EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION AS IT RELATES TO EFFECTIVENESS, EFFICIENCY, PRODUCTIVITY, AND PERFORMANCE

Rob H. Kamery, Nova Southeastern University
robhkamery@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Employees may be motivated on the job by many things, such as a sense of achievement, recognition, enjoyment of the job, promotion opportunities, responsibility, and the chance for personal growth. Employee motivation and performance are tied directly to the style of management that is applied and to principles of positive or negative reinforcement. This paper discusses motivation as it relates to effectiveness, efficiency, productivity, and performance.

INTRODUCTION

Motivation can be induced by the employer or reside within the employee. Employees have higher levels of motivation when they perceive that management cares about their welfare, when they are involved in the management process, and when the management-labor environment is positive. Control stifles motivation while involvement creates a more productive environment. If the workers feel they are being treated fairly and with respect, this attitude will develop and guide their behavior in a positive direction. To be motivated, they must be excited about and interested in their jobs. Activities that can gain interest on the part of workers include employee participation committees, task force efforts, training programs, opportunities for outside education, newsletters, contests, and congratulatory messages from management (Kennish, 1998).

EMPLOYEE/MANAGER RELATIONSHIP

The key to motivating employees is remembering that not all employees are the same. Something different makes each employee tick. In order to achieve motivation, managers must know each employee. Managers must have a wide range of motivational techniques available. Each employee has a different set of values and personal experiences that brought them to where they are today. Employees are motivated by learning and should likewise be motivated to learn. Workers should be offered regular opportunities to attend conferences in their field, seminars, or in-house training programs (Buhler, 1998).

A supervisor can provide the environment in which employees are willing to motivate themselves. The purpose of a motivating environment is to encourage every member of an organization to motivate himself to contribute his best effort to the job at all times. A motivating environment is not a permissive environment, but one where the expectations of each employee are for their best work within their capability. A motivating environment is not necessarily one in which
all employees are happy all of the time. A motivating environment may produce satisfied employees, which in turn may make many employees happy. A motivating environment exists with conditions of high standards, clear objectives, adequate training, effective leadership, rewards that employees value, and adequate working conditions (Capozzoli, 1998).

The standards to which people are expected to produce should be high, but not so high that they can never reach them. People will produce to the level of expectation as long as it is not excessively high. When a manager delegates work to an employee, he or she should be sure the employee understands all of the standards of the assignment. Every employee wants and needs to know what is expected. This goes along with the standards that have been set. They must have adequate training to be able to do the tasks that they are assigned. Employees may get angry and frustrated if they do not know how to do the job. They want and need to be able to trust their leaders and know that what the leader tells them is true. It is important for supervisors to have integrity and to earn the trust of their employees. When an employee does a good job, the supervisor can reward that employee with something that is valuable to them. If it is expected for the employees to do a good job, then they must have adequate working conditions. Poor lighting, too much noise, or uncomfortable temperatures make it difficult for employees to produce both quality and quantity (Capozzoli, 1998).

**TRUE MOTIVATORS**

When considering motivators, longevity and effectiveness are important. Motivators such as fear or incentives have effects that can be counterproductive or short-lived. Thus, the use of internal motivational factors needs to be considered (Helminger, 1997). "Beecher once said, 'God made man to go by motives, and he will not go without them any more than a boat without steam, or a balloon without gas. Find out what motivates man, touch that button to turn the key that makes men achieve'" (Helminger, 1997).

This idea leads to the debate over where change should occur in terms of employee motivation. Simply changing the individual usually takes too much time and effort and does not reap the benefit of helping other employees as much as a company-wide change. However, managers are primarily interested in how to motivate individuals on the job. Their main focus should be designing jobs that meet the demands of the organization as well as the skills and abilities of their employees. Employees are empowered and motivated when they assume additional planning and evaluating responsibilities through job enrichment. In turn, this enrichment will benefit the company because they have employees who are better prepared to deal with everyday situations.

