



The 8th International Scientific Conference
**“DEFENSE RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
IN THE 21st CENTURY”**
Braşov, November 14th 2013



PERSONNEL MOTIVATION – FACTORS AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Abstract:

Motivation is a very important process in human resources area. Personal motivation will increase the individual performance and by default the organization performance, but is contributing also to increasing the employee satisfaction. The development and evolution of the organization is linked to the employee improvement. Using the theories as a base, some factors and the associated opportunities were analyzed to underline ways for motivating employees and recommending actions at the manager's level.

Key words: motivation factors, employee, manager, needs theory.

1. Introduction

Human factor is the most important resource an organization can have. The way the employees are developing influences the organization success. Why is necessary to motivate employees, or to be concerned of their level of satisfaction? Because all processes inside an organization are only the results of the employees' work and satisfaction.

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A traveler was walking on a road and met a man that was carving in a stone. The traveler asked: “What are you doing?” The man, bored, answered: “Don't you see? I'm carving.” The traveler said: “Interesting!” and he kept going on the road. After a while, he met another man on the road side that was carving in a stone. The traveler asked: “What are you doing?” The man looked at his hands and answered: “I'm earning my life”. The traveler said: “Interesting!” and he kept going ahead on the road. Then, he met another man that was also carving in a stone. The traveler asked: “What are you doing?” The man, smiling, answered: “I'm building a cathedral!” Three individuals were doing the same thing but each of them had his own vision about the results. The last was the only one to integrate his work to a more comprehensive picture and underlined its utility. Each of us needs this kind of vision, consciously or not, to help the development on personal plan and to leave something behind that will remember of us.

2. The theories

There are different ways in which motivation is defined. Generally, it includes the needs or expectations, behavior directed toward goals and the feedback on meeting the initial needs. According to Business Dictionary [1], motivation is defined by „*internal and external factors that stimulate desire and energy in people to be continually interested and committed to a job, role or subject or to make an effort to attain a goal*”. Internal factors identify intrinsic motivation (something that exists within the individual – you are the one

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who wants to do it) and external factors identify extrinsic motivation (something that comes from outside of the individual – someone else wants you to do it).

From a historical point of view, motivation was studied first by the psychologists who developed theories¹, and then by the managers who developed models². The theories explain the individuals' behavior starting from a very simplistic view (looking for satisfaction) then, adding new elements (instincts influence, consequences or rewards of past behavior, future expectations and beliefs, satisfying needs) as the society was evolving. The models put emphasis on the managerial concern: production, people and finally, production and people.

Nowadays, conceptual approaches define different types of theories based on the factors that influence the motivation (content theories³), or the processes and interrelationships that cause motivation (cognitive theories⁴). The most popular theories describing specific sets of needs of individuals are:

a) Maslow's hierarchy-of-needs theory – first and still the most popular one. Individuals have five needs (physiological, safety, belongingness and love, esteem and self-actualization) arranged in a hierarchy from the most basic to the highest level. Lowest unsatisfied need becomes the most powerful and significant (prepotent need). The prepotent need motivates an individual to act to fulfill it. Satisfied needs do not motivate.

b) Alderfer's ERG theory. The Maslow's hierarchy is reduced to only three needs: existence, relatedness and growth – ERG. Individuals are motivated by unsatisfied needs and generally they move up the hierarchy in satisfying their needs. Satisfied lower-level needs become less important and higher-level needs become more important as they are satisfied. Non-satisfying a higher need, individuals may refocus on a lower level need.

c) McClelland's trichotomy of needs theory. It includes the needs for achievement, affiliation and power. Individuals have all three needs to some extent, but only one of them tends to motivate at any given time.

d) Herzberg's two-factor theory. This theory makes a difference between the factors that generates satisfaction (responsibility, autonomy, self-esteem and self-actualization opportunities known as motivators) and dissatisfaction (physical working conditions, salary, organization policies and practices, known as hygiene factors)

These theories differs in number and kinds of the needs identified and how motivation is influenced by the unfulfilled needs.

3. Factors and opportunities

Motivating individuals to behave, think, or feel and make them more willing to work, to achieve or to be creative implies a series of factors that can be explored/ used by the managers in order to achieve the organization goals. There is no single solution and no single element to be taken into consideration. The factors listed below are not exhaustive.

