maintains that uncovering these assumptions “requires the addition of individual or group interviews” (Schein, 2010, p. 188). Weisbord (2004) concurs, arguing that “face-to-face discussions, not surveys, are the key to constructive change” (p. 208). For this reason, I decided to include focus groups in the inquiry.

**Focus groups**

Supported by the information gained through the survey, group interviews, also called focus groups (Glesne, 2011, p. 130; Stringer, 2007, p. 73), were the second step in my data-
gathering process. Focus group questions used for this inquiry are included as Appendix F. “Focus group” is the “general term given to a research interview conducted with a group” (Terreblanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 388). Focus groups “are particularly useful in action and evaluation research where participants can express multiple perspectives on a similar experience” (Glesne, 2011, p. 130). Comparing group interviews to individual interviews, Schein (2010) promotes the group interview by claiming them to be “faster and more valid because an interactive process gets to shared assumptions more quickly” (p. 315). “Whereas in interviewing an individual we develop an understanding of subjective experience, when we work with groups we can gain access to intersubjective experience” (Terreblanche & Durrheim, 2004, p. 388). Tapping into this “intersubjective experience” allowed me to uncover common stories of high engagement at Banyan and common visions for an engaged environment, as well as differences.

**Study conduct**

In line with the four major phases of AR, this study encompassed four distinct stages. The planning stage involved the defining of the research question, and the logistical planning of the research. The action stage was the inquiry itself. The observing stage involved receiving feedback from both the survey deployment and focus groups. The final stage, reflection, encompassed post-inquiry feedback, and building a connection to post-inquiry strategy formulation and implementation.

The planning stage included ongoing dialogue between myself, my sponsor, the inquiry team, and some key internal stakeholders at Banyan to uncover and define the research question. Planning also included my immersion in company internal documentation to understand and appreciate the context and systems implications of the inquiry issue. These
activities culminated in my writing the thesis proposal for submission to RRU. The thesis proposal received approval from my thesis supervisor, an external supervisor, my sponsor, and the RRU ethics review committee. Once these approvals were secured, the Inquiry Team was officially invited and confirmed. At that point, creating and testing of survey and focus group questions proceeded, and questions were refined for use in the inquiry. Concurrently, the subject of independent contractor payment for time spent participating was concluded with the COO.

The action stage encompassed the inquiry itself. I collected all data in September 2012. All of Banyan’s 31 top-performing WHCs were invited to participate. Invitations, in the form of Appendix A, were sent via email. Acceptances and declines of invitations were received via Survey Monkey, as per Appendix B. The survey was deployed via the Survey Monkey platform (Appendix D). Informed consent was received in the form of a positive response to the first survey question, as per Appendix C. After the survey responses were collected, I undertook a period of review, resulting in the refinement of the focus group’s questions. This was in line with Glesne’s (2011) assertion that “data analysis done simultaneously with data collection enables you to focus and shape the study as it proceeds” (p. 188). The final step in the data collection process was interviewing the respondents in two focus groups. The final set of questions is included as Appendix F. The same sample group of 14 top-performing WHCs was invited to participate. Invitations were sent and consents received via email (Appendix E). I received no further refusals, and interviewed respondents in two focus groups of seven individuals each.

Because of the geographical dispersion of the participants, I conducted the focus groups via my Banyan Verge conference line. To ensure authenticity, at regular intervals during the
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focus groups I orally summarized what I had understood the participants to say and then repeated this to participants for their approval. With participants’ consent, I recorded the focus groups’ proceedings on my iPhone. After completion of the focus-group interviews, I personally reduced to writing in an Excel document the recorded interviews of both focus groups. I transcribed the information verbatim, not correcting for grammar.

The observation phase involved data analysis. Once all data were collected, they were transcribed and analyzed as outlined in the Data Analysis section below. The observation stage was completed by November 2012, and culminated in the articulation of eight findings, discussed in Chapter Four below.

The reflection stage was completed during December 2012 and January 2013. In this phase, I created draft conclusions and recommendations, which were presented to the COO and the two VPs on January 22, 2013, for feedback and discussion. I also completed all relevant chapters of the thesis document. During this time, I undertook numerous loops of refinement of these chapters.

Once the thesis has been formally approved by RRU, I plan to present the findings and recommendations to the entire Banyan leadership and research participants. Because this inquiry falls into a larger strategic process at Banyan, these presentations will elicit feedback to inform the next loop in creating an engagement strategy at Banyan.

**Data analysis**

“Data analysis involves organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can figure out what you have learned and make sense of what you have experienced” (Glesne, 2011, p. 184). To make sense of the information I had gathered, I used “thematic analysis” (Glesne, 2011, p. 187), or “theme identification” (Bernard & Ryan, 2003, p. 87).
Bernard and Ryan (2003, p. 87) define themes as “abstract, often fuzzy constructs, which investigators identify before, during and after data collection”. According to Bernard and Ryan (2003, p. 85), “Theme identification is one of the most fundamental tasks of qualitative research”. In this process, “the researcher focuses analytical techniques on searching through the data for themes and patterns” (Glesne, 2011, p.187).

Bernard and Ryan (2003, p. 87) say that texts are the primary sources of themes. Because the transcriptions of my data collection qualified as text, I drew on Bernard and Ryan’s (2003) suggested approaches to discovering themes. These included identifying word repetitions, indigenous categories, keywords-in-context, searching for missing information, metaphors and analogies, transitions, and connectors. Text analysis concluded at “theoretical saturation (…), [which is] the point at which no new themes are being identified” (Bernard & Ryan, 2003, p. 101).

Thematic analysis allowed me to isolate important events and processes at Banyan as they related to the issue of WHC engagement. I created a variety of separately tabbed (labeled) pages in in the Excel spreadsheet, each to reflect an emergent theme identified in the transcription of the focus-group interviews. I then copied the relevant parts of the transcribed information and pasted them into the applicable tabs. Initial analysis identified 23 discrete themes. Final analysis, after numerous loops of refinement, yielded the eight main themes reflected in Chapter 4 below.

Once thematic analysis was complete, I completed a second phase of analysis outlined by E.T. Stringer as “analyzing key experiences” (E.T. Stringer, 2007, p. 103). In this phase, focus was placed on “events that seem to have a marked impact on the experience of major stakeholders” (E.T. Stringer, 2007, p. 103). Denzin (1989, cited in E.T. Stringer, 2007) refers
to these as “turning point experiences (…), which may appear as moments of crisis, triumph, anger, confrontation, love, warmth or despair that have a lasting impact on people” (p. 103). By unpacking these experiences, I gained a deeper understanding of the sources of engagement at Banyan, which informed my view of future strategy.

Analysis of engagement survey data focused on some specific issues. Of particular interest was identifying the current level of engagement in the sample group with reference to defined factors including respondents’ tenure and location. The leadership team was concerned about levels of engagement in Quebec in particular. The survey data were intended to illuminate whether this concern was justified. The survey data were also expected to show whether tenure at Banyan influenced levels of engagement in the sample group. Finally, it was hoped that the survey data might highlight the influences on engagement, if any, of telecommuting and contracting.

Ethical Issues

In Canada, research involving human subjects is guided by the TriCouncil Policy Statement for Ethical Conduct involving Humans (TCPS, 2010). At RRU, such research is governed by the Royal Roads University Research Ethics Policy (RRU REP, 2010).

Respect for persons

The TCPS (2010) defines “respecting autonomy [as] giving due deference to a person’s judgment and ensuring that the person is free to choose without interference” (p. 8). An important mechanism for respecting participants’ autonomy in research is “the requirement to seek their free, informed and ongoing consent” (p. 9). This aligns with the RRU REP (2010) concept of avoiding “undue influence”, and is particularly relevant in the recruitment process.
None of the project participants in this study reported directly to the project sponsor or to me. None of the participants fell into a “vulnerable” category (RRU REP, 2010). Participants were fully informed about the nature and intent of research through informed consent forms and ongoing communication. I did not provide incentives, and independent contractors were paid their usual hourly fee for their participation.

**Respect for Welfare**

Concern for welfare means that researchers “should attempt to achieve the most favorable balance of risk and potential benefit” (TCPS, 2010, p. 10). WHCs were not exposed to risk as a result of participating in this study. Even though WHCs have not yet benefitted from participating in this study, they will ultimately gain from renewed efforts on Banyan’s part to promote a more engaged work environment.

In compliance with all regulations, participation and information received from participants were kept confidential. Where this was not possible in the focus groups, this was communicated transparently, and individuals had the choice to withdraw.

**Justice**

Justice refers to the obligation to treat people fairly and equitably. Fairness entails treating all people with equal respect and concern. Equity requires distributing the benefits and burdens of research participation in such a way that no segment of the population is unduly burdened by the harms of research or denied the benefits of the knowledge generated from it (TCPS, 2010, pp. 10-11).

Individuals not invited to participate in this study may have felt disadvantaged. However, no reports or communications of perceived unfair treatment have been received to date. Further, lessons from this inquiry will ultimately inform engagement strategy in all spheres of the Banyan community so that everybody can benefit equally from these initiatives.
Conflict of interest

The RRU Ethics Framework Statement (RRU EFS, 2008) discusses two scenarios for conflict of interests. A conflict of interests may occur where “the interests of the participants vary from the interests of the organization”, or where “a learner/researcher invites research participation from an employee with whom the researcher has a direct reporting or supervising relationship” (RRU EFS, 2008, p. 4).

