

Managerial methods to motivate staff essay sample

[Business](#), [Management](#)



Introduction

‘ When employees feel inspired to live up to their full potential in the workplace, their companies excel.’ (Harvard Business School, 2005). In the fast changing environment of the 21st century, there have been a number of changes in which profit margins have decreased and companies have made the difficult decision to close down their businesses due to tough competition. Managers motivating employees to their full potential can generate a successful organisation, even in the tough times.

The scope of this topic is to examine theories of motivation and to understand how they correlate with managers and employees in the workforce.

Description of motivation

‘ Motivation is the force that energizes or gives direction to behaviour.’ (Maslow). Motivation can be described as a physiological force that impacts a person’s behaviour in an organisation.

Managers have a difficult task to inspire staff to encourage the personal qualities that enhance employee’s performance. (2005, Harvard Business School). From an organisational perspective, employees must believe that their efforts matter, and have continual opportunities to learn. Managers should demonstrate their pledge with employees to create a sense of mutual partnership and the highly motivating sense that ‘ we’re all in this together’ (2005, Harvard Business School).

Motivation can come from intrinsic or extrinsic sources. Intrinsic behaviour is motivation that rises from within (Hiam, 2003). Intrinsic motivational

employees are enthusiastic to excel and succeed. Therefore, managers do not have to drive their employees to be motivated. For example, staff who come to work don't always watch the clock, are happy to help someone else, or take on more extra work if need be. In an ideal sphere, all managers inspire their employees to be intrinsic, although this is not always the case. Extrinsic behaviour describes people who have little of their own enthusiasm for their work, if any, and who only act out necessity when external factors force them to (Hiam, 2003). For example, when managers turn their back for a moment extrinsic motivated employees will stop working, they will come to work late on days that managers are not there to watch. The overall goal for all managers is to motivate staff to be intrinsic, and not extrinsic. Successful managers can maximise intrinsic motivation by assisting employees to achieve high levels of performance they desire.

Methods that managers rely on to motivate staff

Frederick Herzberg researched the sources of employee motivation during the 1950's and 1960's, and found the different aspects that make people satisfied and motivated on the job are different in kind from the things that make them dissatisfied. Aspects that make employees dissatisfied at work include low salary, rules that are not agreeable, uncomfortable work place and an annoying manager. Aspects that make employees satisfied in a workplace are motivated by interesting work, challenges and more responsibility.

All employees are expected to obtain an outcome, the most obvious being is to earn an income. (Waddel, 2011). Organisations want to obtain an input for

their business to thrive. For example, managers would seek to find employees that have education, experience, skills and knowledge for them to grow and achieve business goals. Managers seek to ensure that employees are motivated to contribute vital inputs to the organisation, and are focused in the direction of high achievement, and that high achievement results in employees obtaining the outcomes they desire. (Waddel, 2011). For example if employees inputs are the skills and experience they gain, it will contribute to the overall attainment of organisational goals, and therefore, the outcome for employees would be pay benefits and job security.

A discussion of two different motivation theories

Need theories suggest that to motivate a person to contribute to valuable inputs of a job and perform at a high level, a manager must determine what needs the person is trying to satisfy at work. Consequently, the manager has to ensure that an employee receives outcomes that help satisfy those needs in return of performing at a high level and helping the organisation to achieve its goals. Two need theories are Maslow's Hierarchy of needs and McClelland's needs for Achievement, Affiliation and Power theory.

Abraham Maslow proposed a hierarchy of five basic needs that motivate behaviour. Two of the most common needs are physiological and safety needs. Physiological needs are biological needs. For example, humans need food, water and shelter; it is the strongest need because it is the most basic need to provide them. Employees are motivated to work to receive adequate pay that will enable them to purchase necessities such as food, clothing and

adequate housing. When physiological needs are satisfied the needs for security become active, for example the need for security, stability and a safe environment. Managers can provide this by providing job security, adequate medical benefits and safe working conditions.

Three of the higher level needs are belonging, esteem and self-actualisation needs. The need for belonging can only be progressed when the needs for physiological and safety have been well satisfied. Maslow states, humans enjoy interaction with other humans as it gives them a sense of social interaction and friendship, which creates a sense of belonging. Managers can provide this such as organisation social functions such as company picnics and holiday parties.

