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EFFECTIVE EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION STRATEGIES

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Abstract. In a constantly changing business world, motivating employees within a company and attracting new human resources become strategic priorities for companies. In order to achieve these objectives, it is crucial to implement effective motivational strategies, which lead to the retention of employees and the attraction of new valuable candidates. An effective motivational strategy not only attracts valuable candidates, but also determines the existing employees to make their maximum contribution to the success of the organization.

Managers are increasingly concerned with assuming an important responsibility, namely that of motivating their employees to achieve performance. More and more companies realize the need to awaken the interest of employees to participate to a large extent in the company's success. Companies that maintain a focus on employee motivation will always have an advantage because a motivated employee is a productive employee. This will positively influence the results of the companies. That is why the motivational process is an important one, and managers should juggle motivational strategies to drive performance and help the company thrive.

In this article, we will explore various forms of motivation, the causes for lack of motivation and what are the benefits that motivational strategies bring.

Therefore, investing in effective strategies regarding the motivation of staff and candidates not only increases the attractiveness of the company on the labor market, but also strengthens the solid basis for the long-term success of the organization.

Keywords: motivation, employees, strategies, rewards, efficiency, manager

JEL Classification: J24, J28, J33, M2, M52

INTRODUCTION

In today's economy, the extent to which a company's employees are motivated determines its progress. The essence of a company is its human resource. It is the only creator of value, that is, a flow of creativity and originality necessary to discover the possibilities of knowing one's own limits.

The employee is the key factor in the success of a company and, for this reason, the human resource must be shaped, supported and motivated for the most intense involvement in order to achieve performance. The most effective solution to ensure a company's survival and maintain competitive success is investment in people. That is why the process of motivation is a very important one and

managers should implement effective motivation strategies to drive performance and help the company grow.

Motivating employees is a dimension of work in human resources and not an easy one. Jean-Marie Peretti (2010) states: At the basis of motivation is the theory of equity. The employee thinks about what his contribution is and what he receives in exchange for his work from the organization. The comparison develops in two directions, one internal, within the company, and one external, towards the employees of other companies. Of course, this ratio is not the same in all countries, but the same is the mechanism that puts the employee into action, that motivates him, is the same and is based on the appreciation of the salary in relation to the work and effort put in. As a result, the salary policy developed is very important in motivating the employee, and its transparency is essential. Also, in order to be motivated, employees must have confidence in the performance appraisal system practiced in the organization, to know the rules according to which they are evaluated, to be explained to them the connection between contribution and remuneration. (Lefter et al., 2012, p.130)

The term motivation comes from the Latin *movere*, which, of course, means movement. We can say that an individual is motivated when he wants to achieve something. The reason is not the same thing as the incentive. An individual's motivation covers all the reasons why he chooses to act in a certain way (Adair, 2006).

Other management specialists, Nicolescu, Verboncu (2008, p.291), define motivation as, in a broad sense, "a set of decisions and actions by which the organization's stakeholders are determined to contribute directly and indirectly to the realization of functionalities and superior performance overall, based on the correlation of their interests in approaching and achieving the objectives of the organization and its subsystems".

In a narrow sense, from the perspective of human resources management, motivation, in the authors' view, consists in correlating the needs, aspirations and interests of human resources within the organization with the achievement of objectives and the exercise of tasks, competencies and responsibilities assigned within the organization. (Lefter et al., 2012, p.131)

The ability of motivation to determine a series of characteristics of work behavior is very well captured by Pinder (1998) who stated that motivation is a set of energetic forces that originate both inside and outside the individual to initiate the associated behavior with work and to determine its form, direction, intensity and duration.

Therefore, all these approaches, although sometimes considered antagonistic, justify the need to carry out further studies and research on work motivation, effective motivation strategies, in order to be able to understand and explain organizational behaviors and the way in which the management of an organization must act in this direction to achieve its final goal - performance.

BENEFITS OF EMPLOYEES AND CANDIDATES MOTIVATION

An effective motivation strategy not only attracts valuable candidates, but also determines the existing employees to make their maximum contribution to the success of the organization. When a candidate is strongly motivated by the company during the recruitment process, he is more likely to choose the job offer and join the team. Also, once employees are motivated and actively involved, there is a

higher degree of retention of employees within the organization in the long term. (Motivarea angajaților, 2023)

Motivation helps employees achieve excellent results in the workplace, but when they are dissatisfied, demotivated people can achieve poorer results. There are many factors that can generate lack of motivation: personal problems, disagreements with colleagues, dislike of the type of work that the employee has to do, or other individual reasons. This is because people are different, each person has their own character, principles. From this statement it is important to understand that individual solutions must be found to help demotivated employees find their "interest" in the work they do.