On both counts, I was not in a position of conflict. First, my official and expressed agenda at Banyan remains to create a healthy work environment in which everybody can feel engaged. My thesis research continues to inform future efforts in this arena. I posit that the interests of the organization in sponsoring this thesis project and those of the participants were aligned. Second, none of the research participants had a reporting relationship to me. Many of the participants did not know me. There was no potential for harm in this arrangement.

The RRU Request for Ethical Review for Research Involving Humans (2011, p. 2) document identifies a potential conflict of interests stemming from the researcher and research participants belonging to the same employee group. No conflict of interests existed in this regard. I was an employee under the corporate head-office structure. The research participants were independent contractors within the divisional (branch) structures. We had no history of previous interaction or formal collaboration.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I outlined the approach I adopted in conducting this inquiry. Specifically, I explained why AR was particularly suited to studying the issue of WHC engagement at Banyan, and why I chose the particular sampling and data-collection tools
selected. I also outlined how the AR was conducted and the ethical considerations that supported the research. In the following chapters, I will discuss the findings that emerged from this inquiry, my interpretation of those findings and some recommendations for ongoing engagement initiatives within Banyan.
CHAPTER FOUR: ACTION INQUIRY PROJECT RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Banyan predicted some time ago that an engaged workforce is more likely to produce the types of results the organization has targeted for the next five-year period. The literature supports this assumption. The literature also states that there is no one best way of creating engagement. Instead, organizations will need to establish which processes and dynamics will particularly propel engagement in their specific environment. In this chapter, I describe the specific characteristics, processes and dynamics that exist at Banyan and impact engagement. I outline the findings from the inquiry, and discuss the conclusions I reached based on these. Conclusions are further embedded in the literature as cited in Chapter 2.

Study Findings

The findings highlighted in this section reflect the experiences and opinions of high-performing WHCs at Banyan, gathered through the engagement survey (S) and two identically structured focus groups (FG). Overall, the findings confirm the researcher’s own positive sense of working at Banyan. The findings uncover some of the processes and dynamics particular to Banyan that potentially drive cognitive, affective and behavioral engagement in the sample community. The eight most noteworthy findings and themes from the survey and two focus groups were:

1. High overall engagement scores in the sample group;
2. A relationship between engagement survey scores and tenure;
3. A relationship between engagement survey scores and geographical location;
4. A relationship between engagement survey scores and a perceived lack of career opportunities;
5. Working from home as a positive influence on WHC engagement;
6. The impact of manager support;
7. The ability to do meaningful work as a key contributor to engagement;

8. Inconsistencies between WHCs’ perceptions of what currently drives their engagement and of what could improve their engagement in future.

Each finding will be discussed in depth, and supported by evidence from the survey, and direct quotes from both the survey’s open-ended question responses and focus groups.

**Finding 1: High overall engagement scores in the sample group**

Besides four open-ended questions, the online engagement survey contained 13 statements that were rated on a four-point scale from extremely positive to extremely negative. Fourteen completed response sets were received. The total potential score for the survey, if every response-set had scored maximum points, was 728, which is 13 questions multiplied by a maximum of four points per question multiplied by 14 response sets. A score of higher than 546 indicated overall positive feelings of engagement; a score of less than 364 was considered negative. The overall score for all response sets combined came to 624 out of 728, or 86%.

The highest-scoring item at 98% was “I feel working from home positively affects my feelings of work satisfaction”. The lowest-scoring item at 79% was “I have access to professional growth opportunities as a result of excelling at my work”. The scores for the remaining 11 items were distributed between 80% and 88%, as reflected in Table 1 below.

Besides scoring high scores in the survey, WHCs expressed highly positive sentiments in the focus groups as well. Out of all statements made in the focus groups, only one statement was negative, and even that was qualified. That individual mentioned “I actually don't feel I have good support from my current manager. But this is the first time; all previous managers have been very supportive” (FG).
Table 1. *Engagement survey summary scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total percentage score</th>
<th>Total Points out of 56</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel informed of issues relevant to my work at Banyan</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have many opportunities for meaningful dialogue with other stakeholders at Banyan</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that my work contributes to Banyan's strategic objectives</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel recognized for my individual contribution</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel my professional aspirations are aligned with Banyan's strategic objectives</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel my skills are perfectly matched to my work</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like a part of the Banyan team</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a strong relationship with my manager</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have access to developmental activities that support my achievement at work</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have access to professional growth opportunities as a result of excelling at my work</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can do my best work every day at Banyan</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel working from home positively affects my feelings of work satisfaction</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a contractor increases my feelings of commitment to Banyan</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average over 13 Questions and 14 Response Sets</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Positive statements included: “I love this job” (FG); “Compared to other companies I have worked with, there is such a positive feel here” (FG); “I left my last job because I wasn’t empowered; here I can make a difference” (FG). One survey respondent put it thus, “Probably the highest point was when I got hired. It was like a dream come true (….) I feel lucky to work for this organization” (S).
Finding 2: Relationship between engagement scores and tenure

Survey respondents were asked to classify their tenure with Banyan into less than six months, six to 12 months, 13 to 24 months, or more than 24 months. No respondents fell into the less-than-six-months group, five respondents had worked with Banyan for between six and 12 months, four respondents between 13 and 24 months, and five over 24 months.

When applying the tenure filter to the survey data, as shown in Table 2 below, it became clear that individuals with the shorter tenure, specifically tenure of less than 12 months, had much lower survey scores than those of 13 months and over. Respondents reporting less than 12 months tenure with Banyan reflected an overall engagement score of 77%, which was nine percentage points under the average score of 86%. Respondents reporting tenure of 13 months or over showed 89% for the 13-to-24 month group, and 92% for the longer-than-24-months group. These scores were on average five percentage points higher than the engagement score for the survey, and 14 percentage points higher than the less-than-12-months group.

The shorter-tenure (less than 12 months) group scored lower than the longer-tenure groups (12 to 24 months, and over 24 months) on all but one survey statement. Responding to the statement “I feel my skills are perfectly matched to my work”, shorter-tenure WHCs reported higher agreement than longer-tenure WHCs, though the difference is small.

Considerable differences of more than 22 percentage points in survey scores existed between the less-than-12-months group and the over-12 months groups on the statements: “I feel informed of issues relevant to my work at Banyan”; “I have many opportunities for meaningful dialogue with other stakeholders at Banyan”; “I have access to professional growth opportunities as a result of excelling at my work”; and “I can do my best work every
day at Banyan”.

Table 2. Engagement survey scores filtered by tenure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall %</th>
<th>6-12 months</th>
<th>13-24 months</th>
<th>&gt;24 months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel informed of issues relevant to my work at Banyan</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have many opportunities for meaningful dialogue with other stakeholders at Banyan</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that my work contributes to Banyan's strategic objectives</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel recognized for my individual contribution</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel my professional aspirations are aligned with Banyan's strategic objectives</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel my skills are perfectly matched to my work</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like a part of the Banyan team</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a strong relationship with my manager</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have access to developmental activities that support my achievement at work</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have access to professional growth opportunities as a result of excelling at my work</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can do my best work every day at Banyan</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel working from home positively affects my feelings of work satisfaction</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a contractor increases my feelings of commitment to Banyan</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These data are consistent with Banyan’s official exit statistics (Moore C., 2011a). The exit data for 2012 showed 61% of all exits for the year occurring in the first 12 months of tenure. Statistics for 2011 showed 51% of exits occurring within the first 12 months of tenure. All other exits occurred in the following 10 years.

Finding 3: Relationship between engagement scores and geographical location

Survey respondents were requested to specify the physical location from which they work for Banyan. Three respondents were located in British Columbia, five in Ontario, and
Engaging Banyan’s High Performing Consultants

three in Quebec. Alberta, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland had one respondent each.

The highest survey scores were recorded in British Columbia at 95%, the lowest in Ontario at 76%. This seems consistent with official Banyan exit statistics. In 2012, 35% of all exits occurred in Ontario compared to only 9% in British Columbia; in 2011, 45% of exits occurred in Ontario and 22% in British Columbia. However, factoring in that there are 62% more WHCs in Ontario than British Columbia, and that response numbers to the survey were small, these findings were less distinctive.

Finding 4: Relationship between engagement scores and a perceived lack of career opportunities

The lowest-scoring item on the survey was the response to the statement “I have access to professional growth opportunities as a result of excelling at my work”. Respondents scored this item at 79%, seven percentage points below the average of 86%. This was also the lowest scoring item in the less-than-12-months-tenure sub-category of participants.

Only two of 14 participants referred, in the survey, to promotion to a position of higher responsibility as a high point in their career. One WHC related that, “Within a matter of a couple months working for Banyan, I was contracted to the White Label Team. This was a wonderful experience to feel acknowledged for the hard work I was putting forward” (S). The second response stated, “When I was asked to be a part of the White Label team because of my skills and what I could bring to the position, it was very rewarding for me” (S).

A similar theme emerged when analyzing data from Banyan’s exit interviews (Banyan Exit Interview Tracking Report, 2012). Banyan initiated an exit-interview process only recently. Just six exit interviews had been conducted at date of writing. Prior to these interviews, the primary reason for a WHC’s leaving was provided by the manager. Through
exit interviews, Banyan can ascertain reasons for leaving directly from the WHC. Of the six exits, four fell into the less-than-12-months-tenure category; the other two fell into the 12-18 months category. Of the six exits, five left Banyan for better career opportunities elsewhere. All five were categorized as high performers, regrettable exits, and definite re-hires.

**Finding 5: Working from home as influence on WHC engagement**

The highest positive score on the survey related to the item, “I feel working from home positively affects my work motivation”. This item consistently scored the highest across all sample sub-groups.

