

Employee motivation elements in job design



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Introduction & Background

It is obvious that the world is in constant change process. Markets are growing and becoming more competitive and dynamic. According to Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (online), the systems and methods that once were effective to hold organisations together are now more likely to prevent communication and demotivate employees. Managers now need to take account of the changing attitudes and expectations of employees. They need to find new ways to organising work so that it allows more flexibility and brings motivation and job satisfaction to employees.

Robinson, I. (2006) argues that motivated employees produce higher levels of performance, are more enthusiastic and committed to the organisation. They are willing to use their skills, participate and contribute to the benefit of the company. By contrast, demotivated employees are likely to be apathetic and to have higher levels of absence. It is self evident that organisational performance is likely to be greater with motivated and engaged employees.

The concept of job design opens a new perspective to creating a more favourable work environment in which motivated employees will improve and enhance organisational performance.

Aims & Objectives

This project's objectives are the following:

- To identify those specific factors / elements which are considered / used when designing job.
- To establish which job design factors motivate employees.

- To establish whether a relationship exists between employee motivation and the quality of job performance.

The purpose of my research is fundamentally to find out whether the following hypothesis is true:

H1. The aspects of job design improve employee motivation and lead to improved employee performance.

Answering the following questions will help to research into my topic as well as either prove or disprove the hypothesis I have put forward. These are the following:

- What is job design?
- What is the difference between Mechanistic and Motivational approaches in job design?
- Are motivation and job performance inter-related?
- What are the factors of Motivational approach that improve employee motivation?
- What is the role of IT in job design?

Such a study aims offer insight into the changes going around and a basis for managers for reflecting on how best reorganise work to improve performance.

Preliminary literature review

There is a wealth of literature covering the topic of my research hypothesis. My study of the literature will start with the key question of what job design is and how it impacts employee performance. I will then compare two

different approaches, mechanistic approach and motivational approach in job design and assess the role of IT in this context.

“ Jobs are created by people for people. Whether deliberately or by default, choices are made about which tasks to group together to form a job, the extent to which job holders should follow prescribed procedures in completing those tasks, how closely the job incumbent will be supervised, and numerous other aspects of the work. Such choices are the essence of job design, which may thus be defined as the specification of the content and methods of jobs...” (Wall and Clegg, 1998: 265-268).

Background to job design

Mechanistic approach

The concept of job design was first used in the late nineteenth century when industrialists such as Taylor or Ford first introduced a scientific approach in management practices (CIPD, online). Their approach consisted of defining clear job roles, suggesting that workers required specific tasks and boundaries to enable organisation to become more productive, effective and efficient. The principle of this approach is that a job is broken down into small and simple tasks that can be easily learned and performed. It is assumed that it makes the production more efficient (Business Dictionary, online). It aims to achieve maximum job fragmentation to minimise skills requirement and job learning time. Taylor (1914) was one of the first to develop the idea of time and motion studies to identify the most efficient movements during a work task. Workers were selected and trained to perform their jobs using Taylor’s approach and were offered monetary incentive to ensure that they performed to their maximum efficiency. Bloisi <https://assignbuster.com/employee-motivation-elements-in-job-design/>

(2007) argues that the problem with this approach to job design is that it is too preoccupied with the productivity and ignores the worker's social needs.

According to Pickard (2006, in CIPD), in the 1960s, the focus shifted from hard, process-oriented approach to job design emphasizing social behavioural perspective of employees.

While scientific management aimed on achieving organisational effectiveness through task fragmentation, during the middle part of the twentieth century, there was recognition that motivation would influence organisational performance. The work of Maslow and McGregor advocated that job design could be heavily influenced by understanding and responding to the motivations of individuals. However, it was Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation and the concept of job enrichment that was to shape the development of job design during the second half of the last century (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2002).

Motivational approach

This new approach, called human relations approach (Bloisi, 2007) stems from the assumption that jobs can be designed to stimulate employee motivation and increase job satisfaction. Herzberg (1993, in Bloisi, 2007) asked two questions: "What makes you feel good about your work?" and "What makes you feel bad?" From the answers received, Herzberg concluded that the job satisfaction was one of the key elements of motivational job design. In his two-factor theory he identified hygiene factors and motivator factors. 'Hygiene factors' are referred to practices at work that would cause dissatisfaction, but if corrected would not motivate (i. e. salary,

organisation's policies, administration and supervision). For example, if an employee were given a laptop computer to do his job, it may stop him to be unhappy because of the lack of the IT, but he would not be motivated to work harder. On the other hand, 'motivator factors', such as achievement, advancement, growth, recognition, responsibility and work itself, tend to create satisfaction and positive attitude and discretionary effort of employees (Robinson, 2006).