Managers can increase employee motivation by seeking employees' input on daily decisions. The ability to make good decisions should not be the sole responsibility of the managers, but a concerted effort by individuals with the best knowledge of the situation. When employees are encouraged to make their own decisions, managers should not micromanage, but allow employees to learn from their mistakes and learn to tolerate some learning errors. Other motivators that can be implemented by management include providing social interaction and teamwork, implementing goals and challenges, and instituting employee appreciation programs (Zimmer, 1998).
Some examples of motivators used by various organizations include educational assistance programs, stock options, and savings plan benefits. All of these represent long-term programs that are specifically designed to increase worker satisfaction and effectiveness. It is the policy of many organizations to encourage employees to take college-level courses to increase effectiveness in their present positions or prepare them for increased or new responsibilities. Many organizations will reimburse 100 percent of the cost of tuition, books, entrance exam fees, and lab fees for courses toward a job-related bachelor's degree and/or a master's degree. Many will also reimburse these costs for non-degree courses if the material covered is job-related. The corporate standard is that reimbursement is contingent upon the satisfactory completion of the course with a grade of "C" or better.

In terms of stock options and savings plans for employees, some organizations require that employees be 21 years of age or older and have at least 1,000 hours of service in order to be eligible. Once these requirements are met, the employee is eligible to participate in the employee retirement savings and stock plans. The savings plan allows employees to defer up to a certain percent of their annual salary, and the organization matches the first few percentage points of deferral and contributes 50 percent of the next one percent of deferral to each participant's account. Employees become 100 percent vested in the company-matching portion of their account after five years of service. In addition, the board of directors makes an annual contribution (based on the results of operations) in the form of company stock to the plan.

**MOTIVATIONAL JOB DESIGN**

In order to be effective, management should be concerned with motivating individuals on the job. Therefore, managers should seek different methods of designing motivating jobs. Job design should incorporate environmental dynamics, the organization's resources, and individual preference. Job enlargement, job enrichment, and the job characteristics model are three methods that can be used in the process of designing motivating jobs (Robbins & Coulter, 1996).

Job enlargement is a type of horizontal expansion designed to overcome the narrow focus of highly specialized jobs. It involves the concept of knowledge enlargement--enrichment of the individual through increased job knowledge/training. Some examples of the results of enrichment include increased worker satisfaction, enhanced customer service, and increased accuracy. In contrast, job enrichment is a vertical expansion that provides for increased worker responsibility (i.e., planning and evaluating duties). Greater responsibility increases job depth (worker control) and results in employee empowerment. This empowerment often leads to a higher quality of output and employee motivation since workers feel connected to their jobs. The job characteristics model is a method of job analysis and design which identifies five job characteristics: 1) skill variety (range of skill/talent), 2) task identity (worker-task connection), 3) task significance (degree of impact), 4) autonomy (worker freedom/independence), and 5) feedback (worker critique/performace evaluation).

The above characteristics measure the intrinsic rewards derived by workers via increased knowledge and performance review--such rewards have led to greater motivation, performance, and satisfaction while decreasing employee absenteeism and turnover rates. According to the job characteristics model, managers should: 1) combine tasks to increase skill and task identification,
2) create natural work units to encourage worker-task identification, 3) establish client relationships to increase variety, obtain valuable feedback, and increase worker autonomy, 4) expand jobs vertically via job enrichment, and 5) open feedback channels via employee performance reviews (Robbins & Coulter, 1996).

Employers and managers must also realize that sometimes it becomes necessary to take a break from the job. This helps to reduce stress that can build up in a person who is faced with a high degree of job enlargement. Friendships can also be made during these periods of relaxation. This is possible through company gatherings and/or parties. Many organizations sponsor company picnics at recreational facilities for employees and their families. These facilities are rented at the company's expense and lunch is often catered. Activities such as door prizes, bingo, face painting, etc. are offered (also at the company's expense). In addition, many organizations sponsor a Christmas party for employees and their spouses/dates. This event is also usually catered and entertainment is provided at the company's expense. Most organizations appreciate the work endeavors of their employees and wish to convey thanks via social gatherings such as these. Most organizations believe that it is important to promote healthy work relationships, and these events place employees face-to-face with individuals they might not encounter during a normal workday (i.e., executive management, manufacturing personnel, second/third shift employees).