In the focus groups, WHCs were requested to elaborate why working from home was such an important aspect of WHCs’ positive feelings. Themes emerged around balance between work and family commitments, schedule flexibility, avoidance of perceived negative aspects of working in an office, and feelings of being trusted by the organization.

Six of the 14 respondents commented that working from home was important to them because it allowed them to spend time with family. One respondent said, “I can be more present with my children; go to school with them” (FG). Another stated, “My mother is 88 years old and lives far away; I can talk to her any time as long as I want and as long as she wants me” (FG). A further WHC explained, “My husband travels abroad lots of the time. I have two children who have to be brought to practices and games. I wouldn’t be able to do that with a regular job” (FG).

Seven out of 14 respondents spoke of the benefit of a flexible schedule when working from home. One WHC explained, “I’m a morning person. I can just roll over to my computer and start working between two and five AM. The whole world is quiet. You can’t do that in an office” (FG). Another WHC agreed, stating, “I can set my hours to my most
productive time” (FG). A final comment concluded, “I can go shopping outside of rush hour, or take a break or go for a walk. The flexibility is key” (FG).

Avoiding perceived unpleasantness and inconveniences that occur from working in an office was another major theme put forward by ten respondents. The following statements reflect that theme: “In an office, it is really easy to get caught up in office politics, and that wastes a lot of time” (FG); “At home, I can work in my pajamas” (FG); “I can avoid rush hours, which is key for me” (FG); “Because I smoke it’s really important for me so that I can smoke when I want and I don’t bother anyone” (FG); “An office environment is more social and you don’t get your work done” (FG); “I never fit into the social scene” (FG).

Finally, five respondents commented how working from home made them feel trusted by Banyan, and that this arrangement promoted their feelings of empowerment and intrinsic motivation. They felt that an office environment would necessarily involve being managed more closely, which in turn would decrease motivation. Statements to support this theme included: “I feel Banyan has confidence in me; that’s how I function best: liberty and autonomy. The company respects my capabilities as a professional” (FG); and “[Working from home] taps into your intrinsic motivation: makes it obvious you’re doing the work because you want to” (FG).

The concept of working from home was sometimes treated by respondents as meaning the same as working as an independent contractor. Evidence of this perception stems from statements in focus groups such as, “Coming from Europe, I am used to 8 weeks of vacation; currently I can take vacation whenever I want to” (FG), in response to the work-from-home question. Responding to the same question, other WHCs said, “You are responsible for all the things you do, which is different when you work for others” (FG). These responses are
similar to responses to the question of why being a contractor is important. In that instance, responses included: “I like that I can manage my own workload” (FG); “I work harder in winter and go on holiday in summer” (FG).

**Finding 6: Impact of manager support**

Although the statement on the survey “I have a strong relationship with my manager” scored a below-average 82%, feedback received from the survey’s open-ended questions pointed to the importance of solid relationships between WHCs and their managers at Banyan. The words “support” and “supportive” and “supported” occurred 16 times on the survey in relation to the manager. Examples of such statements include: “I really appreciate the support and contact with my manager. He is always available when I need to brainstorm a challenging file” (S); “[I value] the strong management team who are supportive and encouraging. Great mentors!!” (S); “The support I receive from these leaders is very valuable to me and contributes to my success as a WHC” (S). Another WHC puts it like this: “I find the manager has a pivotal role, more so than in other [organizations], as they are the primary professional contact in what can be an isolated position” (S).

The manager is the WHCs’ primary and often only point of contact with Banyan. The manager is the source of information and performance feedback. Therefore, it could be argued that the relatively low score on the statement, “I have a strong relationship with my manager” can be offset by much higher scores in the statements, “I feel informed of issues relevant to my work at Banyan”; “I have many opportunities for meaningful dialogue with stakeholders at Banyan”; “I feel that my work contributes to Banyan’s strategic objectives”; and “I feel recognized for my individual contribution at Banyan”. Only one individual in the survey, and one in a focus group, claimed to feel inadequately supported by their current
manager. This same individual however referenced high feelings of support when working under other managers at Banyan.

Based on the prevalence of this theme in the survey, I included a follow-up question in the focus groups. When asked to elaborate what support meant to them, WHCs referred to the availability of the manager, sharing of information and of performance feedback, encouragement, and feelings of trust. WHCs explained: “[My manager] encourages me to keep on going, [even when] I feel less motivated”; “I have another set of eyes on [my files]” (FG); “[My manager] trusts my decisions, listens to my needs, is available when I need help on files” (FG); “I feel [support] is always there. My manager is always available. This helps with the job because the job can be stressful” (FG); and “Even if you’re not correct in your rehab plan, they’ll find out why you chose the plan you chose. Provided you can show just cause, they’ll allow it” (FG).

A further theme emerged during this discussion. WHCs felt their managers were successfully achieving a delicate balance between being supportive and available, yet allowing them enough freedom and autonomy to complete their tasks. This is reflected in statements such as, “[I have] lots of freedom; not micro-managing my work. [I have] a lot of trust from them; I ask them for help if I need them” (FG); “I love the fact I’m not being micro-managed. I have the support when I need it. I am trusted to make a decision. I have the freedom” (FG).

**Finding 7: The ability to do meaningful work as a key contributor to WHCs’ feelings of engagement**

When responding to the survey question to describe a high point in their association with Banyan, nine out of 14 WHCs cited an example of successfully returning an ill or
injured person back to health and work. Judging from the text of responses, the sample of WHCs found their work meaningful and inherently gratifying.

One excerpt typified the gist of many others: “I had a participant with chronic back pain and overall lack of self-esteem. I was able to identify that she needed a chronic pain program and ergo therapy. With these two programs (…) she was able to gain confidence in herself and be happy to return to work with no pain. Banyan was able to change her perspective about health [and] I tried to empower her to have control of her health” (S).

Having achieved a successful return to work for claimants, many WHCs claimed to experience “positive feelings that keep me energized to other challenges as they come up” (S), feelings of “satisfaction” (S), of being “energized and successful when I had the chance to change someone’s life in better [sic]” (S). Responses from the focus groups followed this theme. When asked what motivated WHCs to do their best work, WHCs answered: “You can see people evolve and get back to work” (FG); “It is nice to see [claimants] involved and change their way of thinking and get back to work and get back into society and be a productive person and be happy” (FG); “[My work] is like going back to my roots as a nurse: what I love most is being able to help” (FG).

**Finding 8: Inconsistencies between WHCs’ perceptions of what currently drives their engagement and of what could improve their engagement in future**

When asked what more Banyan could do to promote feelings of engagement, WHCs clearly felt that everything done currently should be continued into the future. When pressed to think of specific issues that could be added, responses focused on the need for increased security, social contact, and efficiencies. Some of these are inconsistent with prior responses.

When combining the data from the survey and the focus groups, the words “autonomy”
and “independence” occurred 24 times. “Flexibility” was mentioned 16 times. Working from home achieved the highest survey score of 98% and was mentioned six times in open-ended survey questions in relation to positive engagement. Being an independent contractor received a survey score of 88% and was mentioned positively seven times in open-ended survey responses. The need for work security was mentioned only twice in the survey and focus groups combined.

When asked what else Banyan could do to enhance their engagement, five WHCs specifically requested a benefit program. One person requested more consistent workflow from Banyan. This need for increased security seemed inconsistent with the prominent theme of autonomy and independence as a primary generator of engagement.

Ten focus group responses dealing with the importance of working from home focused on the happy avoidance of social aspects of office life. Yet five WHCs, responding to what more Banyan could do, requested more in-person interactions between them and their managers, as well as invitations to corporate events. When asked to explain the contradiction, one WHC elaborated, “I don't want to go to a Christmas party: that’s one of the nice things about being independent; but if there’s no expectation, I’d be happy to go” (FG). Another commented “There is a difference between socializing day-to-day on the job when you should be working versus setting aside a specific time for networking” (FG).

The final theme informing what more Banyan could do for WHCs seemed to focus less on enhancing feelings of engagement, and more on making WHCs more effective at their work. Examples suggested cited included: Banyan’s providing better technology tools; easier access to useful information and resources; and more inter-manager consistency.
Study Conclusions

Based on the study findings, and supported by relevant literature, I have drawn the following conclusions about the engagement of Banyan’s top-performing WHCs:

1. Banyan is successfully creating the conditions for high engagement;
2. Banyan is not engaging new WHCs effectively; and
3. Compensation and resources might drive engagement.

Each of these will be considered individually in the sections below, and discussed in relation to the three inquiry sub-questions.

**Conclusion 1: Banyan is successfully creating the conditions for high engagement**

In response the first sub-question of this inquiry “What is the current state of engagement of Banyan’s high-performing WHCs?”, I conclude that the current state of engagement in this community is high. As mentioned, the literature suggests that when it comes to engagement, “antecedents that drive the development of engagement at the organizational level revolve around basic employee/human needs” (Wollard & Shuck, 2011, p. 435). Also indicated by the literature, “different organizations will come to create an employee engagement culture in different ways, using different strategies and methods that are unique to the organization” (Wollard & Shuck, 2011, pp. 436-437). The overall findings from this research study suggested that Banyan manifests a unique blend of organizational practices that successfully promote an engaged environment.

The second sub-question of this inquiry states, “What current organizational practices do WHCs feel support engagement and should be continued into the future?”. The research findings of this inquiry pointed to a degree of alignment with Kahn’s (1990) theory, in that specific practices outlined in the paragraphs below do seem to foster those psychological
conditions preceding engagement. Findings also demonstrated a degree of support for Ryan and Deci’s (2002, cited in Rothman & Rothman, 2010) self-determination theory, showing that some of Banyan’s practices also promote the satisfaction of needs underlying the development of engagement.

