

Prevention of absenteeism, presenteeism and turnovers essays example

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PREVENTION OF ABSENTEEISM, PRESENTEEISM AND TURNOVERS

Abstract

Any business enterprise that fails to introduce strong organizational policies and strategies is bound to face problems. Problems such as employee absenteeism, presenteeism and turnover are some of the problems that these enterprises face. If left unattended, these problems can cause inefficiency, and monetary damage. The consequences of these actions are multifold as they can destroy the image of those organizations and lead to its ultimate downfall.

Keywords: absenteeism, presenteeism, turnover, lackadaisical, revolt, motivation

Absenteeism at work is failing to report for work. It is considered a violation of a social obligation toward work at a predetermined and predefined time. Absenteeism can be viewed as an indicator to poor individual performance and a breach of an implicit contract by an employee. According to Johns (2007), “ Modern research has linked absenteeism to psychological, medical or social adjustment to work.” Two theories that specifically focuses on

absenteeism are those by Farrell and Stamm (1988), who called this as the 'Withdrawal theory,' where absenteeism results from withdrawal or avoidance of unfavorable work conditions, and Cooper and Robertson's (1999), 'Stress theory,' wherein they state that absenteeism results from stressors which arise from unfavorable work conditions.

Presenteeism is a problem related to inefficiency of work by employees due to illness or other medical conditions, which hampers performance and productivity. According to Burton et al., (1999), "Presenteeism measures the 'decrease in productivity of those employees whose health problems has not necessarily led to absenteeism, but a decrease in productivity before and after their absence period.'" Demerouti et al., (2009) believes that "Presenteeism may not be a smart strategy to compensate for, as this could further lead to deterioration in an employees' mental and physical condition." Considering this, it is better to avoid presenteeism, as it could prove counterproductive and affect the collective productivity of the group in which he/she performs.

On turnover, Heathfield (2013) says that "Turnover is about the percentage of employees who voluntarily or involuntarily leave an organization in comparison with those who stay over a certain period of time; generally in a calendar year." Turnovers are sickening, as organizations that are incapable of holding on to their employees risks manifold problems. Human resource experts evaluate that every employee lost to a firm is equivalent to that person's salary for a full year!

At this point, a few theories can be included to overcome such problems.

One popular theory is that of Maslow's Hierarchy Theory. Maslow bases his

motivational theory on employee needs. According to Maslow “ there is a pattern of needs in an individual and it is the fulfillment of these needs which leads to personal satisfaction,” say Beech et al, (2005). Since needs are enormous and widely defined, Maslow categorized them into five levels; “ physiological, safety, social (Love), esteem, and self-actualizing,” says Lindner (1998). Maslow argued that ‘ needs’ had to be satisfied in a systematic order to motivate employee. This meant that for an employee or individual, “ his/her physiological thirst had to be quenched first, before they thought of the next level of needs,” said Lindner (1998). Maslow also argued that some of needs were more powerful than others. Subsequently, “ the dominant needs had to be satisfied first before the higher levels of needs could be addressed to motivate an individuals' behavior,” reported Pride et al., (1999). Mullins (2002) states that Maslow felt that it was the “ unsatisfied needs of individuals which motivated them and that satisfied needs were no longer motivational.” If this was the case and if all needs were met at work, motivational needs would reduce or become defunct.

Maslow (2001) is of the opinion that people have five levels of needs. The basic need is survival; have enough money to buy food, shelter and clothing. The second level is security; job security. The third level is social, followed by status, and finally, the pinnacle of them all; the level of self-actualization. We see that for an individual to go from one level to another, he/she needs to be motivated. Unless there is sufficient motivation, one would remain content with the basic level. Maslow attributes motivation to be of two kinds:

- “ Financial: includes, bonus, commission, profit sharing and piece sharing.
- Non-Financial: includes, job rotation, job sharing, team work, status,

consultation, quality circles, and fringe benefits” (Maslow, 2001).

Therefore, organizations must target those needs which will ensure that their workforce is retained by fulfilling their unmet needs in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. This will ensure that there are constant growth opportunities which can be capitalized through their workforces’ capability. Marlow’s theory thus says that if an individual or employee(s) is to be motivated, their motivation level on the hierarchy must be understood before their immediate need or needs are considered to motivate them (Lawler III, 1994). One way of achieving this is by organizing employee satisfaction surveys and then proposing suitable incentive schemes to motivate them.

