

Analysis of the Impact of Motivation on Employee Performance

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Employees are the foundation and the core of a company, and their performance is the key to supporting the operation of the company. For company managers, how to improve employees' performance is their major working objective. Only when employees improve their performance, can the company maximize its benefits and achieve continuous growth and development. One of the most important ways to stimulate employees' performance is to offer them proper motivations. A survey of 126 large companies found that employees had higher morale and more productive work and the companies had higher customer satisfaction if employees believed that they were paid a competitive salary (Sabramony et al. 2008). The annual growth rate of stores of Walmart U.S. was only about 1% in 2011, while the growth rate of one of its main competitors, Costco, reached 8%. The average annual salary of a Costco employee is USD 45,000, while the average annual salary of an employee of Walmart Sam's Club is only USD 17,500. Costco's strategy is that the more we pay, the more we get - the higher salary could increase productivity while reducing the resignation rate of employees (Isidore, 2015). Therefore, proper motivation are conducive to improving employee's performance. However, unlike other management elements, people's different personalities, autonomy, subjective initiative and other aspects make it much more difficult to manage people than manage other management elements. Given the complexity of people, it is obviously insufficient to stimulate employees with only simple motivation, and some wrong motivations may even reduce their internal impetus. In this analysis paper, I will illustrate this view based on various motivation theories, specific examples and empirical data.

In a survey, 69% of respondents said that they were wasting time at work every day; almost 25% of them said they would waste 30-60 minutes at work every day. How is time wasted? Employees usually waste time in surfing the Internet and chatting with their colleges (Gouveia, 2013). Therefore, despite the changing world, the motivation problem for employees is still the same.

At present, most companies have similar motivation strategies, and also have some common problems. Firstly, their motivation strategies are too homogeneous without targeted motivation. Welfare payment and salary increase are the most common motivation strategies of most companies for their employees. Although such motivation strategies could play a certain role for most employees, in the long run, they may reduce employees' psychological enthusiasm, and influence employees' performance. Secondly, many companies place too much emphasis on material reward, and such motivation strategy ignores employees' mental needs, which may even lead to a situation where employees are overly interested in profit but neglect teamwork. Moreover, sometimes material rewards can bring side effects. A study on five laundry factories provided an example. Their monthly perfect attendance bonus plan did not work as expected: once participants lost their qualification for the perfect attendance bonus, their attendance rate would decrease. Employees' attention to attendance rate reduced their work efficiency by 8%, because employees who lost their qualification for the perfect attendance bonus became slack in work. However, the aim of perfect attendance bonus is making employees perform better, but the result is counterproductive (Gubler, 2016). Perhaps, in order to explain the above phenomenon, the companies need to study the motivation theory, which is one of the most commonly studied topics in organizational behavior. The most widely known motivation theory is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943). This theory is described as the "classic of classics" (Matteson and Ivancevich, 1989: 369). Perhaps due to its simplicity, comprehensibility and intuitive appeal, this theory has deeply influenced those who are interested in working behavior. In Maslow's (1943) Motivation Theory, people's needs are divided into 5 levels, that is, physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, self-esteem needs and self-actualization needs. These needs are innate and therefore universal and unchanging. Maslow believed that these needs are progressive, which means that only after the lower level need is satisfied, do people develop a higher level need and motivate them to a great extent. The essence of this theory is that it supports and encourages employees' autonomy and personal growth as such factors allow them to meet self-esteem needs and self-actualization needs. In addition, there is McClelland's Theory of Needs. Compared with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the needs that McClelland's Theory focuses on are more similar to incentive factors rather than strict survival needs. McClelland's Theory of Needs divides people's needs into 3 kinds, that is, need for achievement, need for power and need for affiliation (McClelland, 1953).

Therefore, for people with different needs, or for the same person at different stages, different motivation strategies should be selected, so as to have a positive impact on the work performance of employees, so that employees can maintain a good enthusiasm for work, thus promoting the operation and development of companies.

Firstly, companies have to use reasonable motivation strategies to keep employees motivated.

Different employees have different needs for motivation strategies. Therefore, if companies adopt a single motivation strategy, it may hinder some employees' motivation and reduce their work performance, which is totally a waste of motivation effectiveness. Based on this, it is necessary for company managers to understand the specific ideas of employees, give them different motivations according to their actual needs, so that employees would have a stronger motivation to work, and ultimately achieve the goal of improving employees' performance and promoting the development of companies.