Kahn’s studies (1990, cited in: Gruman & Saks, 2011; Jeung, 2011; Ram & Prabhakar, 2011; Shuck, 2011; Shuck & Reio, 2011; Slatten & Mehmetoglu, 2011; Welch, 2011; Wollard & Shuck, 2011) identified three psychological conditions that precede the state of engagement: meaningfulness, safety, and availability. Research findings from Banyan’s sample of top-performing WHCs confirmed that processes at Banyan promote two out of the three conditions identified by Kahn (1990), namely meaningfulness and safety. WHCs referenced perceptions of meaningfulness frequently when describing their career high points at Banyan. Findings also showed that WHCs feel safe in the environment through highly supportive and positive relationships with their managers. It can be speculated that these factors enhance the WHCs’ feelings of engagement and their performance.

Banyan seemed to be slightly less successful in creating the psychological conditions for availability. This could be gleaned from WHCs’ requests during focus groups for more effective work tools, and from a sense that professional growth and promotional opportunities were limited, as indicated by the lowest score on the engagement survey on the latter item.

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suggested that Banyan was meeting two out of the three identified needs. These were the needs for autonomy and relatedness.

WHCs’ need for autonomy was addressed through home-based work enabled by the virtual organizational structure, and the sub-contracted employment model. Autonomy was further referenced in focus groups, where WHCs spoke about latitude and freedom to use their own best judgment when making decisions, and WHCs’ ability to influence work, services, products and processes at Banyan.

WHCs’ need for relatedness was satisfied by support from managers, who effectively provided information, feedback and recognition, and the alignment of personal with organizational values. Further, relatedness needs were addressed by reference to Banyan’s positive reputation in its market, as well as Banyan’s responsiveness to its customers. When answering the focus group question, “What motivates you to do your best work at Banyan?” WHCs referred to the “reputation of the enterprise” (FG), “putting clients’ needs first and having values guiding that process” (FG), and the fact that Banyan is a “serious and really professional business” (FG).

WHCs’ needs for competence were less strongly addressed. “I have access to professional growth opportunities as a result of excelling at my work” received the lowest overall score on the survey. In addition, five out of six exiting WHCs have left Banyan for better career opportunities elsewhere (Banyan Exit Interview Tracking Report, 2012). These findings suggested a real or perceived lack of promotional and career opportunities at Banyan.

To conclude, the level of engagement in the sample community is high, and many conditions for engagement already exist at Banyan. WHCs experience Kahn’s (1990)
psychological conditions of meaningfulness and safety, though not of availability. Also, on the whole, WHCs’ needs (Ryan & Deci, 2002, cited in Rothman & Rothman, 2010) for autonomy and relatedness were being met, though not their need for competence.

**Conclusion 2: Banyan is not engaging new WHCs effectively**

The literature is not specific about how long it takes for needs to be met and psychological conditions to be created to start building perceptions and feelings of engagement in employees. It could be argued that time alone may not be the influencing factor as to why shorter-tenure WHCs, while still highly engaged, experience lower overall engagement than longer-standing WHCs. Rather, the answer as to why newer WHCs reported lower engagement survey scores may be found in the novelty of operating in a virtual structure combined with a lack of self-efficacy for working remotely, and inappropriate or ineffective internal communication processes. These issues potentially compromise new WHCs’ needs for competence and relatedness.

The impact on engagement of telecommuting in a virtual organizational structure has been shown to be overwhelmingly positive (Chianello, 2011; Gainey et al., 1999; Hill et al., 1998; Kenexa Research Institute, 2007). Some disadvantages exist, however. Christensen (2011) calls telecommuters “invisible employees” (p. 133). Lafferty and Whitehouse (2000) found that the one of “greatest challenge with telecommuting is isolation” (p. 236). Extrapolating from the survey data, it appeared that Banyan’s shorter-tenure WHC might feel more isolated than their longer-tenure counterparts, as reflected in much lower scores in the survey item, “I feel like a part of the Banyan team”. In focus groups, WHCs also spoke of a desire for more face-to-face interactions with managers to compensate for the isolation of home-based work.
To re-iterate, self-efficacy is defined as “the belief that one can perform a task or set of behaviours successfully” (Bandura, 1986, cited in Mencl et al, 2012). Self-efficacy is linked to feelings of competence. Self-efficacy is “important to employees because it is positively related to the adjustment of newcomers to an organization” (Saks, 1995, cited in Weidert, 2011, p. 12). The largest survey score difference between new and longer-tenure WHCs exists on the item “I can do my best work every day at Banyan”. On this item, newer WHCs scored 27 percentage points lower than their longer-tenure counterparts. This difference is unlikely to be explained by differing levels of technical competence, as WHCs are hired by Banyan through a standard process that ensures a certain level of skill. Instead it could be argued that newer WHCs have not yet mastered the competencies required for success in a virtual environment. This is in line with Staples’ (1999, cited in Lombardo, 2011) reasoning that newcomers to virtual organizations and their managers require training in skills necessary for success in such environments.

It warrants repeating that “internal communication (…) is an organizational practice with the potential to effectively convey the values of the organization to all employees, and involve them in the with the goals of the organization. Such practices result in more engaged employees” (Bindl & Parker, 2010, cited in Welch, 2011, p. 339). Welch (2011) investigated internal communication as an “organizational condition facilitating engagement” (p. 336). The survey data suggest that newer WHCs felt less informed than longer-tenured WHCs. On the survey item “I feel informed of relevant issues to me work at Banyan”, newer WHCs scored 22 percentage points lower than tenured WHCs. On the item “I have many opportunities at meaningful dialogue with other stakeholders at Banyan”, newer WHCs scored 24 percentage points less.
In summary, it seemed that new WHCs were less engaged than their longer-tenure counterparts. Referencing the second inquiry sub-question, the absence or ineffectiveness of some practices may undermine engagement for newer WHCs. It was argued that this lesser engagement may stem from the novelty of operating in a virtual environment combined with a lack of training in virtual-effectiveness competencies. Further, it would seem that newer WHCs, perhaps because of this novelty of the virtual environment, might have individual communication needs, which are not effectively addressed by Banyan or direct managers.

**Conclusion 3: Resources and compensation as compensators for lack in other areas**

To address the third sub-question, participants were asked what more Banyan could do to improve engagement in the WHC community, issues of work resources, compensation and benefits were raised. The literature shows a positive relationship between the availability of work resources and engagement. The literature shows mixed results for the effect of compensation on engagement.

Job resources are “physical, psychological, social or organizational features of a job that help achieve work goals, reduce job demands, and stimulate personal growth, learning and development” (Gruman & Saks, 2011, p. 126). According to JD-R, job resources support engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, cited in Gruman & Saks, 2011, p. 127). Despite the fact that the survey did not contain items pertaining to the availability of resources, in focus groups WHCs requested more effective resources to enhance their engagement. This request seems consistent with the JD-R model.

The literature shows mixed results for the relationship of compensation to engagement. Even Giancola’s total-rewards model may not be appropriate in Banyan’s context. In his
research on compensation, Giancola (2010) introduces the concept of total rewards, which he claims increases intrinsic motivation at work. Total rewards are a composite of “compensation, benefits, work life balance, recognition, and developmental and career opportunities” (p. 25). Even though contracted WHCs are paid a fair and market-related hourly fee, their monthly earnings fluctuate in accordance with their hours of work done for the dominant client. Being contractors, WHCs do not qualify for company benefits; they have to procure their own. Work-life balance was not a construct surveyed, but discussion from focus groups clearly linked home-based work and the contracted model to perceptions of improved work-life balance. WHCs reported mid-range scores on the survey for recognition and access to developmental opportunities, but both of these received positive feedback in focus groups, implying a satisfaction of needs on this front. Access to professional growth opportunities received the lowest score on the survey, indicating a possible demotivating force.

Given such mixed findings, WHCs’ desires for improved compensation and benefits may be rooted elsewhere. Two parts of the research findings suggested that perhaps the desire for benefits could be a mechanism to compensate for lacks in other areas. In the focus groups, WHCs mentioned their dissatisfaction with fluctuating work levels due to the ebbs and flows of work referrals from the dominant client. In the survey, feelings of being part of a team received the second-lowest score. It might be argued that WHCs perceive an increase in their compensation to contribute to their feelings of safety; participating in the company benefit plan may contribute to WHCs’ need for relatedness.

In sum, to address the third inquiry sub-question, “What new organizational practices do WHCs feel should be implemented at Banyan to support engagement?” WHCs’ requests
for more effective work tools and resources seem to be consistent with the literature as a positive influencer on engagement. WHCs’ requests for benefits, however, seem to be at odds both with the self-proclaimed drivers of their engagement and with research findings outlined in the literature. Instead, such requests might point to a need to compensate for unmet needs in other areas.

**Scope and Limitations of the Inquiry**

Four issues potentially impact the transferability and applicability of this inquiry. These issues are: the sample characteristics; sample size; the soundness of the survey questionnaire; and the nature of the appreciative inquiry approach itself.

For this inquiry, homogenous sampling was used. This is a process that selects “all similar cases in order to describe some sub-group in depth” (Clark, 1999, cited in Glesne, 2011, p. 45). The sample was very specifically chosen to incorporate only WHCs, and only those individuals who demonstrated their discretionary effort through above-average achievement of their role objectives measured from January 2012. The definition excluded any individuals outside the WHC role, and any top performers in roles where achievement is measured differently. It therefore cannot be assumed that the factors that making for engagement in top-performing WHCs will be the same factors contributing to engagement elsewhere in the organization.

