

Motivational Strategies to enhance Staff Productivity in Nigerian Universities

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Abstract

There is perceived de-motivation among staff in Nigerian universities. This may result to ineffectiveness and low productivity. The factor that can set apart an organization in this turbulent environment be it in the public or private sector, is its people; therefore establishing and maintaining a stable workforce is a major concern of human resources department. Motivation is the key to economic recovery in the country; this could be in form of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards which influence staff productivity and efficiency. The paper used Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory; and ERG Theory of Motivation for its theoretical support. The paper considered motivational strategies that can improve employees' productivity. In conclusion, motivation was analyzed as important in employees' productivity. It was recommended that the management of universities should establish motivational strategies that can enhance staff productivity, effectiveness and efficiency.

Keywords: motivation, strategies, productivity, extrinsic, intrinsic

Introduction

Motivating people to give their best has become more crucial than ever, in the present business conditions, because of stiff competition and economic uncertainties. The factor that can set apart an organization in the public or private sectors is its people; therefore establishing and maintaining a stable workforce is a major concern of human resources department. It is argued that motivation is the key to economic recovery of a country (Aremu, 2017). Motivation in the work context is defined as predisposition to behave in a purposeful manner to achieve specific, unmet needs, the will to achieve, and the inner force that drives individuals to accomplish personal and organizational goals.

A person becomes motivated in order to achieve their own personal goals as well as the organizational goals. The more motivated an employee is, the more likely they are to have organizational commitment and identify themselves with the organization. This will meet some of the unmet needs, and connect them with the organization. If willing, the manager is able to give the employees incentives to meet their own goals and the goals set by the organization. Naturally, organizations seek out individuals who are motivated to perform well in the workplace. In addition, they hope to employ people who have the ability to

motivate others with whom they work, subordinates, peers, and superiors to work harder towards the accomplishment of tasks assigned to them. If organizations can motivate employees to become effective problem solvers and to meet or exceed customer expectations, then the organizational goals and objectives can be realized (Harvard press, 2005).

Workers' motivation is essential since there is a direct relationship between motivation and productivity. Only through motivation can managers help their employees to generate the excellent performance that enables companies or organizations to boost profitability and survive, even during tough times. Increased motivation creates the conditions for a more effective workforce, but because work motivation is an interactive process between workers and their work environment, good management and supervision are still critical factors in reaching organizational goals (Heizer & Barry, 1999). The performance of the employee depends on work environment. The world has been changing rapidly and the aspect of the requirement of the service users is also being modified day by day. Therefore, it can be effortlessly assumed that the pattern of the employee management by the human resources department also changed its aspect (Cascio, 2018).

Productivity has been an essential contributor to corporate success. This is as a result of its direct translation into cost savings and profitability. Mojahed (2005) as cited in Chigara and Moyo (2014) stated that productivity has also been a key to long-term growth and sustainable improvement; and when associated with economic growth and development, it generates non-inflationary increases in wages and salaries. Mullins (2005) indicated that productivity quality and services should improve when a positive motivation philosophy and practice are implemented. This would help people towards the achievement of stated goals within an organization. Many information centres and archival institutions have a mission to offer a high quality of service to all clients. Human resource is seen as the most valuable key resource which organizations can possess. Workers all over the world understand that hardwork is associated with motivation and job satisfaction which will lead to increase in performance (Mullins, 2005). Employers who adopt this system always see their employees giving off their best leading to high performance.

In order to allow for a highly motivated workforce, the manager can consider what conditions will motivate each employee in a day, then make adjustments as needs change. Armstrong (2006) said that managers who treat all employees the same or who assume they know what is important to their subordinates and others are likely to do a poor job of motivating. In the supportive view of Khojasteh (1993), when managers attempt to treat all employees the same, it means that managers provide employees with the rewards that would motivate him (manager) but this may not necessarily be what motivates the employees. There is, therefore, the need for managers to have at the back of their minds that employees have a unique set of values and motives and will respond uniquely to different motivational factors.

Meaning of rewards

Malhotra, Budhwar, and Prowse (2007) define rewards as all forms of financial return, tangible services and benefits an employee receives as part of an employment relationship. It is without doubt that every employee expects some level of reward after delivering a function or task. Employers expect employees to deliver or execute designated duties to their satisfaction whilst employees also expect their employers to assure them of adequate wages and salaries (rewards) after they dutifully deliver what is expected of them. According to the Oxford Dictionary, performance, which originates from the word 'perform', is to carry out, accomplish or fulfill an action, task or a function. The reward for executing a task or a function is what is termed as motivation. Even though people work for salary or wages (rewards), there are numerous ways of rewarding (motivating) employees according to the task or function performed.

Extrinsic and intrinsic rewards

Rewards basically fall into two categories, extrinsic and intrinsic rewards. Shanks (2007) notes that extrinsic rewards are "host of external things that managers can provide that may serve as incentives for employees to increase productivity". These include money, benefits, bonuses, promotions, flexible schedules and so on. Intrinsic rewards are internal to the individual and are in many ways less tangible. In fact, they are highly subjective, in that they represent how the individual perceives and feels about work and its value.