Another theory that can be connected to Presenteeism is Correll’s (2004) observation. Correll smartly acknowledges the complicated behavior of employees when it comes to deciding on the nature of work sought by them. According to Correll (2004), “ When an employee faces a choice between two endeavors like desired performance versus undesired performance, he/she is bound to choose a course which offers a greater reward. This is why organizations need to address their employees with motivational strategies to instigate them to undertake undesired performances. One way to do so is by increasing the net reward for undesired performances, as employees perceive it, called the downside. The Upside is the desired performances an employee would cherish, for they are easy and less risk-oriented. In order to get employees to perform downsides, incentives and bonuses and rewards can be offered. This is how motivation works. Virtually every performance carries both an upside and a downside. So, associated with every endeavor or performance is a formula, called the Net Reward Formula, and

represented as: $\text{Upside} - \text{Downside} = \text{Net Reward}$," ended Correll (2004).

This will ensure that when cases like absenteeism, presenteeism or turnover happens, there is a suitable program in place to handle such difficult situations.

It is strategies like these that attract and retain people, and is a point that all organizations should follow to improve their standing. And finally, there is Herzberg's theory of motivation. Herzberg's theory is based on two factors; motivators and hygienes. " Motivators are intrinsic, while hygienes are extrinsic. Motivators include achievements, recognition, work contents, advancement and chances to take responsibility. Hygiene includes work conditions, financial compensation, security, social status, interpersonal relationship, and company policy," says Basseet-Jones and Lloyd (2005). Hence, hygienes factors are described as factors that influence the environment and the surrounding of the work but not the work it self.

Another theory of immense importance is the Vroom Theory. The Vroom theory focuses on three important relationships that play crucial role in employee motivation. These relationships are based on the relation between efforts and performance, performance and reward, and rewards and personal goals. The theory argues that in order to motivate an individual to perform a given task, the expected rewards shall be inline with individuals' needs and goals (Kotze). Thus, tasks appraisal and selection are very much controlled by employees and their needs and goals at various times or stage (Kotze). According to Langford et al. (1995), this theory is based on the theory that individuals realize their needs, and whenever they approach their task, they weigh and analyze its outcome and rewards in terms of their needs. They

determine the level of their participation, and base it on the level of their rewards or pre-judged outcomes, before deciding to partake in that task (Kotze).

The expectancy theory highlights a very important motivation connection between an individual's performance and reward. This is a very delicate relationship and it could lead to adversity if the individual perceives the rewarding system to be unsatisfactory to meet or fulfill his/her needs and goals in comparison to their expected performance levels. Employees may then consider other alternatives to fulfill their needs or readjust their performance to match the existing rewarding schemes. This is a definite no-no, for this is when lethargy sets in and becomes contagious to other members of the team. It's never been easy to stop unhappy employees, and in most cases, unhappy employees leave the organization. The practical implication of this theory is that, employees behave according to the expected outcomes and its alignment to their needs. Hence, organizations need to consider employee-centric programs to motivate their staff and maximize their engagement. Consequently, a careful implementation of the concept is a must in retaining employees in organizations once it's strategically impeded in HRM structures.

Of the three predicaments faced by organizations, it would be illogical to say which of them would be most harmful to organizations, as each one of them present a different challenge. Having an employee who is sick report to duty and have/her work in a group could be catastrophic as a target set by the group could be in jeopardy due to the below par performance of one team member. Teams work collectively and when one of them underperforms, the

collective objective of the team suffers. As Roe (2003), says, “ group performance may suffer due to dependance of healthy workers on sick workers to complete their job, or because sick employees may pass on infectious illnesses to their colleagues and clients.” Managements need to be careful when assessing such situations. In their effort to motivate employees, managements often include reward systems for high attendance, caring little for the consequence of attracting sick employees can have on group performance. Demerouti et al. (2009), studied the positive correlation between higher presenteeism and burn ou, and how emotional exhaustion and Presenteeism are analogical. Their study revealed that “ employees who encountered emotional exhaustion by way of the lure of rewards, reported to work only to become physically exhausted.” It is in this context that Hunt (2009) says that, “ While designing strategies, a major objective would be to ensure that such policies are eliminated.” This can stir the hornest’s nest. If absenteeism is high, employees will perceive the workplace as an informal setting with no codes being observed, which in turn could decrease the morale of the employees who report to work regularly. When this happens, there is bound to be internal bickering which could affect the morale of the sincere employees and affect productivity.