The fourth need on the hierarchy is esteem. Humans have a need a high level of self-respect and respect from others, when this need is satisfied, humans feel self-confident and valuable. When these needs are not met, humans feel helpless and worthless. Managers can provide this by recognising employee's accomplishments.

The final need is self-actualisation. Humans want to be challenged, driven into opportunities to advance in their organisation. Managers can provide this by enabling employees to use their skills and abilities to their full potential.

Clayton Alderfer proposed another needs theory. It features three universal categories, existence, relatedness and growth (ERG). The lowest level need is existence, which is providing the basic needs for human existence, for example food and water. The second need is relation that enables humans to have good interpersonal relations, share thoughts and have open-two way

communication. The final need is growth, which aims for humans to grow within an organization and engage in meaningful work.

It is evident that Maslow's and Alderfers ERG theory are similar. Alderfer believes that there is only a need for three needs, not five, and that it is possible to go to one to another without being in order. Maslow believes that you can only progress from the bottom of the hierarchy to each need in order. Alderfer also suggests that when people experience need frustration or unable to satisfy needs at a certain level, they will focus all the more on the satisfying needs at the lowest level in the hierarchy. For managers it is important to understand these theories to determine what needs your employees are trying to satisfy at work, and to ensure they receive outcomes that satisfy these needs when they person at a high level to help the organization achieve these goals.

More recently there have been some limitations to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. An article by Pamela Rutledge titling ' What Maslow Misses' explains that Maslow's theory is not so black and white.

For example, none of needs listed in the hierarchy are possible without social connection and collaboration. Understanding technology and feeding information from social networks is not mentioned in Maslow's theory.

Humans are social animals and without collaboration there is no survival.

Pamela, also discusses that needs are not hierarchical, needs are interactive, dynamic and anchored in our ability to make social connections.

Methods managers rely on to motivate staff

One of the approaches managers can employ to motivate staff is through empowering the staff (Hardina, 2007). Empowerment can be achieved by giving the staff autonomy. When the staff have been given the authority to make decisions they develop a sense of self-determination. Having participatory decision-making makes the staff to feel as part of the organization. Thus, the level of initiative and creativity among the staff increases. However, the staffs need to be aware that they will be held responsible if things go wrong. Furthermore, the ability to make decisions by the staff will not exceed the authority assigned to them. Additionally, having a reward strategy for employee performance is an effective way to increase staff morale.

Problems associated with the application of these theories;

Problems that may arise from the application of Maslow's motivation theory include the fact that people will respond to a number of needs and not just one. Thus, in an organization providing for certain needs to the staff may result in the staff demanding more of other things or needs. Furthermore, it becomes difficult to establish when the staff will be completely motivated. Additionally, when the staff achieve certain needs such as power as proposed in McClelland's theory, it is not guaranteed that the staff will act in the responsible or required manner (Lauby, 2005). Since individuals are different, some may choose to use a position of authority to make decisions that may benefit them at the expense of the organization. Managers may also face the problem of selecting which motivation theory to use. The

managers will have to choose the theory that best fits their circumstance and how it will operate.

Benefits from applying motivation theories in organisations;

Work morale is bound to increase. This is especially the case where the needs of the staff such as pay increases and awarding of authority are used. The manager may develop training programs that are aimed at increasing the skills of the staff. When the employees are better trained they can be able to perform better in their duties. Further, using incentives such as rewards encourage better performance, which means that the organizational performance is likely to increase or improve (Martin, 2005).

Examples of how these have been applied by managers; are all employees able to be motivated?

Managers frequently adopt the reward system as a means of motivating employees. The rewards system may include benefits such as maternal leave, bonuses for better performances, healthcare benefits and annual vacations trips for best performing employees (Vlad, 2012). However, the issue with the application of the rewards system is that it may only motivate them to perform for financial needs rather than for the organization. This becomes a disadvantage where the organization is involved in customer service. The customer may experience poor service at the expense of the employee achieving the financial goals.

Actual industry examples

Motivation is evident in organizations such as Tesco where the employees' book taxis for the shoppers and help to accompany disabled people in the

store. A company such as Kellogg has adapted non-financial incentives approaches to motivation by reducing modifying the shift hours for the employees. This has increased performance unlike the traditional financial incentives. The result has been an increase in the efficiency among the workers.

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