

Example of research paper on motivation and employee recognition

[Business](#), [Company](#)



Customer Inserts His/her Name

The decisions that led to Michael Jordan becoming a Basketball player and Abraham Lincoln the great leader he is known as today are very unique to them, and certainly all the decisions that we make in our daily lives depend on reasons interlinked with our own personalities. Why we choose one alternative and let go of the other depends on what motivates us, motivation is the drive one feels to achieve a certain goal and this variety from person to person differentiates their personalities and the pathways that they choose to walk on.

Motivation

Motivation can be of two types, intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is when a person truly wants to do something because it gives them satisfaction or they find value in doing so. Example would include a passionate soccer player regularly playing at the local soccer club or a mother taking good care of her son. On the other hand extrinsic motivation is when one does a task not for the pleasure of it, but because of the outcome the action will lead to. This could be true for students pursuing bachelors and masters degrees as they are required to attain good jobs in society (Center on Education Policy, 2012).

Employee motivation

Employee motivation makes or breaks a company. A firm's competitive advantage is gained by its employees and how well they are able to complete their tasks. If a workforce is not motivated enough, productivity,

morale and profits all suffer leading to an overall unhealthy working environment within the organization. Employees can be motivated by money, status or having the ability to support their loved ones. Whatever the reason though, companies need to identify these factors and tailor jobs and their reward systems to match employees so that they remain happy and motivated and contribute to better performance (Inc, 2013).

Drivers of employee motivation

There are 4 main emotional drivers hardwired into our brains that motivate us to take on certain courses of actions. Since they are emotional needs, our behavior depends on the degree to which these needs are satisfied (HBR, 2008):

- The drive to acquire

It is a well known economic fact that resources are finite and wants are infinite. This statement applies to the human notion that we always want to acquire the things we do not have. Some of these could be necessities such as food and shelter; they could also be things which are not really needed as a luxury car or an exotic vacation. An employee is motivated to earn a good salary to fulfill any of these wants.

- The drive to bond

It is very natural to bond with parents, friends or the opposite sex, but humans are the only organisms that bond with collectivist entities such as organizations and nations. This strong bond can create positive feelings if the employee feels proud of the company and similarly negative feelings can arise if they feel betrayed by the same association. Such feelings create a

stronger desire whether to do good for the company or not.

- The drive to comprehend

We want to make sense of things around us, we want to know why something happens and if we cannot figure it out we often get frustrated. In the workplace this translates into employees seeing a meaningful contribution by themselves in the company's output. Employees become motivated by taking on challenging tasks and often if they feel they are not working at their full potential, they would look for other places sighting them as better options.

- The drive to defend

Again as humans it is in our nature to defend ourselves against anything that we feel threatens us or to protect things and people that are dear to us, such as our property, loved ones and even ideas. In the corporate world this would be gaining security and confidence by building a sound career and working towards the security of having a good life. This too represents a big motivation factor among employees.

What managers should do

Managers and supervisors play a very big role in making the life of the employee at work a pleasant one. Since one has to report to a senior, their actions and intentions can determine whether the employee will stay motivated or not. Here are 5 easy ways to ensure that an employee feels good and would want to work hard for the company (Lipman, 2013):

- Alignment of individual interests with company performance

Many a time employees get frustrated when they cannot see a significant

contribution made by them to company goals, they feel as if the organization maybe does not need them. That's why incentive compensation programs are there to fix this problem. Matching the goals of the individual with those of the company's will ensure that the employee wants to benefit the firm and hence will stay motivated to do well. It will also make visible to them their own contribution.

- Taking interest in employee's future career path

Naturally when one cares for us we feel good about them and want to do something for them as well. In the workplace a little care by the manager for where the employee's career is headed can go a long way in them appreciating those efforts and replicating them. All managers probably have had passed that phase as well, so why not see through the eyes of the subordinate and help the guy.

- Giving them work-life balance

Working is very important but no one likes to be away from their families and personal lives at all times and if that does happen then life becomes a bit sad and that takes its toll at the work place. Understanding by managers about their employees' off the work commitments creates a feel good factor on part of the subordinates and increases their motivation to stay where they are and work hard.

- Listen to them

We all have a lot going on our lives and problems are a naturally occurring phenomenon. Most of the day goes at the office and employees always appreciate if their managers would once in a while listen to what they have to say and offer some meaningful advice if possible. Listening to their ideas

of job improvement, company drawbacks and personal lives would make them feel good, however if someone makes a habit of doing so without a good reason then they need to be notified.

- Do unto others as you would have done unto you

This stems from the fact that at the end of the day we are dealing with humans here and they should not literally be used as a tool or resource that you just use when needed and then keep them away. Fairness plays another major role in keeping motivation high and if employees feel they are just being used without worthwhile give back then it would harm their relationship with the company. Caring for your employees also shows that you respect them for who they are and the job they do.

