

Counselling at the workplace commerce essay



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Stress in the workplace brought about by deadlines, pressures from left to right and high expectations from a boss can definitely make any employee suffer from both physical and emotional fatigue. When this happens, many employees find alcohol, smoking and other vices as the best way to make them forget about all the pressures, stress and sufferings they experience at work (DirectGov, 2010).

However, the use of any of these vices merely leads to other forms of problems which further aggravate the tremendous problems they are already facing at work. Soon enough, these poor employees find themselves losing interest in their jobs, getting depressed easily, bored and restless at work or even worse, bullying and harassing other people (Adams, 2010).

Aside from the abovementioned employee problems, other people also find it hard to adapt to new directions and the ever-changing work tasks that people often get trapped with their work. Some people even get traumatized by the overwhelming stress, harassment and even discrimination that they experience at work (Source Line, 2010).

Many people actually suffer from these symptoms and are in need of emotional help, advice and support from other people who understand their situation. According to Matthewman (2000), all these psychological stress that people constantly experience at work inevitably affect not only their professional life but also their personal lives.

Naturally when employees experience these awful things, they become vulnerable, easily losing interest in going to work and performing their tasks

that motivating or encouraging would be the most difficult thing to do (Herzberg, F., 2003).

Nevertheless, these employees need motivation, support and advice more than anything as this serves as their way of healing, of bring back self-respect and stimulating their interests at work (London Metropolitan University, 2010).

This is where the role of counselling comes, which according to Matthewman (2000) is often used to resolve stressful and difficult problems and issues being experienced by many employees nowadays. Other than counselling, there are no other channels or ways wherein people can actually resolve these work-related conflicts which often have the tendency to ruin even their personal lives.

Work-Based Counselling Defined

According to Cox, E. & Bachrikova, T. (2005), work-based counselling may be defined in so many ways. Essentially, it involves active listening and not simply hearing words spoken by the employee. The process also involves showing interest and sincerity to the employee in terms of reflecting back and asking further questions. In counselling, sarcasm must never exist nor any form of discouragement.

Empathizing is one key element in the counselling process. The ability to put one's self in the shoes of the employee is an essential element in counselling and is the best form of expressing sincere thoughts and totally understanding where the person is coming from. Without empathy or the

sincere effort of understanding the employee, the counsellor may merely end up blaming or further discouraging the employee (Matthewman, 2000).

Oftentimes, counselling is the best avenue to discuss key details about an employee and his personal problems at work. Problems such as an employee-boss conflict or dealing with a hot-tempered boss are often best discussed through counselling. Also, any form of discrimination and harmful acts by fellow employees which caused psychological trauma on the employee is also best talked about in counselling. Moreover, counselling serves as an avenue to discuss personal problems or pressures at home which affects an employee's work performance (Source Line, 2010).

Contrary to many people's beliefs that counselling is merely an avenue for the discussion of problems and issues at work, counselling is also the best avenue for feel-good discussions, advices and encouragements. Advices such as whether to accept a new position or job offer or not as well as career plan advices are best dealt with in counselling. Also, giving good feedback and praises about one's work ethics may also be given through counselling. Furthermore, encouragements for employees who lack motivations or passion at work are most commonly given also through counselling (Cox, E. & Bachrikova, T., 2005).

How Work-Based Counselling Works

Counselling at the work place is something that must be freely given to all employees because any problem that an employee experiences may either directly or indirectly interfere from his or her better work performance. Since companies compensate these employees, any performance below the

company standards may have a negative impact on the company's business and ultimately on its sales and profits (Connexions Direct, 2010).

Given this fact, counselling must be a company's top benefit that must be provided to every employee. According to Adams, A. (2010), there are various types of counselling which works best depending on the employee's issues and problems.

Disciplinary counselling is one type of counselling wherein a counsellor discusses with an employee, the latter's personal issues at work and the causes of his poor work performance. In facilitating disciplinary counselling, the counsellor must be very careful not to impose rules and regulations in a way that would discourage or hurt the employee undergoing the counselling. Proper proceedings in disciplinary counselling must strictly be observed by the counsellor so that the session would not result to a form of forceful discipline or worse, bullying (Direct Gov, 2010).

