

Improving workplace productivity



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Executive Summary

This proposal looks at ways of improving workplace productivity. This is one of the major problems that companies and firms experience. The major problem at work places can be defined as the lack of employee productivity and performance. This could be caused by inadequate employee input. Mostly it can be attributed to the lack of motivation and innovation at the workplace. This proposal has discussed this problem in detail this problems. This proposal proposes a number of systems for motivating employees. It also gives a step by step detailed report on how to nurture innovation in employees. This is because innovation is the cornerstone of success of a firm. This proposal has an in depth analysis of each proposed system and offers recommendations. This report has also looked at a work life plan that should be adopted by the company so as to reduce the cases of work becoming monotonous to the employees. Monotony may lead to boredom and boredom leads to lack of productivity. This report has also gone to the length of comparing the best companies and has highlighted their systems. It would be good if some of these systems were borrowed so as to ensure the company is successful. Diagrams have also been included in this proposal so as to further the understanding of the proposed systems.

Introduction

So that an organization can achieve its goals and ambitions there must be productivity and performance by its employees. Workplace productivity is a major problem in numerous organizations. The reason for lack of employee productivity could be due to lack of motivation and maybe boredom at the

workplace. Another reason for lack of productivity may be attributed to lack of innovation by the employees of the company. This report has given a number of ways to increase employee motivation and innovation. (Bhargava 95)

It has also looked at a work life plan that should be adopted by the company so as to reduce the cases of work becoming monotonous to the employees. Monotony may lead to boredom and boredom leads to lack of productivity. By having good work life policies boredom could be reduced and in turn increase employee output. This effort motivation effect is applicable to all but may vary depending on the transparency of the link between the rewards and the employee's performance, the extent to which an employee is able to adjust his/her pay depending on the performance level, and the time holdup between appraised performance and reward. This will ensure that employees work hard i. e. have a great input and in turn increase the companies output. (Bhargava 97)

Employee motivation

Motivation is defined as the psychological feature that arouses an employee to act for a preferred goal; the motive for the action; that which giving direction and meaning to behavior. Work output and input is greatly influenced and affected by motivation. The company has the challenge of constantly motivating the employees to work at their best since it is important so as to achieve the company's goals and objectives.

The company should also organize motivational talks for the employees. This could be through the use of motivational speakers. This will encourage staff

to put in more effort in their work. This will increase work output and thus propel the company to its goals. The company should have constant and regular reviews of issues like pay, wages and benefits of the best performing employees. Financial incentive is essential in motivating employees to be more productive. This will also increase job satisfaction. This can be carried out in a number of ways. These have been discussed below.

The Proposed Profit-Sharing Scheme

The company should implement a system which offers employees financial incentives which are pegged on the profits made by the company. This will increase work input and output. This will in turn increase the company's profits. This will put the employees pay in their hands and will increase their responsibility. This type of scheme does not affect the company's profits. (Bhargava 98)

So as to have as successful profit-sharing scheme the company must ensure that:

The employees participating in the scheme directly affect the company's profits. The company must ensure that the scheme motivates the selected employees to be more productive.

The goals and ambitions must be realistic and attainable. The company must spell out goals that can be achieved. It would be best if the goals were based on the history of the company. If the goals are set too high it would demoralize the employees.

Below is a diagrammatical representation of the proposed system.

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Figure 1 The Proposed Profit-Sharing scheme

The system shown above offers employees financial incentives which are pegged on the profits made by the company. This has a direct and indirect effect. It will motivate the employees as well as sensitize them. This will increase work input and output. This will in turn increase the company's profits. This will put the employees pay in their hands and will increase their responsibility. This type of scheme does not affect the company's profits.

Work Life Programs

Another way to increase employee performance is through work life programs. Work life programs help to bridge the gap between work and the personal life of an employee. These programs create a balance between work and the personal lives of the employees. This leads to an increase in productivity and work output in the work place and creates a better place for employees to work in. (Marx, K 12). There are various options of work life programs for example adjustable work arrangements, salary bonuses and discounts for employees. Good work life programs highly motivate employees to work better and to love their jobs. Work life programs make employees loyal to a company. They also reduce the monotony of work. Good work life programs reduce the cases of employee absenteeism.

So as to emphasize the importance of work life programs five companies were studied in this research. The companies studied were said to be top 5 companies to work for due to their good work life programs. These are:

1. American Century Investments

2. MITRE

3. Standard Pacific Homes

4. SAS

5. Nugget Market

The companies studied have been discussed in detail below.

