Employee Motivation

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Corporations hire managers to oversee their daily operations and develop strategies to acquire, efficiently utilize, and manage corporate resources to essentially provide services or products and accomplish the corporate mission. Corporate resources can be financial, equipment, inventory, production, property, information technology, or natural. In addition to the tangible or conceptual resources listed, managers must often manage the organization's human resources, that is, their employees. Each employee possess their own internal motivation as evidenced by their application for employment, subsequent interview, and retrospectively, in review of their degrees and certifications. Accordingly, people are already sufficiently motivated, our task as managers is to unleash that motivation (Goyette, 2016). This dissertation will focus on employee motivation and specifically cover the use of the motivation and performance formula, further motivation theories, methods involving rewards and recognitions, and motivation strategies that managers can use to improve employee performance.

Fundamental to understanding employee performance is comprehending the motivation and performance formula. A manager who puts all of his or her effort into unleashing an employee's internal motivation will be ineffective at achieving top performance since motivation alone is insufficient to perform. Three distinct factors functionally determine performance, to wit: employee ability, motivation, and possession of necessary resources (Lussier, 2017). A zero in any one category results in an inability to perform. Each position in a company certainly has prerequisite qualifications as do individual tasks. A high school graduate with no university degree cannot reasonably expect to perform in a biology lab just as a person with no mechanical knowledge cannot expect to be effective in the garage of an automobile repair shop. Consequently, it goes without saying that an employee's ability, working knowledge, comprehension, and fluidity within a given field is imperative to performance. The role motivation plays in employee performance is clear, enjoying the task at hand is paramount to efficiency, attention to detail, and quality performance. General Motors' chief executive officer, Mary Barra, advises that success and pursuit of one's passions go hand in hand (Lussier, 2017). Lastly, in contemplation of the formula for motivation and performance, possession of adequate resources is fundamental.

Corporate resources include tangible or conceptual resources, as outlined above, which an employee may need to do his or her job.

Employee motivation, just one aspect of the motivation and performance formula, is often studied because it gives insight into employee behavior and provides a basis to predict future behavior. There is not just one theory surrounding employee motivation which has been unanimously accepted. Furthermore, motivational philosophies are divided into three classes, content motivation, process motivation, and reinforcement theory (Lussier, 2017). The first divisional class, content motivation, focuses on recognizing and comprehending the needs of your employees. The foundation of this class of theories comes in part from Maslow's hierarchy of needs, a prevailing concept in psychology which outlines the basic, psychological, and self-fulfillment needs of individuals (McLeod, 2020). The content motivation theories apply the hierarchy and elaborate on self-fulfillment needs to provide advice to managers on factors which they can control within an organization to unleash an employee's internal motivation. Factors which are controllable by the manager include attainment, authority, and relationship. Since this is just an overview of classes of motivational theories, only a general synopsis is being provided. The second divisional class of motivational theories are collectively called the process motivation theories. Emphasis is on appropriate goal-setting and the link between an employee's exerted effort, projected result, and the expectancy that the rewards of a given project will be worth it. The last class, divisionally, is reinforcement theory. This class holds that consequences of employee action will motivate employees to perform in predictable ways. Through positive reinforcement, effective use of punishment, and avoidance-reinforcement methods, it is determined that the manager can control their employees' actions and unleash their internal motivation to perform.

In Kerry Goyette's TEDx discourse on motivation, she reveals that unleashing an employee's internal motivation comes down to understanding if the individual is either a pleasure seeker or a pain avoider (Goyette, 2016). Reinforcement theory addresses both and proposes that a manager can reward and punish employee behavior to achieve future desired results predictably (Lussier, 2017). Even if reinforcement is continuous or intermittent, consistency is imperative, as is the employee clearly understanding the parameters which result in either reward or consequence. There are four specific theories classified within the class of reinforcement theory. First, positive

reinforcement, proposes offering rewards for objectives met or certain performance. If the reward is attractive enough, the theory dictates that the employee will perform predictably to achieve the reward. The restaurant industry uses this incentive, in the form of tips, collected by waiters and waitresses wherein patrons pay (tip) based on performance. Second, avoidance is a type of reinforcement wherein negative consequences await poor performers. This method is a contrast to the previous method and wherein the former was designed for pleasure seekers, the latter is designed for pain avoiders (Goyette, 2016). This type audits performance over a period of time and threatens negative consequence. In certain circumstances, a prolonged audit of previous performance is unavailable and more instantaneous punishment for undesirable behavior is equitable. This constitutes the third theory within reinforcement theory. Examples of this theory employed in common industry include fines, employee demotions, and loss of privileges (Lussier, 2017). Lastly, withholding reinforcement for behavior is a sub-theory within reinforcement theory and attempts to reduce or eliminate objectionable behavior by refraining from providing an expected reaction. This method is employed where other social consequence exists such as when a manager does not acknowledge an employee's lack of performance and he may naturally feel embarrassed in his own shortcoming. This technique relies on peer pressure and other natural social consequences.