Motivating someone means understanding their needs, what motivates them to work better and make them want to get better results. (Costin, 2020, p. 118)

Motivation itself is an extremely complex activity and affected by many factors in the business. The benefits of employee motivation are numerous; however, we would like to list some of the most important ones:

➤ **Increases employee engagement**

Motivational strategies can help employees feel more involved in their work, leading to higher levels of job satisfaction and commitment to the organization. Connecting to the company's mission and values leads them to give their full contribution and to work with passion and determination.

➤ **Productivity increase**

Motivation stimulates employees to focus their efforts to achieve the organization's goals. When employees are motivated, they are more likely to actively seek ways to improve their performance, take on new challenges and exceed expectations. They may be more willing to go beyond their responsibilities and take more responsibility for their work. This can lead to increased productivity.

➤ **Talent retention**

Motivated employees are less likely to leave the company. This means cost savings associated with new hires, as well as maintaining knowledge and expertise within the organization.

➤ **Reducing staff turnover**

High employee turnover can be costly to organizations, such as increased recruitment and training costs, decreased productivity, and lower morale.

By implementing effective employee motivation strategies, organizations can create a positive work environment that promotes growth and development, which can improve employee retention rates.

➤ **Increasing creativity and innovation**

Motivated employees are more open to new, innovative ideas and to taking constructive risks. Employee motivation strategies can encourage employees to be more creative and innovative in their work, leading to new ideas and approaches that can benefit the organization.

➤ **Better collaboration and teamwork**

Motivated employees may be more willing to share their ideas and collaborate with others to achieve common goals. They may be more open to feedback and constructive criticism, which can help improve communication and team trust, and are more willing to support and help their teammates, which can help foster a culture of positive team. Motivated employees are more inclined to work together, offer mutual support and develop constructive relationships.

➤ **Increases attractiveness for candidates**

A strong employer brand, based on solid motivational practices, can attract talented and high-potential candidates who will want to join the team.

➤ **Creates a positive public image**

An organization that invests in employee motivation creates a reputation as a top employer, thus attracting the attention of candidates and other key stakeholders.

➤ **Increasing profitability**

Effective employee motivation strategies can improve an organization's profitability in several ways.

- This improves employee productivity such as increasing sales, increasing customer satisfaction and improving the organization's reputation in the market.
- This helps employees to come up with new ideas and approaches that can benefit the organization to remain competitive in the market.
- This helps reduce employee turnover and associated costs such as hiring and training.
- This creates a positive work culture and helps improve the reputation of the organization by attracting top talent and reducing recruitment costs. (Джейн, 2023)

Once people are motivated, maintaining this condition will require constant vigilance, but the effort will be rewarded: highly motivated people will behave well and get more than satisfactory results.

In terms of compliance with deadlines, many studies suggest that pay isn't the biggest motivator for employees, but it sure helps. When there is a structured process to tie performance appraisal scores to merit increases, employees are more motivated to meet deadlines and get things done.

Well-motivated people harness their creativity and top management skills to re-engineer their workflows and resources to finish the job faster and exceed expectations

In an organization, the success of the the qualitative side of the human factor and his motivation towards the work performed are ensured to the greatest extent. Satisfaction with work is associated with performance up to a point, from which performance influences satisfaction. The direct link

between performance and work satisfaction is mainly provided by the feedback and reward system. (Costin, 2020, p. 118)

Therefore, investing in effective strategies regarding the motivation of staff and candidates not only increases the attractiveness of the company on the labor market, but also strengthens the solid basis for the long-term success of the organization. This proved to be extremely important when it was necessary to motivate employees during the pandemic, because the distance was a factor that could have easily broken up the teams.

CAUSES FOR LACK OF MOTIVATION OF EMPLOYEES

here are countless reasons that lead to workplace demotivation and low morale, and they vary by individual.

Here are some possible causes for lack of motivation at work:

- **Invasive or authoritarian management:** can inhibit creativity, initiative and active involvement of employees;
- **Insecurity and instability:** can reduce commitment and involvement at work. Job security is the most important factor in employee motivation. If an employee is in an expendable job or working in an unstable company, he may put in the effort necessary to continue receiving his salary. The rest of his energy will be spent updating his resume, gossiping with coworkers, looking for a more stable job elsewhere, and planning his jump.
- **Distrust in management and ineffective communication:** lack of open communication, preferential treatment or lack of respect can undermine employee trust. In the absence of information, rumors thrive. Employees end up second-guessing, confused and frustrated. If there is no way to communicate to management for clarification, it becomes even worse. Clear communications throughout the organization not only ensure an efficient workplace, but also have a major impact on employee morale and confidence.
- **Lack of recognition and rewards:** can lead to disengagement and demotivation. When employees are not recognized for a job well done or the immense effort they put into a project, they become demotivated. They lose interest and may not even want to try to think innovatively, do extra work or even perform their role with only feelings of obligation and energy because their superior does not seem to care or notice the hard work and devotion. (Ghid resurse umane și management de personal)
- **Lack of development opportunities:** limited learning opportunities or stagnation in unchallenging positions can lead to demotivation. Most employees feel happy when there is continuous learning potential in their company and a sense of growth in their knowledge and skills. Even progress in the form of small achievements at work are motivation triggers. If, on the other hand, employees feel uninspired and stagnant, their enthusiasm and commitment will decrease.
- **Lack of connection with the organization's values:** the feeling of not identifying with the organization's culture or of not seeing a meaning or an impact in what they do, can diminish involvement and dedication;

- **Monotonous tasks and lack of challenges:** this can lead to boredom and demotivation;
- **Lack of balance between professional and personal life:** extended working hours, lack of flexibility or support for personal needs can lead to exhaustion and demotivation. (Motivarea angajaților, 2023)

EFFECTIVE EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION STRATEGIES

Currently, the salary is not enough to ensure the existence of employee motivation and involvement. The context constantly demands new ideas when it comes to ways to reward and retain employees. They perform in such a way that they stay in the company for a long time.

Organizations can create a positive work environment that supports employee well-being, engagement and productivity by implementing effective employee motivation strategies. This, in turn, can lead to a number of benefits, including greater job satisfaction, reduced turnover and improved organizational success.

Determining employee needs

Identifying employee needs is an important step in creating effective employee motivation strategies. This includes understanding what motivates employees and what challenges they face in the workplace. Conducting surveys, focus groups, or one-on-one meetings with employees can help gather this information.

- *Question and Answer Surveys.* They can be useful tools for collecting anonymous feedback from employees. An online survey can be conducted on a range of topics such as job satisfaction, work-life balance, opportunities for growth and development, and recognition and reward.
- *Focus group.* These group sessions involve a small number of staff and are led by a trained moderator. These can provide a deeper understanding of employee needs and identify common themes or issues.
- *One-on-one meetings.* These meetings can give employees a safe space to discuss any issues or concerns they are facing and help build trust with managers or supervisors.

By understanding the needs of employees, customized motivation strategies can be created that address their specific concerns and challenges.

For example, if employees report feeling stressed or overwhelmed, consider providing additional support or resources, such as counseling services or wellness programs.

Rewarding employees by recognizing merits

It is important for employers to provide constructive feedback and highlight the valuable contributions of employees to motivate them to continue to engage and achieve exceptional results.

Employee motivation improves significantly when their work is known and recognized by superiors. Small and medium-sized companies can take small steps to value and recognize the work of employees. With small gestures, the employer can demonstrate that he cares about his employees and their contributions. Such gestures increase the morale of employees. (Ghid resurse umane și management de personal)

When employees feel that their contributions are valued, they are more likely to be motivated and engaged in their work.

Recognition and reward can take many forms, from public praise to bonuses, rewards or promotions.

- For example, a bonus can be given to an employee who meets or exceeds a certain performance target, or a promotion can be given to an employee who consistently demonstrates leadership in their task.

However, rewards and recognition should be linked to significant achievements or behavior and not just given arbitrarily. This ensures that employees feel that their efforts are truly appreciated and that there is a clear link between their actions and the rewards they receive.

Providing work-life balance

Flexible working hours, remote work or the possibility to set their own working hours allow employees to better balance their personal and professional lives and to feel more satisfied and motivated at work.

By prioritizing work-life balance, organizations can create healthier workplace cultures and reap the benefits of a more engaged and productive workforce.

Providing flexible work arrangements such as telecommuting, flexible hours or extra days off can help employees balance their personal and professional commitments. This can lead to reduced stress, increased employee satisfaction, increased levels of motivation and productivity, and cost savings.

- For example, allowing employees to work from home can reduce the need for office space and overhead costs.

However, it is important to remember that providing work-life balance should not be seen as a privilege or an afterthought. This should be a fundamental aspect of a healthy workplace culture that promotes employee well-being and engagement.

Transparency in professional development

Employees who understand how they can progress in the organization and who see concrete development opportunities are more motivated to make efforts and achieve their professional goals.

Not all people want to climb the career ladder - this requires responsibility, high levels of commitment and long hours. Others want to, but are not up to it. To ensure that expectations and reality coincide

and that both the company and the employees achieve their goals, it is necessary to draw up a career plan for each employee and supervise his professional activities.