Personal counselling is on the other hand, the most popular form of work-based counselling as it deals with the general issues, the employees often encounter. Problems such as depression, discrimination, lack of motivation to work, stress, lack of confidence, anxieties and psychological trauma at work, vices and family problems are the usual issues being tackled in personal counselling (Direct Gov, 2010).

Since counselling deals with highly-sensitive issues an employee experiences either at work or at home, confidentiality must be protected at all times. It would be a crime and a big mistake to tell anybody what the employee has shared inside the counselling room. When this happens, the employees

would automatically withdraw and lose trust with the counsellor which would then affect the number of employees who would want to participate in counselling (Direct Gov, 2010).

The Importance of Counselling at Work

According to Mwosa, J. (2001), counselling is the best form of maximizing human resources in the workplace. Counselling may also be considered the most important form of company investment as it is intended to improve and increase the performance, productivity, and efficiency of an employee.

The Counsellor's Guide (2010) states that there is no better way to address and identify an employee's personal issues, problems and difficulties triggered by his emotions, feelings and thoughts other than by directly listening, responding and encouraging that person through the form of counselling. Any form of unexpressed tension or psychological problems may hinder an employee from performing his best at work. Hence, it is very important for the company to recognize the very important need of employees for counselling.

Other benefits of work-based counselling are also recognized by experts in relation to an employee's work behaviour and performance. For one, counselling makes employees cope better with the stress and workplace pressure that they are constantly facing daily. When the counsellor is able to successfully aid an employee to properly cope with his daily pressures, the employee becomes stronger and more able to deal with problems at work. Also, counselling teaches employees to be solution-centric and to find better solutions to the problems they face at the work place. Counselling allows

employees to see the problem in another perspective and encourages them to gain positive outlook about life (Naukri Hub, 2010).

Bobinski, D. (2005), in an article he wrote on “ The Importance of Employee Counselling”, argues that work-based counselling is also intended for the development of the employees’ careers. It is only in the avenue of counselling that employees are given the best advice and encouragement in order to perform and do their best at work. Hence, counselling is one of the most effective ways in order to develop and maximize a workforce.

Applying Work-Based Counselling for Employee Motivation

Employee motivational issues is one of the hardest, most difficult tasks that any supervisor or boss would have to deal with in terms of handling people. This is because of the close link between motivation and employee performance. Oftentimes, the level of employee performance is relative to an employee’s level of motivation to work or perform (Freeman, 1993).

Motivation is defined as the sum of a person’s energy and a person’s drive or desire to achieve a particular goal. It is a cause or by-product of the benefits of a particular goal. Oftentimes, motivation is extrinsically expressed by a person through feelings of satisfaction, achievement and excitement towards the achievement of a specific aim (Freeman, 1993).

In the workplace, employee motivation is considered as the key to an employee’s performance or performance improvement. It is stated that performance is a direct function of both motivation and ability. While ability refers to an employee’s capacity and competency to perform a specific task

or function, motivation refers to an employee's inner desire to perform or achieve a particular goal (Accel Team, 2010).

In essence, there are various strategies that can be employed in order to increase or strengthen an employee's motivation. One way is to positively reinforce an employee. Setting high expectations or any form of displaying trust on an employee's competency may be the best way to positively reinforce an employee. Another way is through satisfying the needs of an employee either financially or emotionally. Giving incentives & bonuses or even simply treating a person out for lunch or snacks may prove to be an effective form of employee motivation (Clark, D. 2008).

Work recognition is also one of the most effective ways to motivate a specific employee. Any form of recognition and reward has proven to be the best way to directly reinforce a particular person at work. Any person who is acknowledged for a job well done automatically performs better than any other employee simply because his pride and reputation is lifted up (Accel Team, 2010).

