Essay on individual work motivation

History of the Study of Organizational Behavior: Individual Work Motivation

In light of the diverse workforce at our organization, we have put in place a mandatory training program provided to all employees. The objectives of this training are to instill an appreciation of working with colleagues from a variety of cultures, social backgrounds, and belief systems. Not only focused on presenting the legislation enforced by the U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the training is designed to provide appreciation of the spirit behind these laws which make it illegal to discriminate because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability or genetic information. Having run for some time now, the results and feedback from this program are showing that many employees do not seem motivated to perform well. The average test scores fall below the required passing grade. As this is of major concern to management, who require the diversity training to be a success, we will look at the causes leading to low motivation and suggest changes to the program that would lead to better results. Currently, the training sessions are one-day events held periodically at an offsite location, usually a nice hotel. Every employee is required to complete the training and repeat the course if they do not receive a passing grade on the exam given at the end of the day. Not only is the training provided by the company as a benefit, each employee is paid for the day they attend the training.

As a first step in looking to motivate employees to understand the material, to pass the exam on their first time taking the training and to apply the material in the workplace, we interviewed several employees who had taken

the course already. What we found was quite surprising. Our initial assumptions were that the course was not sufficiently presenting and explaining the material, and/or the exam did not properly cover the material presented. Those employees who we interviewed, under promises of anonymity, candidly shared that they enjoyed having a paid day off work that included meals and snacks at a nice hotel. The social and entertainment aspect of the training day overshadowed the company requirements of improving understanding and appreciation of diversity while presenting the laws that protect diversity. Some of these interviewees even admitted taking advantage of the company policy that they would be able to repeat the course if they failed the exam.

Alarmed by what was found, we proceeded to look at how we could change the motivations of our employees to better align with those of the company. To do this we called on our training in motivational theory. The first area we focused on was why our employees were less motivated to complete the training, than they were motivated to spend a day offsite, even if that day was not productive to the needs of the company. We looked at what would improve the willingness of each employee to pass the exam and apply the knowledge gained from the diversity training to workplace. This is indicative of the type of question one has to ask when examining motivation according to the expectancy theory. The overall motivation of an individual, according to this theory, can be improved by their acceptance that hard work will result in an expected performance being achieved. It is also influenced through each individual believing that they will receive rewards from their work. Finally, the theory states that expectancy is dependent on the value of the

reward received (Schermerhorn 369). In the case of our diversity training program, we recommend encouraging each employee to work hard to pass the exam by having the CEO open each training session with a speech in which she emphasizes the importance of the training to the success and mission of the company as a whole. An emphasis should also be made on the high cost of holding the training in an offsite comfortable and neutral environment. By adding this message at the start, we expect the employees to see how diversity sensitivity is crucial to the success of the company as a whole and to understand the cost to the company. The underlying message should be that they are expected to pass the exam after only one session. Positive reinforcement should be added through performance-based rewards that address expectancy theory. A reward that we believe will be valued highly enough by all employees would be driven by departmental directors. All managers will be evaluated on average test scores of their teams. This would address the individual motivating factors important to expectancy theory that direct managers would better understand of their reports. To support this approach we also looked to reinforcement theory. As the theory, states we consider these reward based motivations--by increasing expectancy of our employees--to act as positive incentives and as such reinforce the successful behavior (Armstrong 38). However, these strategies to improve the results of the diversity training and better match the outcome to the requirements of the company need to be reinforced by addressing and reducing the existing motivation employees have to repeat their paid offsite holiday. We suggest that this be reinforced by threat of a punishment. Where reinforcement strategies use punishment to eliminate unwanted behavior

(Schermerhorn 374), we can change our policy of having all classes held offsite at nice hotels. Instead, we setup two types of training sessions; the first session for every employee will be held as it is now. However, if an employee fails the exam they will be required to attend a repeat training session that will be held at the company. In order not to appear too draconian, we suggest the additional positive reinforcement of assuring the employee that their first failing grade will not included in their record.

We hope that these improvements to the program will be implemented as soon as possible so that we may start to monitor and quantify the results of these changes.

Works Cited

Armstrong, Michael. Armstrong's Handbook of Performance Management. 4. ed. Philadelphia, PA: Kogan Page, 2009.

Schermerhorn, John R, Jr. Management. 11. ed. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2010.