It is because of this that Grinyer and Singleton (2000), says that “ Presenteeism is in by itself harmful for employees as by repeatedly postponing sickness minor illnesses they could end up with major health issues.” “ Any policy that mandates strict back-to-work rules must be backed by adequate staffing and health care to minimize any feeling of personal responsibility that encourages presenteeism,” writes Wrate (1999). Despite

the best efforts to educate them on mandatory exclusion rules, health care providers are most likely to come to work if they feel that their absence would burden their colleagues or affect delivery of patient care. Policies that maximize efficiency at work can therefore be detrimental to public health. Furthermore, a policy that ensures adequate coverage may be cost-effective for health care institutions that mitigate the negative financial impact associated with large nosocomial outbreaks.

“ The availability of unrestricted paid sick leave is a step forward in limiting the impact of presenteeism. Policies should also be in place to discourage and exclude employees from coming to work for a minimum period at least when symptoms are seen,” says Widera et al (2010). “ The existence of effective treatment options for a given medical condition is unimportant; employers must implement educational programs for their employees to prevent undiagnosed or misdiagnosed illnesses to be left unattended. This will allow employees to better manage their health conditions and also save considerable money on health-related issues, thus improving workplace productivity,” says Berger et al (2003). Reducing employee turnover may seem to be a formidable task, but it is critical when juxtaposed to replacing these employees.

Turnovers with respect to education can cause drastic social problems. “ Poor academic achievements or poor attendance can demotivate students who, in addition to dropping out, are most likely to show delinquency and commit crimes as they are unable to obtain employment,” says Balfanz and Chang (2013). One of the ways to prevent turnovers is through retention of current employees. This can be achieved by rewarding successful employees

in a straightforward way to recognize good work, either through clearly established incentive/variable-pay programs or more flexible on-the-spot rewards systems. Many employees simply desire acknowledgement for their hard work. However, cash bonuses or other financial rewards are not to be ignored as they will act as motivators and recognize them for a work well done. Another vital element in retention is in training both employees and managers. Properly trained managers are better equipped to make smart hiring decisions which prevent future turnovers, and build productive relationships with employees than their less proficient counterparts. Well-trained managers will have the tools to identify whether applicants are likely to fit within the existing company culture.

“ Encouraging employee communication can help overcome potential problems, and ensure that they are handled much more efficiently by employees. This will reduce complaints and develop better interpersonal communication,” says Befus (2004). Preventing absenteeism facilitates enhanced performance and output. When absenteeism declines, production becomes smooth and along with productivity, employees will become more skilled in their work. This way, effective planning and decision-making can also be achieved. For instance, it is possible for a manager to make a decision on what his workers will do in the following week if their attendance is assured. Plans to achieve and deliver target-based outputs can be put in place, as managers know that they have the backing of a well-trained and healthy workforce to achieve that objective. For instance, a student will be in tune with his/her syllabus when they are present in class regularly. This is likely to reflect in their performance.

“ Customer satisfaction is important for any business to succeed,” says Aamodt (2013). For instance, customer satisfaction can be facilitated by having adequate employees to serve them.

Being present can enhance commitments. When an employee is present, he/she will have a clear idea of what is required from them. This forms a loop; commitment enforces motivation, which in turn strengthens commitment. “ When interpersonal interactions increase and interdependency forms between colleagues, it promotes a group atmosphere that seeks to perform well,” says Aamodt (2013).

Strategies preventing turnovers can help in retention. Replacing exceptional talent is very difficult and time consuming. It also leads to additional financial obligations. March and Simon (1958), proposed that “ employee turnover results from an individual's perceptions about desirability and movement.” However, Jackofsky and Peters (1983) in their research stated that over time, “ the perceived desirability of movement has been equated essentially with job satisfaction alone.” Mobley’s model tried to explain the process of a voluntary turn over. Mobley theorized that job dissatisfaction lead to thoughts of quitting, which in turn lead to evaluation of expected utility for searching for other jobs and costs associated with quitting. On analyzing the evaluation process, an intention to search for alternative jobs may emerge depending on the costs of quitting the current job emerged, which in turn leads to search for alternatives and the acceptability of identified alternatives. The last evaluation results from comparison of these alternatives to the present job, which in turn can lead to an intention to quit and eventual turnover ended, Lee & Mitchell (1994).

Conclusion

Controlling Absenteeism, Presenteeism and Turnout is highly challenging and all organizations must ways to address these issues if they want to succeed. Motivation can be a great source of inspiration, but that too has to be planned in such a way that no complacency arises at the workplace that can have a serious impact on performance and output. Considering and implementing some or all of the above theories can help organizations counter such forms of contingencies like absenteeism, presenteeism and turnout. It all depends on how and when such theories need to be included or implemented that organizational managers will have to understand and set that will decide the fate of that organization.

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