Further, only 14 individuals consented to participate in this inquiry. “A small sample may be quite unrepresentative” (Terreblanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 44). Fourteen participants constitute only 50% of the total potential sample group as defined at the outset of the inquiry. Fourteen individuals represent only six percent of the entire Banyan network. It is conceivable that the remaining 14 individuals in the defined sample did not participate in
the study due to lower levels of engagement, and that, had they participated, results might have been different. Consequently, conclusions and recommendations might not be transferable either to the other 14 high-performing WHCs or to the remaining workforce at Banyan.

“The use of a single survey administration assumes employee engagement is stable over time and thus can be captured in one assessment event, rather than a state that varies over time, which requires multiple capture events” (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003, cited in Weidert, 2011, p. 2). The engagement survey and the focus-group interviews occurred within one week of each other and can therefore not be understood as multiple capture events. It is possible that the timing of this study, a period of growth and prosperity in the Banyan network, may have biased the results and findings positively. It could be speculated that the same study done in 2013, a year of projected contraction in some areas of the network, may show quite different results.

Further, “reliance on one type of methodology for assessing both predictor and outcome constructs has been shown to be a source of systematic error in behavioural research” (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003, cited in Weidert, 2011, p. 2). Two data-gathering methods were used. However, the survey was designed by the researcher herself, and was not a validated or psychometrically sound instrument. The survey attempted to address both predictor and outcome constructs, and may have had systemic errors. Further, neither the survey nor the focus groups dealt with issues that arose as a result of the inquiry. A new round of inquiry would be more fully inclusive.

Finally, I used an approach loosely based on Appreciative Inquiry to conduct this inquiry. “AI is about the coevolutionary search for the best in people [and] their
organizations” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000, p. 3). Grant and Humphries (2006) however argue for that application of critical theory to Appreciative Inquiry “to deepen insight and recognition of the complexity in human behaviours” (p. 401). The use of the appreciative approach in this research uncovered a multitude of positive stories and potentials. Despite that, a limitation of the approach is that it focused on the positive in the organization and did not uncover all negative issues that might block or harm engagement at Banyan. Negatives could still have emerged from the focus groups and the survey, and no specific effort was made to address these. In any future engagement strategy, a concerted effort would need to be made to uncover, not only drivers of engagement at Banyan, but also potential obstacles.

Chapter Summary

In contrast to the leadership’s initial concerns, this inquiry demonstrated a high level of engagement amongst Banyan’s high-performing WHCs. Banyan has created a singular blend of processes and dynamics that promote perceptions and feelings of engagement in the sample group. These feelings of engagement in turn seem to impact top-performing WHCs’ discretionary effort. Findings show a degree of alignment with Kahn’s (1990) conceptualization of engagement and with Ryan and Deci’s (2002, cited in Rothman & Rothman, 2010) self-determination theory. Specifically, WHCs’ needs for autonomy and relatedness are met through home-based work via the virtual organizational structure, the contacted employment model, the special management style that balances freedom of action with accountability, and Banyan’s reputation as a high-quality, customer-responsive player in its market. Banyan is also successfully creating conditions of psychological safety and meaningfulness through effective job design, and appropriate management style. Needs for competence and conditions of psychological availability are less fully addressed, and offer
This inquiry uncovered lower levels of engagement in the shorter-tenure WHC subgroup. WHCs with tenure of less than 12 months scored lower on all but one survey item. It is argued that these lower levels of engagement might stem from the novelty of operating in a virtual environment combined with a lack of training in virtual environment success competencies. It is also argued that new WHCs, perhaps because of the novelty of the virtual environment, have communication needs that are not being adequately addressed currently.

Finally, this inquiry uncovered inconsistencies between WHCs’ self-proclaimed drivers of past engagement, and their requests for items to enhance future engagement. Specifically, WHCs felt their current freedom, autonomy and flexibility were the major contributors to their engagement. However, to increase engagement into the future, WHCs’ requests revolved around increased security in the forms of steady workflow and of benefits. The literature does not support compensation as a contributor to engagement. WHCs also referenced a need for more efficient work tools to support engagement into the future. The literature supports this as being positively related to engagement. The final chapter recommends how Banyan might use this information to support and augment engagement into the future.
CHAPTER 5: INQUIRY IMPLICATIONS

In this final chapter, I discuss some potential strategies for Banyan to adopt in their future engagement initiatives. Because Banyan is already enjoying high levels of engagement in its strategic community of WHCs, no large-scale system-wide changes are recommended. Instead, a focus on specific initiatives, especially as they pertain to the engagement of new WHCs, may bring value. I further discuss implications for Banyan’s leadership practices in applying these initiatives, as well as implications for Banyan should none of the initiatives be adopted. This chapter concludes with a brief comment on how the sponsor responded to initial inquiry findings, and what future changes are planned for the organization in light of these findings.

Study Recommendation

The results both from the survey and from the focus groups point to high levels of engagement in the sample community. No major impediments to engagement were identified. It would therefore be imprudent to recommend large-scale changes at Banyan to enhance engagement. Instead, a number of more contained initiatives could be considered, including the following:

1. Keep focus on successful practices and supplement these with focus on competence and availability;
2. Improve engagement of new WHCs through training and communication; and
3. Maintain high levels of engagement through ongoing, widespread measurement and management.
Recommendation 1: Keep focus on successful practices and supplement these with focus on competence and availability

Specific organizational processes at Banyan successfully promote the fulfillment of needs of autonomy and relatedness, and create the psychological conditions of safety and meaningfulness. It follows that Banyan should continue to focus on those processes that promote engagement.

Individuals’ needs for autonomy are met by certain factors in job design. Specifically, task and role characteristics, such as appropriate levels of decision-making authority and an individual’s ability to impact work or products and services, all fulfill autonomy needs and so generate engagement (Giancola, 2010; Ludwig & Frazier, 2012; Rothman & Rothman, 2010; Slatten & Mehmetoglu, 2011). To support meeting the need for autonomy, Banyan is encouraged to maintain the availability of home-based work through the present virtual organizational structure. Also, WHCs’ ability to work autonomously in the field with flexible oversight and their freedom to make autonomous work-related decisions should be continued and encouraged. Finally, Banyan should continue proactively to elicit WHCs’ input into work-related issues and to collaborate with this community to implement organizational improvements.

Individuals’ relatedness needs are impacted by: the degree of supervisor and organizational support; senior managers’ sincere and demonstrated interest in individuals; visible efforts by senior management to ensure survival of the organization; the organization’s overall reputation; responsiveness to customer concerns; corporate responsibility programs; and internal communication practices (Giancola, 2010; Rothman & Rothman, 2010). Banyan’s current management culture of balancing support with autonomy
is successfully meeting WHCs’ need for relatedness. This culture ought to be maintained, even if the organization itself goes through periods of change. In addition, senior managers’ current demonstrated efforts to assure Banyan’s survival and wellbeing in the long term will support relatedness feelings. In focus groups, WHCs referenced Banyan’s solid reputation and customer responsiveness. Finally, in line with Towers Watson’s findings (2007-2008, cited in Giancola 2010), Banyan might consider investigating investing in a corporate social-responsibility program to support individuals’ relatedness needs.

Psychological safety is associated with “reliable, predictable social environments that have clear boundaries of acceptable conduct in which people feel safe to risk self-expression” (Kahn, 1990, cited in Gruman & Saks, 2011, p. 126), as mentioned above. Interpersonal relations, group dynamics, management style supervisor and organizational support, and co-worker relations all impact individuals’ perceptions of psychological safety (Gruman & Saks, 2011; May, Gilson and Harter, 2004, cited in Gruman & Saks, 2011). Psychological conditions of safety are being achieved again by Banyan’s management culture and the quality of interpersonal relationships between WHCs and their direct managers. Because WHCs esteem their managers’ support, and the manager is often the only point of contact between the WHC and Banyan, it follows that supportive managers cause WHCs to feel that the organization supports them, creating psychological safety. Because WHCs are independent contractors who work from home, not much opportunity exists for coworker relationships to evolve. Banyan might consider developing engagement initiatives that further build conditions of psychological safety by fostering contact and relationship-building between dispersed WHCs.

Finally, task and role characteristics and role fit impact individuals’ experiences of
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psychological meaningfulness (Fairlie, 2011; Gruman & Saks, 2011; Kahn, 1990, cited in Gruman & Saks, 2011; May, Gilson and Harter, 2004, cited in Gruman & Saks, 2011). WHCs’ convictions of doing important and meaningful work were referenced numerous times in focus groups. It may be that conditions of meaningfulness at Banyan are created not only by the dynamics of the WHC role, but also by appropriate hiring practices that ensure a fit between the individual and the role. If so, Banyan is encouraged to maintain the WHCs’ role largely unchanged into the future and to keep the focus on hiring the correct individuals to fill those roles.

Satisfaction of competence needs is influenced by access to professional growth, advancement and learning opportunities, certain compensation models, performance feedback and supervisor encouragement (Giancola, 2010; Rothman & Rothman, 2010). Banyan has been shown as less successful in promoting the fulfillment of the need for competence. Gauging from the survey, WHCs seem satisfied with their access to learning. However, access to career-growth opportunities received the lowest overall score. This presents a dilemma for the WHC community, who generally prefer to work as independent contractors from dispersed locations. However, exit interviews (Moore, C., 2012a) show that many WHCs leave for better career opportunities elsewhere. This stands in contrast to Banyan’s recruitment trends, which show a lack of internal applicants when management positions are advertised internally to WHCs and other personnel. It is possible that Banyan does not present the types of opportunities important to WHCs. Banyan may consider investigating the nature of career opportunities that would interest WHCs, and, if possible, create these. Such initiatives could include job enrichment through participation in fixed-term projects, or job rotation.
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Psychological availability is associated with the “physical, emotional and psychological resources people bring to their role performances” (Gruman & Saks, 2011, p. 216). Finally, psychological conditions of availability are in part impacted by the availability of resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, cited in Gruman & Saks, 2011; Gruman & Saks, 2011; Ludwig & Frazier, 2012). Extrapolating from focus-group feedback, it seems WHCs feel that current resources and tools are inefficient. Banyan might more closely examine suggestions made in the focus groups, and consider for example re-assessing the workflow software and investing in creation of a resource database available to all WHCs.