Examples

IBM, SAP and LiveOps Inc all use videogames in their operations to keep their work enjoyable and their employees motivated. Designed according to their own needs, for example LiveOps awards badges for brief calls and closing sales, such measures would surely make their respective employees want to remain at work (Silverman, 2011).

Google has been awarded the best company award for 4 straight years now and the extent to which it pampers its employees to keep their motivation high is worth mentioning. Free massages, wellness centers and 7 acres of sports land that includes a roller hockey rink, basketball courts and horseshoe pits would be enough for one to want to live there for the rest of their life (CNN, 2013).

All the above mentioned measures that companies take of course have their

own costs and they surely must be huge. However still more and more companies attempt to create such an atmosphere in their offices for the sole purpose of achieving an upper hand through their most valued asset which is the people itself. There is no match for a motivated person full of desires to do something big and companies such as IBM and Google keeping setting an example for others to follow (MIT, 2009).

Employee Recognition

Appreciation and recognition is a basic human need, it tells us that what we do is valued and should be continued. From parents recognizing good manners to teachers praising good academic results, we learn through recognition what is good and what we should avoid. In the workplace employee recognition is the timely appreciation of an employee's efforts to bring about business results that match company goals and is usually given for something that is above normal expectations (Harrison, 2013).

Employee recognition is a subset of keeping motivation high among employees and this appreciation contributes to a great environment within the company. We always want to be valued and liked for our contribution, similarly an employee wants to see his contribution being appreciated and making a difference to overall company performance. This could be in terms of achieving measurable results or even of great hard work being put in (Harrison 2013).

How it works

Reading all the theory it might seem a pretty straight forward task letting your employees know that their work is valued; however in practice it rarely

is that easy. There are dangers of the appraisal becoming meaningless or it not matching the expectations of the employee. There are a few measures that can be taken to ensure that employee recognition remains effective and contributes to increased motivation (Biro, 2013):

- In the moment
- In context

Recognition is most effective when it is given in the context of achieving a bigger goal or company related business activity. Compared to appreciation of smaller deeds, affirmation becomes much more meaningful when it is tied to a business goal. An employee who worked day and night to make sure that the company remains the market leader in a certain category needs to be appreciated in order to make them feel they are valued, also so that they may know the company takes notice of their work and they continue their good performance.

- Appropriateness

It is vital for employees to do certain things such as report in time and maintain good manners in the workplace, if excess recognition is handed out for such acts then it will lose its meaning. Recognition should match effort and results and this often is the tricky part, to have a balance in between.

- Authenticity

Probably one of the most important aspects of recognition, one that is becoming increasingly important considering the ways in which technology is being used nowadays, is that whenever one appreciates or values someone's work they should really mean it. Appraising just for the sake of it never works out and becomes quite clear by the conduct of the giver as well. Such

recognition can often backfire.

- Tied to the employee's perception of value

Employees are aware when they are truly valued and that is when they can relate to what is being given out, cash rewards or appreciation of extra effort. Confusion occurs as to what is the proper appreciation tool in a certain situation and although money works, it's not the solution always. Handing out financial rewards to an employee who values appreciation much more than money will get confused as to how he should be performing.

Why is it so important?

An employee can be extremely discouraged if effort that they put in is not realized by the company and it is very likely that they will never invest that much time and effort in the future in such a case. Through recognition the strong bond that is created between the employee and the manager as well as the company, cannot be replicated by giving mere monetary rewards. Most of all though, there are 3 fronts where employee recognition remains vital. Companies that seem to be spending a lot in hiring and firing of employees need to assess whether they are recognizing the efforts of their workers or not. Employees who are appreciated by their firms exhibit more engagement and hence are likely to remain with their employers for long, hence reduced turnover. Recognition by one another creates an atmosphere of togetherness, as one would not stay in a relationship where they are not valued, similarly an employee would feel resentment for the company if they are ignored. Recognition fosters an improved culture that inhibits greater performance and mutual respect. Motivated and determined are those

employees who know the company respects them and wants them to remain with the firm, such employees know about their standing in the company and invest themselves in creating betterment for both. These characteristics are all made possible by recognizing their efforts, increased and better performance is the outcome of respecting and giving back to your employees (Bricel, 2012).

Research merits the implementation of recognition programs in curricula as well. A McKinsey report states that a \$1, 000 reward has 10 times more return when given through a recognition program as compared to an addition to base pay. Similarly same is the impact of frequent thanks and praise as that of a 1% increase in pay according to White Water Consulting Inc (MIT, 2009). These facts just demonstrate how important it is to value employees and their work, more so than is done in many companies.

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