The job itself – is the way the employee sees the working activities in relation to the responsibilities. The manager is to enhance the satisfaction over the post responsibilities. Less satisfaction is observed to the administrative posts. The tasks are perceived as routine and boring. Delegating responsibilities gives new tasks to the employee and involve a greater freedom of action. This should be done incremental, in time and level of responsibilities. Due to delegation of authority, a subordinate employee feels that manager has confidence in him and his ability to use authority in a proper manner. Employees get

¹ Hedonism, Instinct Theory, Reinforcement Theory, Cognitive Theory, Need Hierarchy Theory - [2]

² Traditional Model, Human Relations Model, Human Resources Model - [2]

³ Need hierarchy theory, Manifest needs theory, Reinforcement theory

⁴ Social learning theory, Equity theory, Goal-setting theory, Expectancy theory

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mental satisfaction when authority is given to them. They take interest and initiative in the work and try to prove that they are competent to work at the higher levels. Thus, delegation of authority is a powerful motivating factor. Job rotation will eliminate routine and give a better vision over the organization. There is a tendency to consider the department in which the employee is working, the most important. This is the case where the results of some departments are more visible or tangible (production or sale). Job rotation will increase the motivation over the support departments.

Professional achievement – is the way the employee sees the result of his work and the level of satisfaction generated by these results. The manager is to enhance this level of satisfaction. Job description is mandatory. The employee knows from the beginning what is expected from him. In addition, the manager will explain to him/her the role inside the organization, being part of the general vision. This will contribute to the increased devotion feelings and loyalty. Sharing the organization values, the employees will realize the importance and compliance with a clear set of values. When the professional achievement is doubled by the employee progress, and the promotion is not possible for the near future, the job description can be enriched. In doing so, the managers can eliminate the routine that can be present after 2-3 years, and will bring that variety any employee need for his/her development.

Responsibility – is the way the employee sees the responsibility involved by his/her post, the freedom to take decisions, and the freedom to express ideas and opinions. The manager is to make them responsible over the job requirements, to give them the freedom to take decisions, and to help them to express their ideas and opinions. Engaging employees to take responsible decisions will enhance their self-esteem. When the level of freedom in fulfilling the tasks or expressing the ideas and opinions is low, the organization is not taking advantage of the entire employees' potential. The organization should initiate training programs for managers in order to develop the necessary skills to overtake the barriers in delegating responsibilities. Responsibility can be also enhanced through a suggestions and proposals collecting system. This system will allow the employees to be involved in the activity improving process. The employees should be permanently informed, and their proposals have to be analyzed and when necessary implemented. Otherwise, the employees will lose confidence in the system and the effect will be the opposite.

Recognition for accomplishment – is the way the employee sees the manager, the colleagues and the beneficiaries are appreciating his/her work. The manager is to appreciate the employee results. The impact of these appreciations is very strong for the individual. There is a need for the work efforts to be valued. The manager should develop the spirit of competition at each structure level, following the organization values and making known to all employees the criteria. Competition is a good opportunity to reward the ones with excellent results. The reward can include honorary titles along with symbolic prizes. Recognition for accomplishment is to be made openly, at an appropriate time and in front of all employees and the comments have to be explicit. This is also an opportunity to give example to the other employees and to remember what is expected from them.

Opportunities for growth and advancement – is the way the employee perceives his evolution inside the organization and the development on the personal and professional fields. The manager is to develop an efficient system that will allow career planning, promoting, and a favorable environment for personal and professional employee development. A good start will be to have a job catalogue. In this respect, any employee will know the requirements for certain position. A career planning policy and procedure will establish the criteria for getting a job into an organization. The manager should identify the employees that can get a higher post and prepare them granting an increasing level of

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responsibility. Fair opportunity of promotion in accord with the professional competences motivates the employee himself as well as his colleagues. The employee desire to grow and develop should be fully exploited in order to motivate. When promotion is not possible, conducting trainings and seminars in which employees are free to improve their professional level can be a solution to keep increasing the employee motivation.