**Recommendation 2: Improve new WHC engagement by focusing on training, socialization and communication**

Self-efficacy is linked to feelings of competence. Self-efficacy is “the belief that one can perform a task or set of behaviours successfully” (Bandura, 1986, cited in Mencl et al, 2012), as recorded above. Wollard and Shuck’s (2011) study found self-efficacy to be the highest predictor of engagement. Self-efficacy is important “because it is positively related to the adjustment of newcomers to an organization” (Saks, 1995, cited in Weidert, 2011, p. 12). In the engagement survey, the highest score differential between new and longer-tenure WHCs existed in the item “I can do my best work every day at Banyan”. This points to a lower self-efficacy between new and longer-tenure WHCs.

Chaudhary, Rangnekar and Barua (2012) advocate for designing self-efficacy-based training interventions to enhance feelings of engagement, including enactive mastery experiences where employees have the chance to practice their task (Chaudhary et al, 2012, p. 379), and employers’ providing training specific to the task (Mencl et al, 2012, p. 378), positive performance feedback, and encouragement (p. 379). Once at Banyan, WHCs
currently undergo a rigorous training program imparting job and task skills necessary for success in the WHC role. WHCs new to the rehabilitation-case and claims-management field will spend three months with a new-hire mentor-manager before being allocated a permanent manager. Banyan’s new WHC training does seem to address all of these items, yet the findings from this study suggest a need to re-evaluate these initiatives, with a lens on both training content and process. New WHCs are not trained in remote-work competencies.

“Institutional socialization tactics are indirectly related to newcomer engagement through person-job fit perceptions, emotions and self-efficacy” (Saks & Gruman, 2011, p. 383). Person-job fit is positively related to meaningfulness (Rothman & Rothman, 2011), and self-efficacy drives fulfillment of competence needs (Weidert, 2011). Jones (1986, cited in Gruman & Saks, 2011), found that investiture, whereby newcomers’ self-identities are reinforced through supportive management and communication, and serial social tactics, where all newcomers are assigned a more seasoned individual to provide guidance, were the most important. These are followed by the sequential activities, whereby newcomers receive clear guidelines regarding the sequence of experiences they will encounter, and by fixed-content tactics, where newcomers receive detailed knowledge of timetables associated with completing each stage of the socialization process. These are rounded out by collective socialization tactics, whereby newcomers go through common learning experiences designed to produce uniform responses to situations, and also by formal socialization tactics, whereby newcomers are isolated from other organizational members while learning their roles (p. 387). It is therefore recommended that Banyan assess its orientation programs to align them with these tactics.
Effective communication seems to engender fulfillment of the need for relatedness through the promotion of trust and feelings of psychological proximity (Orner, 2010; Lombardo, 2011). Gratton and Erickson (2007, cited in Orner, 2010) note that individuals who are new to remote positions may find it difficult to create a sense of proximity to their manager. Findings from the engagement survey point to newer WHCs’ feeling less informed and less able to dialogue than their longer-tenure counterparts. Wilson et al. (2008, cited in Orner, 2010) state that a sense of proximity can be created through frequent communication. It may thus be argued that Banyan’s new WHCs have different communication needs from their more seasoned colleagues. It is recommended that Banyan investigates these needs and formulate a strategy to address specifically new WHC communication requirements.

Staples et al. (1999, cited in Lombardo, 2011) conclude “for remote workers to be effective, they need managers who are good communicators [and] able to use information technology to aid communication” (p. 44). To drive remote work effectiveness, Staples (1999, cited in Lombardo, 2011) argues for training of both managers and remote workers. It bears restating that, to compensate for their remoteness, managers might learn to use voice inflection, tone and speed of speech as indicators of emotions (Orner, 2010, p. 42). Managers should give remote workers their full attention and not multitask while on a conversation (Orner, 2010, p. 42). Managers may consider establishing a pattern of communication to clarify expectations, strategize solutions and share best practices (Miller, 2012, p. 45). Managers are prompted to communicate frequently because frequency of communication can increase perceptions of proximity (Wilson et al., 2008, cited in Orner, 2010). Finally, managers ought to consider and choose the correct media to suit the message and interaction required (Maznevski & Chudoba, 2000, cited in Lombardo, 2011).
Recommendation 3: Maintain high levels of engagement through ongoing measurement and management

Much agreement exists in the literature around the positive results of high employee engagement. Engaged employees have been shown to have lower rates of absenteeism, turnover, theft of employer’s property, safety incidents, and work quality defects. Companies with engaged workforces enjoy increased productivity and profitability, and improved competitiveness and innovation (Carter, 2010; Drake, 2012; Gallup, 2009; Roth, 2010; Weidert, 2011; Wildermuth & Wildermuth, 2008). It is therefore desirable that Banyan may consider continue to measure levels of engagement in all employee groups regularly, and ought to ensure it maintains and even improves their already-high levels of engagement over time.

One effective way of measuring is by the deployment of annual engagement surveys. Advantages of surveys are that “[they] are fairly easy to administer, several people can be assessed simultaneously, and survey data as quantitative data can require less time to analyze than other data collection methodologies” (Weidert, 2011, p. 16). The use of surveys is appropriate at Banyan for three reasons. First, Banyan is a metrics-driven organization; data are considered credible when derived from a measuring tool like a survey. Second, building engagement at Banyan is a long-term process of measuring, analyzing, acting and refining. Aligning with Nadler (1977, cited in Burke, 2009, pp. 303 – 307), surveys are ideal for determining a benchmark on an issue and measuring impacts of interventions over time. Third, “a survey may provide a useful tool for extending the data collection process to a broader range of participants” (E.T. Stringer, 2007, p. 79).

The literature suggests the availability of a variety of engagement surveys in the
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market, of varying psychometric soundness. Although Rich et al.’s (2010) Job Engagement Scale, Schaufeli’s et al.’s (2002) Utrecht Work Engagement Scale and the Gallup Workplace Audit seem recommended, Banyan may want to conduct a thorough investigation into which tool is the most appropriate, to provide the greatest insights for the context and the highest return on investment. Banyan may also consider creating a customized survey allowing targeting of specific issues relevant to the organization.

“The use of a single survey administration assumes employee engagement is stable over time and thus can be captured in one assessment event, rather than a state that varies over time, which requires multiple capture events” (Weidert, 2011, p. 2). It is therefore recommended that Banyan not only conduct comprehensive annual engagement surveys, but also intermittent pulse checks to assess engagement levels throughout the year. Such pulse checks could be done through the current exit-interview and retention-interview processes.

Organizational Implications

In answer to the inquiry question and sub-questions, the current state of engagement in Banyan’s high-performing WHCs is healthy. This state of strong engagement is created by specific practices at Banyan that seem to meet the needs of WHCs for autonomy and relatedness, and by creating psychological conditions of safety and meaningfulness for them. No large-scale changes are recommended. High-performing WHCs are a community of strategic importance to Banyan. These individuals have the highest productivity and work-related outcomes amongst their peers. These individuals beget excellence and customer service. Ongoing assessment and monitoring of engagement levels could allow Banyan to raise retention in this strategic community through ongoing meeting of their needs and the creation of pertinent psychological conditions.
This research revealed that individuals’ needs for competence were less well met, and psychological conditions of availability less successfully created. These factors impacted negatively on top-performing WHCs’ engagement, caused by perceptions of poor career opportunities (Miller, 2012) and by feelings of frustration due to incomplete work resources (Jeung, 2011). Consequently, to reference the third sub-question, Banyan could further enhance engagement by addressing these issues as follows.

This resources issue might be relatively easily addressed. Banyan already boasts one of the best workflow-software solutions in the industry and has a team dedicated to upgrades and efficiency improvements. Banyan could ensure that these facilities are properly applied to serve WHC’s work needs. Also, Banyan could devote an individual to the task of creating a repository of information required by WHCs for effective functioning in their work; this could be achieved with relative ease. In addition, underutilized forums and platforms currently existing within Banyan for the sharing of resources could be used more effectively. These improvements might create increased perceptions of availability in WHCs, and in turn enhance their feelings of engagement.

Addressing competence needs in this community is more challenging than addressing resource issues. WHCs are independent contractors who are not obliged to attend company training other than at their induction. Banyan is beholden to the ebbs and flows of business from its largest customer, requiring the company to remain flexible to grow and shrink as required. This militates against an employed model. Banyan’s organizational structure is flat, which limits career paths and opportunities. However, if needs for competence remain unaddressed, Banyan will continue losing WHCs to other organizations who offer better career opportunities. Creation of career paths or engaging work assignments might improve
Banyan has in the past undertaken a study of potential career opportunities for WHCs, and an employed model has been created. But until the company can stabilize its customer base and create predictable work volumes, large-scale implementation of such initiatives remains unfeasible. Job enrichment and stretch assignments may be the best practical option at this point. Fortuitously, Banyan has been pursuing these options as projects emerge that require internal resourcing.