Another form of employee motivation is found in varying perquisites (perks) and methods of reward and recognition. Perhaps the most recognizable is fair and reasonable financial compensation. Every person deserves to be properly compensated for his or her time spent building up the company or providing consultancy or labor. It is a strange concept that maximum salary means maximum time away from family and minimum salary means minimum time away from family, yet salary is needed to provide financially and thus a dichotomy exists. Another form of reward is through an employer providing flexible hours and work schedule. Many work a standard 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. job but an employer may accommodate with a weekends-only work schedule, or nights-only, or by permitting an employee to work flexible hours so long as his weekly work is complete. Another method of reward is through company stock and ownership share. Publix permits only its employees to own shares of stock in the company. Another reward to motivate employees is through giving an employee a title or position of certain prestige or authority. Often a title can be given without a pay raise thus making it a desirable reward from an employer's

standpoint. Yet another form of reward is when the corporation provides its traveling employees or long-distance employees with mileage reimbursement or by providing transportation.

Corporations may consider other forms of reward and recognition. Retirement benefits with optional employer matching are quite common in the United States. Often an employer may choose to encourage employee savings by offering to match dollar for dollar up to the first $100 monthly in a 401(k) or other similar retirement account. Companies who employ workers who must frequently travel out of the state on business trips may afford their employees an extra day at the destination or may afford them a few vouchers for travel on personal vacation trips or perhaps a personal allowance while away on business. Other companies may provide bonuses to employees after a big job is complete or a large contract is fulfilled; perhaps financial compensation is provided in the form of a tip or performance bonus such as in a sales position at an auto dealership. Organizations which require their employees to be on-call or be a part of a rapid response team may afford housing allowances or a residential tenancy to encourage employees to live on-site or nearby. Lastly, employers can unleash their employees' internal motivation through perquisites and specific employee benefits which may be material or financial in nature. Methods of compensation and reward vary and can take on almost any form imaginable.

There are many motivation strategies which managers can use to improve performance in the workplace. In this discourse I will review two; the first is trust. Trust is about creating relationships with employees and it is about teamwork. Previously I shared rewards and methods of recognition employers use. Good managers will use these tastefully and as incentives, never in a manipulative way lest the results be short lived (Whipple, 2019). A good way to implement trust in the company is to create employee functions such as staff Christmas parties, or monthly luncheons centered around a presentation, seminar, or team-building exercise. Additionally, improve internal company culture with diversity which will result in an increase in creativity throughout the organization. Lastly, encourage employees to share constructive feedback. This could be feedback with each other or management. Always be receptive to employee critiques, ideas, and suggestions. This will increase corporate trust and ultimately improve the company and staff.

Providing feedback is a component of increasing corporate trust and trust amongst staff, but it is also in and of itself a motivational strategy. Providing feedback and being open to feedback increases opportunities for personal growth and learning. As managers we should always share thoughts and opinions with employees on their work and performance. It is for their betterment and the betterment of the organization. Additionally, providing feedback to your workers improves their morale. If it is constructive, then it is advising them of how they are aligning with company values and serves as a guide to achieving top performance. If it is positive or praise, then it will boost the employee's morale and serve as either encouragement, or if presented publicly, will provide a feeling of pride and contentment. Providing feedback to staff builds up professional relationships that you'll seek to establish. When deadlines loom or emotions flare, employees will often stay respectful and not forsake the relationship which has already been built. Lastly, it will reduce any uncertainty in expectations. It can be worrisome if employees do not know what is expected of them just as it can be an unnerving experience for employers. To clear up uncertainty, share with your employees which things they are doing right and wrong. You'll both be happier for it.

Managers have enormous responsibilities within their organizations. Motivation is not solely responsible for an employee's performance as managers must also consider the employee's ability and resources which are at his or her disposal as part of the motivation and performance formula (Lussier, 2017). When assessing motivation, there are three classes of prevailing theories, to wit: content motivation, process motivation, and reinforcement theory. Within the category of reinforcement theory, positive and negative reinforcement were both reviewed, as was avoidance and withholding reinforcement for behavior. Managers would be wise to become knowledgeable with these and implement them. There are many methods of rewarding and recognizing employees but caution should be given to always avoid coming across as being manipulative. Always seek to promote trust within the organization and be sure to provide feedback to employees, both constructive and in the form of praise and compliments. In summary, an employee's motivation is internal and pre-existing, yet there are many things we as managers can do to unleash this motivation and we would do well to employ these methods.

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