The impact of job design on employee performance

From the studies of motivator factors, different job design models were developed, such as Hackman and Oldham's (1980, in Bloisi, 2007). They developed a job characteristics model that identified the motivational factors of a job from the following aspects:

Skills variety – the variety of skills needed to complete the task.

Task identity – how much of the complete product or service is completed by the worker; how much they feel they have ownership of the task.

Task significance – how important is the task to the lives of others.

Autonomy – how much of decision-making role the person has while doing a job.

Feedback – how much feedback an employee is given about their job performance.

The Figure 1 below shows how job characteristics described above impact on critical psychological states of employees, therefore improving their job satisfaction and performance.

Core job Critical psychological Outcomes

characteristics states

Skill variety

Job identity

Job significance

Job autonomy

Feedback from job

Meaningfulness of work

Responsibility for work outcomes

Knowing the actual results of the work activities

Less absenteeism

Less turnover

High satisfaction

High motivation

High quality work performance

Figure 1. Job characteristics model.

Source: Adopted from Hackman and Oldham (1980: 77).

It can be seen from the diagram above that when the critical psychological states are high, then employees will have a high level of internal work motivation. This leads to a greater productivity and helps create competitive advantage through people.

During the 1990s an increased emphasis on employee empowerment led to “high discretion” models characterised by individual job enrichment and self-managing teamwork (Huczynski and Buchanan 2001, in CIPD online).

Herzberg (Accel, online) suggested the following for the job enrichment:

Lessen the control and retain accountability at the same time;

Increase personal accountability for work;

Grant additional autonomy and authority to employees;

Make company reports available to all employees and not only to managers;

Introduce new and more challenging tasks into the job;

Encourage the enrichment of skills and expertise by assigning employees to specialized tasks.

This approach aims to involve employees in decision-making processes, planning, organisation and control of work. An example of this can be through self-managed teams, where workers are given a goal to achieve but it is their teams that decide how tasks are allocated to achieve their goal.

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Job rotation can also be used as part of the motivational approach; here, employees are moved from one job to another over time (Bloisi, 2007). When job rotation is used, most of the jobs tend to be similar. However, it can increase skills variety and help boost job identity. The Figure 2 illustrates how job redesign can improve work and make it more meaningful.

After the redesign of the cashier's jobs, their new jobs were found to be more motivating and as a result their job performance increased significantly.

Before job redesign After job redesign

Cashiers cashed cheques, processed deposits and payments for bills

Business customers were referred to a business advisers

Foreign currency transaction were referred to another cashier

Auditors ensured transactions balanced

Errors were notified to cashiers

No feedback on workload

No records were kept on who did the transactions

Cashiers handled all aspects of the transaction for both business customers and foreign currency

Feedback on errors available immediately

Feedback on volume displayed on a computer screen

Cashiers signed their names to each transaction so they were recognised as taking responsibility for their work

Figure 2. How job redesign can make work more efficient and meaningful.

Source: Bloisi (2007: 84).

Research has shown that if work is seen as meaningful and important to the individual then they are likely to be more committed to the organisation and more productive.

The role of IT in job design

Developments in technology and increased use of the Internet open a new perspective in organisation and job design. Many employers are developing flexible working patterns using latest technological advances. There are great advantages as well as drawbacks to it.

Here are some examples of how employer and employees can benefit of IT:

Employees are encouraged to work more flexibly: it means they can work from home.

Employees can save money and time on travelling to work.

Although employees are physically absent at work, employers can always contact them either by mobile phone or email.

Apart from that, organisations save a huge amount of money on property costs, when some of the workforce is based at home.

Disadvantages of using developed communication technologies at work:

Employees are no longer able to switch off from work: they work outside their habitual nine-to five hours.

It can lead to increased employee stress and dissatisfaction, which ultimately leads to less productive work.

Despite these obvious disadvantages, the benefits of the use of the communication technology are major. As stated in Bloisi (2007), British Telecom encourages staff to work more flexibly. Following a workstyle analysis it now has 7500 of its workforce formally based at home and another 40, 000 have remote access. Not only has it saved £180 million in property costs, but also improved productivity by 20-40 per cent.

The example above illustrates how flexible working in job design can act as a significant motivator contributing to employee well-being and improved productivity.