In order to achieve the positive effect of motivations, company managers need to establish an effective communication mechanism, guaranteeing the free speech of employees so that managers can timely understand different employees' needs, and adopt effective and abundant incentive methods to meet their needs. For instance, company managers can communicate with their employees via different means such as work group chat and WeChat official account, giving them different channels to propose different motivation needs; or company managers can collect employees' opinions on motivation strategies through group voting, so that they can make amendments to the motivation strategies. Such communication methods can help managers to understand employees' needs and enrich motivation strategies to satisfy them. Such motivation strategy can maintain the employees' better work enthusiasm, enable them to create better work performance, and provide help for the business development of companies.

Secondly, companies can actively build a corporate culture system and set reasonable goals to help their development.

Too much emphasis on material rewards is a common problem for many companies in their motivation strategies, and is the main reason for the decline in the impact of motivation strategies on employees' performance. To illustrate this problem, let's look at an example first. Marcia is a volunteer at the Animal Protection Association, she spends 15 hours a week helping people adopt pets, and she really enjoys this job. However, three months ago, the Association hired her as a full-time employee, and she could receive an hourly wage of USD 11. Marcia is doing the same job as before, but she does not think it is as interesting as before (Robbins, 2021, 187). The self-determination theory can explain Marcia's reaction. This theory states that people enjoy the sense of control over their actions. Motivation will be destroyed when those tasks that can make people happy become an obligation rather than an activity of independent choice (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The self-determination theory suggests managers to carefully use external rewards as incentives. Pursuing goals out of intrinsic motivation (e.g., a strong interest in the work itself) is more likely to sustain one's motivation than external incentives. Similarity, cognitive evaluation theory believes that providing external incentives may undermine intrinsic motivation (Cerasoli, Nicklin and Ford, 2014).

Therefore, for individuals, there need to have other reasons to perform work than only have external incentives. For organizations, in addition to providing external incentives, managers have to make work full of fun, give recognition to employees, build the connection between organizations and employees' goals, as well as support employees' growth and development. If employees think that they can control their work and act according to their own choices, they are likely to make more achievements in their work.

Therefore, it's necessary for companies to strengthen the construction of corporate culture system and implement management by means of spiritual and material incentives, so that motivation strategies can positively influence employee performance and promote companies to achieve their development goals. Some large companies attach great importance to the construction of corporate culture system, and use corporate culture to influence more employees, so that their internal needs can be satisfied and their work performance can be improved. Companies can set up various channels for employees to participate in companies' management so as to keep their high enthusiasm for work and make them feel that they are being respected by companies, and they would enjoy working for their companies; besides, it is also important to set goals in scientific and reasonable ways. The goal-setting theory demonstrates how specificity, challenge and feedback on goals can have a significant impact on employee performance. The theory was proposed by Edwin Locke in 2002, which argued that the willingness to work to achieve a goal is a major source of work motivation. Many evidences can strongly support the goal-setting theory. There is an evidence showing that clear and specific goals can improve work performance; once employees accept difficult goals, they may achieve higher work performance compared with accepting easy goals; and feedback can stimulate higher work performance than without feedback (Locke and Latham, 2006). Setting scientific and reasonable goals also shows respect to employees, and is an effective way to improve their work performance.

Last but not least, it's important for companies to carry out reasonable organizational construction, and make employees feel fair and just in order to improve their work performance.

Organizational construction is another kind of motivation strategy, and also has an important impact on employee's performance. Moreover, organizational construction is a significant part of companies' operation, which is mainly reflected in the aspects including the establishment of training systems, equity distribution and career planning. As long as the planning is reasonable, it can improve employee's performance and promote the development of the company. For instance, a reasonable training system can help employees to improve their professional abilities and help them to lay a solid foundation for their abilities to improve their work performance. Equity distribution is based on material incentives, and employees can truly become a member of the company. As the saying goes, "one honors all; one damns all", so that employees can be more active in their work, thus promoting the development of the company, which is more advanced than the general material incentives. At the same time, we should also recognize the importance of fairness. Fairness (organizational fairness, distributive fairness, procedural fairness, interactive fairness, etc.) also plays an important role in employees' morale. When employees feel that they are being treated fairly, they will actively respond in various ways. All types of fairness can improve employee performance (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson and Porter, 2001).

In summary, motivation strategies play an important role in improving employee performance, which has been widely verified in reality. However, in order to achieve a positive impact effect, company managers need to constantly learn and adjust in practice. They cannot

adopt a single motivation method, or pay too much attention to material incentives, ignoring the internal spiritual needs of employees. They should implement reasonable motivation strategies for different employees, and use various motivation strategies in combination to achieve a better incentive effect.

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