The largest impact, as well as the largest potential opportunity, lies with newly-engaged WHCs. Research findings and turnover metrics show that Banyan’s newer WHC group is less engaged than its longer-standing group, and is more likely to leave. If WHCs leave in their first year with Banyan, the company consequently is less likely to realize a return on its investment in recruitment, training and development. The impact of improved onboarding, orientation, training in both task and remote-work competencies, and targeted communication could be higher engagement, better retention, and lower turnover-related costs (Lombardo, 2011; Orner, 2010; Miller, 2012).

**Leadership Implications**

From its inception, this inquiry prompted a fluid process between my sponsor and myself, involving a process of uncovering, informal conversations, and an envisioning of engagement initiatives based on those conversations, followed by further unpacking and feedback. This process culminated in a formal feedback meeting on January 22, 2013, with my sponsor, and with the VP of Rehabilitation Services, whose contractors constituted the sample, and the VP of Claims and Support Services, who manages the training division. During this meeting, high-level findings, trends and preliminary recommendations were
tabled and discussed.

Banyan’s leadership has been exemplary in their adoption and promotion of engagement initiatives. As a result of this inquiry, my sponsor and the VPs resolved to proceed with four specific initiatives that had been envisioned during this process of ongoing dialogue. Specific commitments were also made in terms of leadership practice going forward. Below, I will first outline the four engagement initiatives. I will conclude by discussing commitments to leadership practice drawing on Kouzes and Posner’s (2007) framework.

As far as engagement initiatives are concerned, it was decided to extend engagement measurement to all individuals at Banyan. As part of this exercise, it was also decided to go ahead with a previously envisioned initiative to pursue participation in a national Best Place to Work competition. These measures are hoped to uncover propellers of and impediments to engagement at Banyan. Both measures are hoped to impact individuals’ needs for relatedness. Second, it was decided to investigate more closely the issue of new WHCs’ engagement and to re-assess current on-boarding, orientation and socialization practices. I will collaborate with the VP of Claims and Support Services in this initiative, as her team delivers new WHC training. Third, it was decided that resource issues will be addressed. I will collaborate with the VP of Rehabilitation Solutions to deal with these. We will craft an approach to enable us to become more effective in the dissemination of resources, hopefully enhancing WHCs’ conditions of psychological availability. Finally, and in line with Towers Watson’s findings (2007-2008, cited in Giancola, 2010) a desire to identify a meaningful corporate social responsibility initiative was expressed. This is however more of a long-term initiative, unlikely to be addressed in 2013.
Regarding future leadership commitments, Kouzes and Posner’s (2007) five practices of exemplary leadership was adopted to anchor and promote specific leader behaviours. The first leadership practice, modeling the way, encompasses two activities, namely clarifying values and setting the example by acting in line with those values. Banyan does have a formal values statement (Banyan, 2011b), but this document has not been proactively disseminated to the all stakeholders. Yet, even in spite of the lack of this communication, the COO’s values permeate the organization at all levels. This is referenced by survey responses such as “I agree with the philosophies and values the organization works with” (S). Banyan has also very clearly modeled the way by promoting this research study and investing in engagement in the executive team and management cohorts. The leadership recommitted itself to these practices, and requested I spearhead the articulation and official communication of values throughout the organization.

Kouzes and Posner’s (2007) second practice of exemplary leadership is inspiring a shared vision. Specifically, they describe a process of envisioning a desirable future and enlisting others to “animate” the vision. “Great leaders are forward looking (…..) Leaders have to make sure that what they see is also what others see. When visions are shared, they attract more people, attract higher levels of motivation, and withstand more challenges than those that are singular” (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 105). At the time of writing this paper, Banyan had concluded a year of high growth and expansion, and was facing a period of contraction. In focus groups, WHCs referenced their insecurity around these fluctuations and a desire for more predictable workflow. Significant investment has been planned for 2013 to diversify away from the dominant client and stabilize revenues. Until those investments bear fruit, stability may remain elusive. In this scenario, the onus falls on Banyan’s leadership to
create a vision based on the goodwill that already exists in the network. Leaders committed to applying themselves to articulate this future that is meaningful to all in the network and propels their discretionary effort in spite of anxieties. My task is to identify and leverage champions of this vision who can in turn inspire their own spheres of influence.

Challenging the process is Kouzes and Posner’s (2007) third practice of exemplary leadership. “The work of leaders is change” (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 163). However, the focus is not on challenging for its own sake, but on “challenging with purpose” (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, pp. 172-173). Banyan’s leadership is masterful at challenging process. The adoption of the Kaizenovation concept in 2010, the inclusion of an innovation and continuous improvement competence in all performance appraisals, and the bestowing of an annual Kaizenovation award are the culmination of a history of challenging the status quo and operating at the cutting edge. Even though innovative thinking at Banyan is the norm, constant challenging and change may cause anxiety of change fatigue in the network. At this time of flux, the leadership may need to balance challenging process with inspiring and articulating a vision to which individuals can anchor themselves.

Kouzes and Posner’s (2007) fourth practice of exemplary leadership focuses on enabling others to act through trust and collaboration. The virtual environment and the subcontractor model both support individuals’ ability to act. “At the heart of collaboration is trust” (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 224). WHCs frequently referenced in focus groups that they feel they have autonomy, that they are trusted to act in their best judgment, and that managers support them in these actions. Working from home achieved the single highest positive survey score. This is a cultural norm at Banyan, an expectation set by the most senior leader herself, which permeates every level of Banyan. Yet, the home environment
can be isolated as a workplace, and increased effort might be invested into collaboration. As a consequence of this enquiry, it was decided to offer me a resource to assist me in my I community mobilizer role. This is an individual with significant technology savvy who can leverage Banyan’s technology tools to promote online collaboration.

Finally, Kouzes and Posner’s (2007) fifth practice of exemplary leadership is encouraging the heart. Actions supporting this practice are the recognizing of personal contributions, and the celebrating of values and victories. At Banyan, leaders may need to improve their efforts to encourage the heart, and to provide reward and recognition. “I feel recognized for my individual contributions” achieved below average scores in the survey. The subcontracted employment model militates against certain types of rewards. Consistent with Ludwig and Frazier’s (2012) Organizational Behaviour Management approach, the leadership team should recognize the power of their positive reinforcement and encouragement, and possibly leverage these more.

**Implications for Future Inquiry**

Conducting this inquiry, it became clear that certain issues required greater attention. These issues revolve around sample size and constitution, the measurement instrument, new WHC engagement, and current compensation models.

This inquiry studied only a small sample of individuals at Banyan. A future inquiry will require much broader scope. It cannot be assumed that factors driving engagement in a community of subcontracted field consultants will be the same as other employee groups. A broader study including all groups within the Banyan network may uncover other incentives and deterrents which the leadership may need to consider and to address appropriately.

The survey tool used in this inquiry may not have been sound psychometrically.
further inquiry should not only use a more robust tool, but also supplement findings with data collected at multiple points in time. Such an inquiry may show engagement in a different light, and may yet again highlight new issues acting as motivators and demotivators.

The issue of newer WHCs’ engagement requires more attention. Banyan continues to lose a disproportionately high number of WHCs within their first 12 months. This trend exists not only in the sample group, but also in the wider WHC community. Because of the AR method, the small sample size and the rudimentary measuring instrument, data from this group and this study are not necessarily transferable to other individuals. An inquiry is required in the newcomer community to dig deeply into possible causes and solutions.

Finally, the issue of compensation and benefits was not a major theme, but enough discourse existed to merit a closer investigation of this topic. The literature shows mixed results for compensation as generator of engagement, with compensation model configuration seemingly the differentiating factor. Yet WHCs referenced their desire for benefits and more security around compensation. A further inquiry may uncover whether these requests are symptomatic of WHCs’ anxieties around fluctuating workloads, or if they will genuinely make for further engagement of this community.

Chapter Summary

This chapter synthesized the research findings and conclusions into three specific recommendations. First, because a high level of engagement already seems to exist in the sample group, Banyan would be well advised to continue promoting the factors that promote those levels of engagement. These processes could be supplemented by new initiatives to promote WHCs’ needs for competence, and to create feelings of psychological safety. Second, Banyan can continue to observe and refine their engagement initiatives through
regular measurement via surveys and internal company reports. Finally, engagement on the part of new WHCs requires a more in-depth analysis. Preliminary findings suggest that a greater focus on self-efficacy through training and improved communication may positively impact new WHCs’ engagement.

From inception, this inquiry has generated much discussion and debate between my sponsor, the VPs and myself. These discussions have culminated in the commitment to pursue four specific engagement-focused initiatives. The leadership has also re-committed itself to exemplary leadership practices.

The precise impact that these new initiatives will have on Banyan cannot accurately be predicted. Banyan is facing a contradictory year in 2013. It is anticipated that the core business will contract. Efforts to develop new areas of business are currently underway and will shortly be augmented. These exertions may pay off and cause the company to expand into new areas of endeavour. Workers at Banyan will be required to respond and adapt to these changes. A highly engaged workforce will be more resilient to such flux. Ensuring that engagement flourishes will continue to be a priority at Banyan.
REFERENCES


Banyan (2011a). *Business and financial planning strategy project stage one report*. Banyan Work Health Solutions [Banyan internal report].

Banyan (2011b). *Strategic planning: Leading work health*. Banyan Work Health Solutions [Banyan internal memorandum].


Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. (2010).


Engaging Banyan’s High Performing Consultants


APPENDIX A: LETTER OF INVITATION (GENERIC)

Dear [Name]

I would like to invite you to be part of a research project that I am conducting. This project is part of the requirement for a Master’s Degree in Leadership (MAL), at Royal Roads University (RRU). My credentials with RRU can be established with Niels Agger-Gupta.