Many times, fatigue and boredom at work may result into the lack of motivation among employees especially once the job becomes routinely and uneventful. Through the efforts of managers or supervisors however in keeping their people's jobs exciting, meaningful and challenging, the employees' motivational level may significantly increase immediately (Clark, D. 2008).

The key however to effectively increase the motivation and positive reinforcement of the employees lies on the capacity of the bosses,

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supervisors and managers to motivate their own people. While that is one important qualification for the bosses in terms of handling their people, motivating employees may prove to be indeed a challenging task (All Business, 2010).

One way of facilitating the motivation process is through employee counselling. In order for employee motivational counselling to work however, certain qualities must be demonstrated by the supervisor. One is that the supervisor must show respect for the employees. This includes awareness of the employee's skills, attributes, values and personal beliefs (Clark, D. 2008).

Supervisors are also expected to demonstrate self-awareness. In conducting employee motivational counselling, the so-called "counsellors" must let go of any biases they may have in terms attitudes, values and beliefs. Also, they must be able to establish credibility and trust with their own people. Since technically, they are the "bosses" of their own employees, the latter would normally think twice of going through an employee motivational counselling with their own boss due to their own pre-conceived notions of biases and unfair judgment with their bosses (Clark, D. 2008).

Finally, an effective employee motivational counselling is always accompanied with empathy and sincere understanding that must be demonstrated by the counsellors or the supervisors to their own people. Supervisor-counsellors may only be able to effectively motivate their employees to perform better at work once they learn to understand their subordinate's position and actions. They must be able to put themselves in

the shoes of their people in order to better understand them (Clark, D. 2008).

Applying Work-Based Counselling for Improving Work Performance

Just like motivation, work performance is also a positive indicator that an employee performs at his best at work. However, if an employee is demonstrating negative signs of work performance such as constantly arriving late and being absent from work, then the company may be experiencing serious problems with the employee which the supervisors must take note of.

According to Healthfield, S. (2010), the very first step in improving an employee's work performance is none other than counselling. Part of the job responsibilities of a supervisor or a manager is to perform counselling duties to his people. It is only through counselling that positive and negative feedback are being expressed freely by the boss to the employee and it is only through counselling that the boss is able to bring out the best in an employee he handles. Other than counselling, there are no other avenues to directly correct, train, improve and encourage an employee that's why it is very important that supervisors are aware of this responsibility.

The ultimate goal of counselling is actually not to make the employee feel bad by running down a list of their mistakes or showing that they have no chance of improving. In fact, it is the complete opposite of that as it the direct means of enhancing the employee's performance at work.

According to Higgerson, M. (1999), performance counselling is extremely important in all organizations. This is because performance counselling is the only avenue for supervisor-counsellors to motivate their employees to improve their work performance. Since performance counselling is indeed a person-specific activity, the organizational goals and purposes are easier to communicate which must be the object of focus of all employees in any organization.

Williams. H. (2000) asserts that while common sense dictates that written warning be sent to any employee whose work performance is way below that of the standard set by the company, the principles of performance counselling encourages the opposite. In fact, the principles of performance counselling suggest that counselling must take place right away with an underperformer.

In performance counselling, the supervisor-counsellor must be able to discuss the performance standards expected of an employee as well as provide the means to appropriately lend assistance to that performance in order for him to meet the standards (Williams, H. 2000).

Second, the supervisor-counsellor must give the benefit of the doubt to the employee. He must give the employee the time and the chance to explain the reasons for his underperformance at work and ask him to determine a specific length of time by which he should have already addressed the performance problem (Smith, H. W., 1988).

In all performance counselling sessions, the supervisor-counsellor must ensure a proactive and emphatic approach as it would be harder to facilitate

a counselling session with a counsellor being driven away completely by his or her own biases and beliefs. The counsellor must therefore keep in mind that the main reason why he's counselling is to produce a positive impact on his employees, that is, so that the employee might perform better and be motivated more at work (Williams, H. 2000).

Moreover, the supervisor-counselor must consistently show his willingness and sincerity to help solve the employee's problem and not focus on the mistakes and the consequences of the poor performance of the employee. An effective personal counseling takes a personal approach to improve the performance of the person at work and not control or change his attitudes and beliefs (Higgerson, M., 1999).