MITRE. This is a non-profit organization that provides research, development and information technology support. MITRE is also involved in system engineering. It runs on government funds in various sectors of research such as the internal revenue authority and the department of defense. MITRE's goal is to empower people to make their own good choice. It believes in innovation and research. MITRE has one of the best work life programs which include having flexible work arrangements. This enables employees to plan their personal life by offering changing work schedules, home based work or telecommuting and job sharing. The company also offers adoption assistance which is a program where the company offers financial help to an employee who adopts a child who is physically disabled or mentally challenged. MITRE has also offered a work life consultation service where employees are given confidential consultation on issues like work related stresses. It also has a remarkable health program which helps employees to stay healthy so as to increase their work output. This is achieved through the introduction of fitness site at work and also outdoor recreation facilities for employees to stay fit.

American Century Investments is a financial institution that deals in offering financial investment advice and information to its clients. It deals with mutual funds, retirement benefits and savings. It also provides asset management services and also sales support. The company has the goal of being one of the leading companies in the financial field. American century investments has one of the best work life programs which range from time off to its employees, sabbaticals, parental leaves and other form of leaves. The company has health coverage for its employees, a retiree medical plan and also an employee assistance program. Employees are also offered financial security by the company through retirement plans and packages, annual employee incentives, tax saving plans and relocation benefits. Due to this work life programs the company is voted one of the best to work in. This has greatly increased the employee's involvement in their work since they love their job and hence increased the productivity of the company.

Southern Pacific Homes was also another company studied. It is a company that deals with buying and selling of houses. It has a motto of making its clients feel right at home in the homes the company sells. The company also offers flexible work schedules and telecommuting so as to give employees time for their personal lives. It offers employee discounts of 3% of the company's homes. It also has a health and income program that is tailored for its employees. Each employee can choose whatever benefit package that suits their needs. The company also offers its employees mortgage discounts. This in turn saves their employees cost of owning a home.

Another company whose work life program was evaluated was SAS. SAS is a company that deals with providing software solutions. Its main objective is to offer tailor made software solutions to its customers and also to foster innovation in its employees. The company recognizes the need for its employees to have some time away from work so as to be able to have a balanced life. The company has company paid vacations. These are three weeks per year. The company also has paid sick days where its employees get paid even when on sick leave. The company also has flexible work schedules which are offered to employees such that their work plan can be adjusted. The company also has 11 paid holidays for its employees.

The last company looked at was Nugget Markets which is a chain of retail supermarkets. It also owns food franchises. The company offers has paid sick days where its employees get paid even when on sick leave. It also offers employee discounts to its employees in its supermarkets. Nugget also offers flexible work arrangements so as to bring balance between the employees work and personal life.

Nurturing Innovation

Innovation in a team can be defined as the act of starting something new for the first time, something that has not yet been done by the team. The creation may rise from a study or experiment. Innovation could be termed as the brain child of creativity of the team members. Proper motivation is needed so as to be able to foster proper innovation in the team. The team must have a clear guideline and understanding of what innovation is and what it entails. (Kruse, D. 9)

Benefits of innovation

Nurturing innovation in a team also has great benefits on not only the team members but also to the organization as a whole. This includes: The organization benefits greatly by being the first organization to take a product or service to the market before any of their competitors. Innovation gives the organization an edge over its competition. By being the first organization to take a new product or service to the market the organization gains a large market share. Due to having a large market share and increased team productivity the organization benefits by the increase of profit margins. This in turn increases the share price of the organization. Innovation also leads to increase in shareholder dividends due to the increased profit margins of the company. Innovation will increase the overall production of the organization by having a highly motivated team. (Kruse, D. 15)

Nurturing innovation in the team has great benefits for the team. This are: Nurturing innovation increases curiosity in the team. Curiosity leads to the team trying out new ideas and concepts. Nurturing innovation leads to increased productivity of the team. This can be through positive competition within the team. Nurturing innovation leads to the team building and cohesiveness. The team acts as a single unit in order to meet the goals of innovation that have been set. Nurturing innovation will increased employee motivation and morale. Team motivation and morale is important in productivity. Nurturing innovation encourages the team with passion in undertaking their tasks. Innovation leads to the team having more praise other than criticism and these increases and boosts the team's spirit when facing a problem. (Kruse, D. 23)

Strategies and actions to promote and foster innovation

In a bid to foster innovation the organization could adopt a few strategies which encourage the team members to be as innovative as possible. So as to increase innovation the organization must first select the appropriate team to tackle the problem in hand. The team must be chosen in a free and fair manner and it should only contain people who are qualified in the particular field that the organization is dealing in. The team selected must include individuals who are ready to learn new things and are ready to branch away from the norm. The organization has to devise practical and realistic ways for the team to overcome the problem facing the organization. (Kruse, D. 25)

The organization should then come up with an approach to nurture innovation in its team members. From time to time the organization should reflect upon its approach so as to ensure that the organization has in place proper measures and strategies that are in tune with the organizations morals, plans and objectives of the organization. The organization should then inform the whole team of the strategies and motivate the team to come up with new ideas for a new product or service.