The objective of my research is to study factors that work health consultants feel make for a positive work environment, and improve their satisfaction at Banyan. The title of the research is “engaging Banyan’s top performing work health consultants”.

In addition to submitting my final report to Royal Roads University in partial fulfillment for a MAL, I will also be sharing my research findings with Banyan. A copy of the final report will be published and archived in the RRU Library, as well as in the Thesis Canada Portal of Library and Archives Canada, and ProQuest/UMI. Upon conclusion of the final report, I will conduct a debriefing session for all interested research participants.

My research project will consist of a survey and focus groups. Your name was chosen as a prospective participant because of your work with Banyan as a work health consultant. If you are interested in participating you will be asked to participate in both the short survey and the focus group. The survey will take between 5-10 minutes; the focus group will take one hour.

Survey responses are anonymous. Focus group information will be voice-recorded and transcribed and, where appropriate, summarized in anonymous format, in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual unless your specific agreement has been obtained beforehand. All documentation will be kept strictly confidential. Subsequent to the thesis being published, the data will be destroyed.

You will be paid your regular hourly fee for your participation. Submission of an invoice for survey participation will identify individuals as participants in the survey. However, each individual response set will remain unidentifiable and anonymous. In other words, I will not be able to identify which respondent gave which answers. Furthermore, participants who agree to complete the survey but who do not want to be identified as having participated will be able to complete the survey secretly only by not submitting an invoice to Banyan.

Please feel free to contact me at any time should you have additional questions regarding the project and its outcomes.

You are not compelled to participate in this research project. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw without prejudice, up until commencement of data collection. Similarly, if you choose not to participate in this research project, this information will also be maintained in confidence.
Please indicate your willingness to participate in this research by clicking the link below and selecting the appropriate response.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RRUBanyanResearchConsent

Sincerely,
Carola Moore
APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT CONSENT ON SURVEY MONKEY (GENERIC)

1. Full Name: _____________

2. Please indicate your consent to participate in the survey questionnaire by selecting the most appropriate response below.
   a. I hereby give my consent to participate in the survey questionnaire research
   b. I do not give my consent to participate in the survey questionnaire research. Please remove me from that process.

3. Please indicate your consent to participate in the focus group by selecting the most appropriate response below.
   a. I hereby give my consent to participate in the focus group
   b. I do not give my consent to participate in the focus group. Please remove me from that process.
APPENDIX C: ELECTRONIC CONSENT ON SURVEY MONKEY (SURVEY)

I welcome and value your input into this survey investigating the question: "What factors do work health consultants feel make for a positive work environment, and improve their satisfaction at Banyan". Answering “yes” to question 1 indicates that you consent to participate in the survey. Answering “no” to question 1 indicates that you do not wish to participate in the survey and will end the survey experience. All information collected in this survey will be kept confidential. No individual response set will be identifiable. Survey data is housed on Survey Monkey’s American servers and is subject to the Patriot Act. It will take approximately 10 minutes to complete this survey. We would appreciate your participation by Monday 24 September 2012.

PLEASE NOTE: If you click "no", you have forfeited your opportunity to complete the survey. You will be unable to complete the survey even when clicking on the original link.

Yes

No
APPENDIX D: SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. I welcome and value your input into this survey investigating the question: "What factors do work health consultants feel make for a positive work environment, and improve their satisfaction at Banyan". Answering “yes” to question 1 indicates that you consent to participate in the survey. Answering “no” to question 1 indicates that you do not wish to participate in the survey and will end the survey experience. All information collected in this survey will be kept confidential. No individual response set will be identifiable. Survey data is housed on Survey Monkey's American servers and is subject to the Patriot Act. It will take approximately 10 minutes to complete this survey. We would appreciate your participation by Monday 24 September 2012.

PLEASE NOTE: If you click "no", you have forfeited your opportunity to complete the survey. You will be unable to complete the survey even when clicking on the original link.

Yes
No

2. Please indicate in which province you currently live by selecting the appropriate response below
   - British Columbia
   - Alberta
   - Saskatchewan
   - Manitoba
   - Ontario
   - Quebec
   - Nova Scotia
   - New Brunswick
   - Newfoundland & Labrador

3. Please indicate how long you have been a field consultant with Banyan by selecting the appropriate response below
   - <6 months
   - 6-12 months
   - 13-24 months
   - +25 months
4. When you think about your work at Banyan in general, please rate the statements below by selecting the response you feel most appropriate to you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel informed about issues relevant to my work at Banyan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have many opportunities for meaningful dialogue with other stakeholders at Banyan</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel that my work contributes to Banyan’s strategic objectives</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel recognized for my individual contribution</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel my professional aspirations are aligned with Banyan’s strategic objectives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel my skills are perfectly matched to my work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like a part of the Banyan team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I have a strong relationship with my manager</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I have access to developmental activities that support my achievement at work</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I have access to professional growth opportunities as a result of excelling at my work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can do my best work every day at Banyan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel working from home positively impacts my feelings of work satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a contractor increases my feelings of commitment to Banyan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Please focus on a high point, a time in your work experience at Banyan where you felt most energized, most positive, most engaged, or most successful. Please tell me about that time: describe the scenario; what particularly made you feel so positive?

6. What do you most value about your work with Banyan?

7. What do you value the most about Banyan as an organization?

8. What further comments about positive aspects of working with Banyan do you feel are important to share?
APPENDIX E: RESEARCH CONSENT FORM (FOCUS GROUP)

My name is Carola Moore, and this research project is part of the requirement for a Master of Arts in Leadership (MAL) at Royal Roads University. My credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by telephoning Niels Agger-Gupta.

This document constitutes an agreement to participate in the focus group phase of my research project, the objective of which is to study the issues health consultants feel make for a positive work environment, and improve their satisfaction at work. The title of the research is “engaging Banyan’s top performing work health consultants”. The focus group is predicted to last one hour. Because of the inclusion of a many participants in the group, individual anonymity cannot be assured. However, collected data will be coded to eliminate personal identification, and reported anonymously.

In addition to submitting my final report to Royal Roads University in partial fulfillment for a MAL, I will also be sharing my research findings with Banyan Work Health Solutions. Upon completion, participants will receive a copy of the final report upon request.

A copy of the final report will be published and archived in the RRU Library, as well as in the Thesis Canada Portal of Library and Archives Canada, and ProQuest/UMI.

Information will be voice-recorded and transcribed and, where appropriate, summarized, in anonymous format, in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual unless specific agreement has been obtained beforehand. All documentation will be kept strictly confidential. Subsequent to the thesis being published, the data will be destroyed. Data/information will not be retained pertaining to an individual who has withdrawn at any time.

You are not compelled to participate in this focus group. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw without prejudice, up until commencement of data collection.

You will be paid your regular hourly fee for participation in this focus group.

By signing this letter, you give free and informed consent to participate in this focus group, as described.

If you have any questions about this research, please contact me.

Name: (Please Print): __________________________________________________________

Signed: __________________________________________________________

Date: __________________________________________________________
APPENDIX F: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Please introduce yourselves to the group. Specifically,
   a. How long you have worked with Banyan?
   b. What geographical area you operate from?

2. When you think of your association with Banyan in general, what makes you want to do your best work?

3. In the survey responses, the word “support or supportive or supported” appears 16 times. Please elaborate what the concept of support means to you.

4. Why is working from home important to you?

5. Why is being an independent contractor important to you?

6. What are those things about Banyan that no matter how much we change, we want to continue into our future?

7. Let’s assume that today we woke up and it is 2015. Banyan has became exactly as we would like it to be - all of its best qualities are magnified, extended, multiplied - the way we would like to see them. As you come to Banyan today, what do you see that is different, and how do you know?
APPENDIX G: INQUIRY TEAM MEMBER LETTER OF AGREEMENT

In partial fulfillment of the requirement for a Master of Arts in Leadership Degree at Royal Roads University, Carola Moore (the Student) will be conducting an inquiry research study at Banyan Work Health Solutions to study factors that work health consultants feel make for a positive work environment, and improve their satisfaction at work. The Student’s credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by calling Dr. Niels Agger-Gupta, Program Head, MA Leadership.

Inquiry Team Member Role Description:

As a volunteer Inquiry Team Member assisting the Student with this project, your role may include one or more of the following: providing advice on the relevance and wording of questions and letters of invitation, supporting the logistics of the data-gathering methods, including observing, assisting, or facilitating an interview or focus group, taking notes, transcribing, translating, or analyzing data, to assist the Student and the Banyan organizational change process. In the course of this activity, you may be privy to confidential inquiry data.

Confidentiality of Inquiry Data:

In compliance with the Royal Roads University Research Ethics Policy, under which this inquiry project is being conducted, all personal identifiers and any other confidential information generated or accessed by the inquiry team advisor will only be used in the performance of the functions of this project, and must not be disclosed to anyone other than persons authorized to receive it, both during the inquiry period and beyond it. Recorded information in all formats is covered by this agreement. Personal identifiers include participant names, contact information, personally identifying turns of phrase or comments, and any other personally identifying information.

Personal information will be collected, recorded, corrected, accessed, altered, used, disclosed, retained, secured and destroyed as directed by the Student, under direction of the Royal Roads Academic Supervisor.

Inquiry Team Members who are uncertain whether any information they may wish to share about the project they are working on is personal or confidential will verify this with Carola Moore, the Student.

Statement of Informed Consent:

I have read and understand this agreement.

____________________________________  ____________
Name                                          Date