Shared values – the employee values and their correlation with the organization values. The manager should act in order to facilitate overlapping the two sets of values. Each organization has its own set of values, even if they are not always explicit or shared by the employees. A successful organization is one with well defined values which are assumed by each employee. The difficulty for a manager to make the employees assume the organization values is the employee resistance to change. An error a manager can make is the perception that the resistance to change is something negative. Building pride is based on shared values. A good organization will pay enough to attract and retain good employees, but to motivate them to higher level of performance rely much more on nonmonetary approaches. An intrinsic feeling of pride is a lasting and powerful motivating force.

Policies and administrative practices – is the way the employee perceives the organization policies and practices. The manager should use the policies and administrative practices to create a proper environment. The practices and procedures are to be simple to avoid bureaucratic working processes. The policies and administrative practices will not increase the motivation, but the lack of them will definitely have a negative impact.

Working conditions – is the way the employee perceives the environment (space, cleaning, equipments etc.). The work environment should be safe and pleasant, creating the desire to work efficiently. The manager is to create/assure a suitable environment for work. In this respect, the tendency is that the technological equipment progress is faster than human relation one.

Supervision – is the way the employee perceives the leading and coordination style, and the relationship between manager and employee. The general opinion is not in favor of the managers. It is not supposed that a manager will know in detail each operation executed by the employees. Important is how to organize and make them reach the organization goal. The manager is to pay more attention to strategic activities instead of operational ones. The subordinate staff should not exceed a certain number (seven). By this way, the manager will have enough time for each employee.

Pay – is the employee's satisfaction on pay and other benefits. Apparently this is the main incentive for motivation or lack of satisfaction. In reality, there are many opportunities to find other ways to motivate or to satisfy employees. Often, not the level of pay is the problem, but the internal inequity (reference to the efforts, the colleagues etc.). A clear hierarchy and evaluation criteria can illustrate the post importance. Monetary incentives are very attractive to lower level employees (quick benefit), and the non-monetary incentives are more important at the higher levels of management. A new organization will pay better than a well known one. The first is to attract specialists and the last is taking advantage of the employees' interest in gaining experience. A clear link between performance and reward will motivate the employee. The pay or benefit system should treat individuals differently when appropriate.

Personal life – the way working is affecting personal life and the support an employee gets from his family. Even if the employee is assuming a reduced time allocated to personal life, there are some limits not to pass over. Working overtime is not necessary the result of a lower level of employee' performance. Coordination and communications deficiencies inside the organization or manager' working style could be also the reason.

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Program flexibility, where possible, is desirable. By this way the employees can be motivated to work overtime. The opportunity to visit the working place will give to family members a better understanding of job responsibilities and can enhance the employees' pride.

Interpersonal relations – is the way the employee perceives communication and collaboration with team members, and how is perceived the team members' qualities. The manager is to improve the relations between employees. In order to build a good team work is to invest efforts from both the manager and the team members. The manager' role is to get involved and to provide the necessary framework: activities outside the organization with the aim to develop cohesion, communication and the spirit of competition; analyzing sessions to identify and work out the deficiencies (open atmosphere; expressing free opinions); socialization sessions – getting out for a beer, in the mountains, at the picnic (team members will know each other better and will discover their common interests; the sessions cost is to be supported by the organization).

4. Conclusion

From all human resources processes that can be developed in an organization, the motivation process is taking a central role. All others processes derive from it. Poor motivation is a common characteristic of current work organizations. The issue resides mainly on two actors: the employee and the manager. The manager is to be the one to control the process. First, he should be aware and give attention of employee needs. Some needs are common and easy to be identified. The impact of the needs depends on their intensity and priority which is specific to an individual. Then, the manager is to understand the motivational process and the causes that conduct to certain behavior. Finally, he should intervene, finding ways to overlap the employee's objectives with the organization ones.

The managers should focus more on the internal environment, not only on the opportunities from external environment. After a careful evaluation of the organization, the manager should develop guidance and actions to ensure the success. Main effort should be focused to efficiently motivate the employees in order to increase the performance and their satisfaction. In this respect, two elements are to be present: confidence that all we can imagine can be implemented and passion to bring to the reality all we dreamt about.

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“Motivation is the art of getting people to do what you want them to do because they want to do it”⁵

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⁵ Dwight D. Eisenhower