Methodology

Approach to my research scope

The scope of my research is to explore the impact of job design on employee motivation and improved performance as its result. This is reflected in my research topic and hypothesis. This topic is of my own interest.

Basically the research consists of the following three sequential parts:

Job design —f Employee motivation —f Improved performance

My research objectives and questions are designed in a way so that they first explore what job design is; secondly, how it can motivate people (Herzberg theory above); thirdly, I studied the model of Hackman and Oldham about the impact of employee motivation on the quality of their task performance (please see above).

Research methodology

Definition: Pattron (2009, online) defined research methodology as “ a highly intellectual human activity used in the investigation of nature and matter and deals specifically with the manner in which data is collected, analysed and interpreted.”

Secondary data collection method

I have conducted a preliminary literature review to investigate what other authors write about my research topic. All findings in my literature review are meant to serve as a base for comparison with the results of primary data collection. The comparison between the two will help to either prove or disprove my research hypothesis.

Theory

Hypothesis

Primary Research

Conclusions

The approach I have adopted for my research is deductive and can be represented in the diagram as follows:

Figure 3. Deductive Research Approach.

Primary data collection method

Written questionnaire is the method I have chosen to collect the data. The type of my questionnaire is the Likert Scale (PHS, online) where I have given a scale to indicate the strength of agreement to statements (please see a sample of my questionnaire in the Appendix 2 below). The advantage of this type of questionnaire is that it is easier and faster for the recipient to complete and also allows direct comparability to answers as well as to assess the feelings of the respondents towards issues.

This method ascribes quantitative value to qualitative data, makes it amendable to statistical analysis. A numerical value is assigned to each potential choice and the final average score represents overall level of accomplishment or attitude toward the subject matter.

This questionnaire is targeted on sample population. Sample population is a number of “ homogenous” respondents who share important characteristics – e. g. all employed and working in a relatively big companies, rather than self-employed or working in small private businesses. It is essential to make the data comparable as well as to make conclusions meaningful (PHS, online).

Accordingly, I distributed my questionnaires to a number of people working in different organisations but which had one same characteristic – employed and working in medium size businesses.

Approach to analysis and interpretation of data

The theories in the literature review above (Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics model) have confirmed my research hypothesis which states that there is a link between job design, employee motivation and improved performance.

In order to test this theory, I designed my primary data collection (questionnaire: questions 1 to 15) so that it fits the following formula:

Motivating Potential Score

MPS

=

Skill

Variety

+

Task Identity

+

Task Significance

x

Autonomy

x

Feedback

3

Source: Hackman & Oldham, 1980: 90 in Bloisi, 2007.

This formula is a summary of Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics model. It measures the overall potential of a job, or Job Satisfaction. It is calculated by taking the average of Skill variety plus Task identity plus Task significance and then multiplying that Average by Autonomy and Feedback.

The outcome of jobs with high MPS will be high quality work performance and high worker satisfaction (Hackman & Oldham in Bloisi, 2007).

I created additional 12 questions, 16 to 27, to identify strong feeling of employee engagement. Results from this part of the questionnaire would show a strong correlation between high scores and superior job performance.

All answers are accumulated and represented in the table in the Appendix 1 below. For each of the "agree" answers "1" point, and for each of "disagree" s "0" point is ascribed. The averages are calculated as well as MPS's for individual questionnaires.

Conclusions

The objective if this research was to investigate into the impact of job design on employee motivation and performance.

The results of the primary data should either prove or disprove the statement made in the research hypothesis.

The research was based on 5 dimensions that according to Hackman and Oldham (1980) would help to analyse how jobs were designed.

The highest score for the Variable 1 (average 1.93) showed that the majority of the respondents agreed to a certain degree with the statement that their jobs require the variety of skills and abilities. Whereas Task significance and Autonomy had the lowest scores (Appendix 1).

MPS has revealed which of these dimensions, that impact total Motivating Potential of a job, can be redesigned so that employees feel more motivated.

Additional questions on job performance (16 to 27 and referred as Variable 6 in the Appendix 1), showed the result for the quality of job performance (average score 7.8 out of 12 questions).

The research has revealed that job performance score is far greater at those jobs which had higher scores for Task variety, Task significance and Feedback. Therefore, we can conclude that if a job is well designed, people feel more satisfied and motivated which results in improved performance. Thus, our research hypothesis has proven to be true.

Timescale

Key tasks with milestones plotted along a time line