Contrary to popular belief that it is only the underperforming employee who benefits from the performance counseling sessions, what ultimately benefits is the company where the employee works. There are a number of ways by which performance counseling benefits the company by further improving employee work performance.

One clear benefit of performance counseling is a much clearer job role and function which the company can benefit from. When the employees know how to perform their duties and up to what extent, their job responsibilities encompass, they would be able to perform their jobs better. Also, another clear benefit of performance counseling is the early identification of problems. Oftentimes, in the workplace, problems come at unexpected moments when people least expect them to come that's why it often results to the inability of the organizations to meet their desired goals. However, if the organizations have practiced performance counseling, any problems encountered when it comes to their employees may easily be avoided (" The Effect of Job Counseling on Employee Performance", 2005).

Who May do the Counselling in the Workplace?

According to the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment (1997), while there is normally an assigned employee counsellor to whom the employees can freely discuss or air out their work-related concerns, it is first and foremost the job responsibility of supervisors and managers to provide counselling to their own employees or people.

The rationale for this is simply that no one else in the organization knows an employee and how an employee performs at work other than his own boss. When an employee's performance is manifesting poorly, it is the unit or the department where that employee belongs that is automatically affected, inevitably, the boss is also affected when an employee performs poorly at work (Cegos, 2006).

This explains why preferably, counselling must be performed by the manager, boss or immediate supervisor of an employee because of their direct relationship at work. Nevertheless, the counselling must be done privately and in strict confidentiality as sensitive and personal details may be disclosed throughout the discussion. Supervisor-counsellors must be extremely cautious of the environment wherein the counselling will take place as any form of leaked information may cause harm to the relationship and trust established between the counsellor and the employee (Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment, 1997).

Implications of Work-Based Counselling in the Management of My Own Organization

The strict and free implementation of any type of work-based counselling in the workplace has proven to be an effective performance and motivational

driver for all employees. It has been constantly proven that other than counselling, there is no other avenue or channel to discuss personal issues and sensitive details about an employee's problems and issues at work.

Hence it is indeed important for a company to invest in counselling and apply counselling as a form of motivating employees and increasing their work performance. Moreover, an effective employee counselling allows many benefits not only for the employee being counselled as well as the counsellor but also on the company or the employer itself.

Providing workplace counselling as one of the employee benefits is one good way to invest in permanent cost reductions which are commonly associated with employee absenteeism and a high rate of employee turn-over.

Counselling provides the best means of retaining experienced and mature employees. Unlike other companies who lack feedback and counselling systems, which is an avenue for employees to air out their work related concerns, companies who are advocates of employee counselling further retains their employees (Northern Occupational Support Service Inc, 2009).

In managing my own organization, I would definitely apply the principles of counselling as it carries with a lot of benefits and advantages that owners and employers like myself, can certainly benefit from. Some of these benefits include an increase in the productivity level and efficiency of my employees.

In my business, I have experienced employees who perform under the standards that I have set for my company. I noticed that this certain group of employees rarely go to work on time and rarely finish work on time which

disrupts the work cycle of other employees belonging to their department. From the owner's or employer's perspective, the bad performance of this group of employees indeed indicates a higher cost in terms of compensation, utilities and other operational expenses. Since they come to the office at a later time and end work at a much later time, they are utilizing electricity and other company utilities which further increases the cost of my company's operational expenses.

Also, I noticed that other staffs are slowly mimicking the wrong ways of this group of employees which also decreased the productivity and efficiency level of other employees. This little workplace issue that I encountered within my own organization indeed challenged me to come up with an effective solution to correct these employees' misbehaviours.

That's when I decided to apply and utilize the principles of counselling within the organization. With the aim of finding out the reasons why this particular group of employees is underperforming, I found out and understood that they are quite dissatisfied with their jobs since they have been doing the same thing over and over again for the past 7 years. Hence, through the help of counselling, I was able to identify the problem and find an effective and practical way to solve it.