The organization should adopt a strategy of free flow of ideas within the team whereby the team members should be free to exchange information and ideas for the betterment of the organization. The organization should come up with an award scheme for some of the most innovative ideas. Awards could be in the form of salary bonuses to the team or team member who came up with the most innovative idea. The organization must also

ensure that the owner of an implemented idea get recognition for their work done.

The organization must also be able to avail enough funds, resource and time so as to facilitate the research, design, testing and implementation of the innovative ideas. The organization must encourage team member not to give up and take chances with ideas. The organization should encourage the team to learn from its mistakes in the past.

In as much as the team should be able to take risks the organization must be able to teach the team how to pick between the risks and the benefits of taking the risk. To be able to differentiate the two should be well explained to the team members.

Employee Diversity

Since employees of the company are from different cultural, social, economic and spiritual back grounds. The company must be able to account for all the employees equally without favor. It must respect their beliefs and thus making employees comfortable to work at the company. This will increase productivity as well as work input.

So that the company can achieve all its goals all employees must work as a unit so as to propel to company into the future. It is the challenge of the company to bring together all employees from their diverse backgrounds. The company should ensure that all employees work together so as to achieve the same goal. The company must also ensure that all employees are treated equally at the company and that their beliefs are protected. This

may prove to be a challenge since the company has a wide diversity of employees. (White, M., et al 6)

This is very important since for example, large multinational companies employ people from different countries and backgrounds. The company must be able to manage the diverse talent so that the company can achieve its goals since it is important for the company to have diversity for maximum productivity. It is also important for company to address diversity issues since it may affect an employee's productivity and work output. This can be illustrated for example; if an employee is treated well at their place of they perform better and have greater work output.

So as to be able to address the problem of employee diversity the company needs to understand that it is important for all employees despite their difference to work together. The company must understand the need of having an employee and the employee's contribution to the company. The company must cater for all employee differences when they are planning and organizing the company's resources. (White, M., et al 9)

The best way to tackle this problem is by having a diversity awareness campaign at the company. By having a diversity awareness campaign the company will be able to get feedback from employees on how to improve the approach to employee diversity. Consultants and experts could also be hired so as to encourage employees to voice their concern on how diversity could be addressed. The experts could also encourage the company's employees to look beyond their cultural background. The awareness campaign will encourage the staff to work as a team. (White, M., et al 15)

The company must also be able to organize the diverse talent of the company strategically. The company must understand how important each talent is to the company. The company must understand that it is important to employ employees from diverse backgrounds if they are talented. The company must know that a diverse workforce is important since it enables the company to achieve its goals. It also ensures that the company reaches its full potential.

The company should lead in the championing of a diverse workforce. The company could do this by making it clear that it embraces diversity. The company must respect and protect the different beliefs and cultures of the employees. The company must show a high level of commitment to resolve this problem so as to encourage other employees to do the same. The company should set a good example. The company must constantly get feedback on what the employees think should be done to promote diversity at the work place.

Recommendations

Figure 2 All the proposed Systems.

It is recommended that all the systems that have been discussed in this research be implemented since when they all work together they increase the employees' performance and productivity. Below action plans on how to implement the systems have been discussed.

Action plan for nurturing innovation

The organization should have a perfect action plan so as to be able to implement the strategies that have been discussed above. Without the action plan the strategies discussed above will have no beneficial use to the organization.

The team selected should be able to anticipate future trends. Innovation is all about being the future. The organization must be able to cater for research in future trends by collecting data from consumers and opinion polls. The organization must be able to come up with practical and realistic ways for the team to overcome the problem facing the organization. The organization must provide an environment that encourages and supports the team to do its best, to the best of its ability.

The organization must desist from internal or external interference of the teams work and should encourage the team to make its own independent decisions without having external pressures this could affect innovation. In as much as the organization does not interfere in the teams work the organization should continuously challenge the team to come up with innovative ideas and alternative ways of solving a problem.

In a bid to maximize on innovation and profits the organization must be ready to branch out and invest in emerging markets. It should foster innovation by encouraging the team to find new opportunities and concepts. Team members should be encouraged to be curious and experimental since it is only by taking risk that they could learn.

The policy of free flow of information should be implemented for the team so as to increase and boost the team building effort. Team building could also

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be enforced by, as discussed above, financial incentives to the team for having innovative ideas. Incentives will constantly challenge the team to be better. They also boost the team's spirit, morale and enthusiasm towards their work. These incentives could include pay rises, bonus pays and job promotions.

Action plan for Work Life Programs

From the study undertaken it can be shown that work life balance has great benefits. This is because it lowers the level of employee absenteeism. It boosts the company's recruitment and retention powers for employees. They also encourage diligence and commitment to the company. It also increases the productiveness, the quality of work by the employee and also leads to job satisfaction. This leads to very happy and devoted employees. Thus work life balance is a recommended must have since it is very advantageous to the growth and development of the company.

Action Plan for Employee Motivation

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