It is important for the subordinate to understand: it is impossible to come to work as a consultant and a month later take the position of boss. Even if we hypothetically assume such a development of events, the result will most likely be disastrous. A career is built progressively and depends on many factors. However, a manager can set a lower but still good bar for a potential manager.

Companies are interested in employees becoming better, because professionalism directly affects the profitability of the business. And by the way, a career can develop not only vertically, but also horizontally - a company does not need an endless number of managers, but strong experts in their field are always needed. (Якyба, 2022)

Opportunities for personal development

Employees who see that they are offered the chance to grow and improve their skills are more engaged and involved in their work.

Organizations can provide opportunities for growth and development by offering training, coaching and mentoring programs. These programs can help employees develop new skills and knowledge that can benefit both the employee and the organization.

- For example, an employee who is trained in a new technology or process can work more efficiently, resulting in improved productivity and results.

Additionally, these programs help employees feel valued and supported, which leads to greater engagement and motivation.

For example, an employee who has the opportunity to lead a project may feel proud of their work, which leads to increased motivation and productivity.

Team spirit

Team atmosphere, team spirit - these are things that cannot be measured and counted, but they greatly influence the company's efficiency. This is communication between employees and at the "manager-subordinate" level. If the relationship is friendly, built on mutual respect and trust (but without familiarity), then the work will be better. Here are some ways to do this.

Building a team

In simple words: this is an event whose purpose is to unite the team. It can be organized after a working day or week or combined with a corporate or holiday event.

What can be team building. Various games, missions and other activities where the team has to solve puzzles together, get out of difficult situations and just have fun and relax. As a rule, after such events the work process goes better - employees get to know each other better and establish mutual assistance.

Team meetings

It is advisable to organize regular meetings - not only in critical situations, but also when something relevant simply needs to be discussed. The manager must praise people openly, express gratitude to them, talk to them about offers and prospects for success.

Personal conversation

If we talk about communication between a manager and a subordinate, personal conversation and feedback bring people closer and help them quickly achieve company and personal goals. It is advisable for the boss to have a general idea about the employees: do they have a family, children, parents, where do they live, why do they work in his company. The team must ensure that everyone in it is respected and not neglected.

Creating a positive work environment

A positive work environment is one that is supportive, inclusive and fun. This environment can be created by:

- *Encouraging cooperation and teamwork.* When employees feel they are working together toward a common goal, they are more likely to be motivated to succeed.
- *Providing opportunities for social interaction,* such as team building or company events, can also help create a sense of community and support among employees.
- *Creating a culture of respect and trust.* This can be achieved by encouraging open communication and feedback, recognizing and rewarding positive behavior and dealing with any workplace issues quickly and effectively. (Джейн, 2023)

Encouraging respect and transparency in the team

It is important that employees feel respected and appreciated by colleagues and hierarchical superiors. Also, the role of managerial communication in motivating employees is very important. Promoting constructive feedback and active involvement can create a motivating and sustainable work environment.

Financial motivation of employees

Of course, financial rewards are also important and an extremely large motivational factor because they satisfy a number of people's main needs. The financial motivation of employees contributes to the development of the feeling that their work is appreciated and respected. These are one of the best ways to support, well and efficiently, the behavior of employees and help them to be satisfied with what they do and the company they work for.

Capitalizing on employees' opinions

Employers can create an environment where employees feel listened to and valued, by organizing brainstorming sessions, collecting feedback and encouraging their contributions to projects and processes.

Respecting promises to employees

When employees see that their rights are respected and their promises are fulfilled, they will be more motivated to stay involved and contribute to the success of the organization. (Motivarea angajaților, 2023)

CONCLUSIONS

In the near future, policies will continue to be revised by both organizations and legislation to emphasize people-centered solutions that motivate employees, enable them to celebrate, recover, easily manage personal events, to take care of others.

Revising leave policies and adopting creative motivation solutions will give organizations a competitive advantage for top professionals in parts of the world with low unemployment, while helping companies comply and stay ahead of growing regulations.

Motivation plays a very important factor in a person's life. Be it individual improvement or organizational performance. Motivated employees do not need to be told how to do things, they take initiative, are willing to assume on additional responsibilities, are innovative and good entrepreneurs.

Hence, motivation plays a very important factor that ensures that employees remain active and contribute their best to their organization.

To successfully include efforts aimed at motivating employees, managers must have a real picture at both the macro and micro levels of the company. The macro level supports a motivational initiative through logic and context, and the micro level gives it consistency in action. As long as the employee sees his relationship with the company as an important one, the activity he performs brings with it personal fulfillment. In this way, the result of the motivation approach will have a decisive impact on personal motivation.

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