MOTIVATIONAL THEORIES

Because each organization has a distinct personality, managers should try and remove barriers from their organization that cause job dissatisfaction and are a detriment to motivating employees. Factors such as company politics, unproductive meetings, withholding information, and unfairness lead to low morale and overall job dissatisfaction (Robbins & Coulter, 1996).

Another theory related to employee motivation is the equity theory. This theory suggests that individuals compare their performance and compensation against their co-workers' performance and compensation and act to correct any inequities. For example, two workers are paid an hourly rate for the same task; however, worker A is paid more per hour than worker B. Thus, worker B may act to correct this inequity or just continue to perform below his or her potential. Similarly, worker A will increase his work efforts given his or her elevated level of compensation (Robbins & Coulter, 1996).

Recent studies have expanded the concept of employee motivation beyond job design and identified issues such as motivating a diverse workforce, pay-for-performance programs, and employee stock ownership plans (ESOPs) (Robbins & Coulter, 1996). Researchers suggest that management exercise flexibility when confronting a diverse workforce. For example, different groups of workers have different needs. A single mother may need daycare or a second job and therefore require specific motivators. Research also suggests that tailoring rewards to the individual worker can be a highly motivational tool. A few such tailored rewards in use today include compressed workweeks (four 10-hour days), flextime (set number of hours, with flexible scheduling), job sharing, and telecommuting (Robbins & Coulter, 1996).

Pay-for-performance plans are designed to link specific performance goals with employee compensation. Since most individuals work to obtain the amount of money required to meet their needs and wants, these types of plans can be highly motivating since they positively relate the
amount of pay with the amount of work effort. Pay-for-performance programs compensate employees based on some pre-determined performance measurement (objective). Examples include piece-rate pay plans, wage incentive plans, profit sharing, and bonus plans.

Performance measurements may include individual or team goals, departmental objectives, or overall organizational profit. The basis for such programs is that by making a portion of an employee's compensation contingent on some specific performance objective, he or she will be more focused and devote more effort toward attaining that objective (Robbins & Coulter, 1996).

Some organizations have management incentive programs under which managers and executive managers pledge to meet certain MBOs by year-end. At the end of the period, their performance is measured against these MBOs and compensation is granted according to the organization's results of operations for the year. These programs work well for management; however, as only a targeted group of employees are allowed to participate, the overall success is debatable.

Yet another type of specific reward program is The Idea Program (TIP). In this program, employees are encouraged to submit cost savings ideas, and an appointed TIP committee researches every idea to determine the cost savings, if any, that are applicable. The idea program awards are granted on a quarterly basis, and the amount (up to a certain dollar amount) is based on the projected cost savings. Employees should be recognized at the state-of-the-company meeting and in the company newsletter. They also might receive a plaque for their idea.

CONCLUSION

There are many factors that play into the concept of employee motivation. The first necessary step is to determine what motivational tools will actually be effective in each particular situation. Some tools may work for some companies, but not for others and vice versa. It is important to note that the decisions dealing with motivation are based upon several theories. No single theory seems best suited for every situation; therefore, theories are often combined to provide the best possible combination to motivate employees. Although no single theory works all the time, there is an underlying theme to all of the theories that respect and participation are two key items that employees tend to appreciate. Oftentimes, the existence or nonexistence of these two factors can determine how productive an employee will or will not be. It is important to note that these two factors are almost always more important than monetary compensation. Of course, there are some individuals for whom this generalization will not apply. Also, many of the motivational theories that have been developed are used in industry today. However, they have been modified to meet specific needs of the particular company.

REFERENCES