Malhotra et al. (2007) argue that "intrinsic rewards are inherent in the content of the job itself" and include "motivational characteristics such as skill variety, autonomy and feedback" as well as employee participation in decision making and role clarity. Manion (2005) also notes five types of extrinsic rewards which can be summarized as healthy relationship, meaningful work, competence, progress, and choice. Researches into rewards as motivation tend to support two schools of thoughts with regards to extrinsic and intrinsic rewards. One school of thought argues that extrinsic rewards are more powerful and effective in attaining employee motivation, performance and commitment (Angle & Perry, 1983) while the other school of thought argues that intrinsic rewards are best suited for motivating employees (Brief & Aldag, 1980).

Motivational implication of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards

According to Steers and Porter (1987), although most people work for some mix of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, people clearly differ as to which is the more compelling motivational force. If a manager always praises an achievement, the motivated individual who excels largely for the feelings of intrinsic satisfaction, will begin to look on his manager as fake. Even within the extrinsic rewards arena, people look for different types of reward. Praise may be perfectly acceptable to the person motivated by the relatedness needs or affiliation, but may do nothing for the person expecting a more tangible pay-off.

Importance of motivation to management

Many managers agreed with the idea that different things motivate people at different times. According to Maslow (1964), employees' response to incentives differs from

person to person. In a developing country like Nigeria, many workers find it difficult to make ends meet, so they focus on the physiological needs such as food, shelter, sex, but such focus may be different in developed parts of the world. Therefore, the hierarchy of needs can help management to predict changes in overall employee behaviour.

Sabbagha (2016) posits that, based on Maslow's Theory of needs, effective managers try to anticipate each employee's personal needs profile and to provide opportunities to fulfill emerging needs. Herzberg et al. (1959) asserted that satisfaction is not the opposite of dissatisfaction; thus managers are encouraged to think carefully about what actually motivate employees. Employees give off their best when the manager gives appropriate concentration to the factors of motivation and growth. He, however, emphasized that hygiene factors are not a "second-class citizen system" but they are as important as the motivators.

Accel-Team (2008) posits that the manager's main task is to develop a productive workplace, with and through those he or she is in charge of. The topmost function of a manager is the development of a productive workplace with and through the people that he/she supervises. The main tools in the manager's kitbag for motivating the team are approval, praise and recognition, trust, respect and high expectations.

Motivational theories

Maslow's Needs Hierarchy Theory

In 1943, psychologist Abraham Maslow published his now famous need theory of Motivation (Maslow, 1943). Although the theory was based on clinical observation of few neurotic individuals, it has subsequently been used to explain the entire spectrum of human behaviour. Maslow proposed that motivation is a function of the basic needs. These needs are:

- Physiological: The need to have oxygen (air), food, water and sex.
- Safety: Consists of the needs to be safe from physical and psychological harm.
- Social: The need for love, affection and acceptance as belonging to a group.
- Esteem: Need for reputation, prestige and recognition from others. Also contains need for self-confidence and strength.
- Self-Actualization: This implies desire for self-fulfillment. The need to develop potentialities and skills to become what one believes one is capable of becoming.

Maslow's theory of motivation states that when a lower need is satisfied, the next highest becomes dominant and the individual's attention is tuned to satisfying this higher need. The need for self-fulfillment however can never be satisfied. He said that "man is a wanting animal," only unsatisfied need can motivate behaviour and the dominant need is the prime motivation of behaviour.

One of the implications of Maslow's theory is that the higher order needs for esteem and self-fulfillment provide the greatest impetus to motivation. They grow in strength when they are satisfied, while the lower needs decline in strength on satisfaction. But the people

will not necessarily satisfy their needs, especially when they are routine. According to Armstrong (2006), Maslow's needs hierarchy has an intuitive appeal and has been very influential. Though it has been criticized for its apparent rigidity, different people may have different priority and it is difficult to accept the people's needs progress steadily up the hierarchy.

ERG Theory of Motivation - Clayton P. Alderfer

Clayton P. Alderfer proposed the ERG (Existence, Relatedness, and Growth) Theory of motivation in 1972 which can be seen as a review of Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. He notes that managers need to understand that each employee operates with the need to satisfy several motivators simultaneously. Based on the ERG theory, managers who focus exclusively on one need at a time do not effectively motivate their employees. Alderfer (1972) uses the frustration-regression principle to explain the impact of motivation on employee performance in the workplace. He notes that regression in employee performance is a result of restricted growth within the work setting and therefore employees tend to regress to fulfilling related needs. Employees may also exhibit the desire for more money or better working conditions when managers fail to satisfy the need for social interaction.

Motivational strategies

To attain a sustainable performance at its highest level by employees is the concern of every organization. This demands adequate concentration on how people can best be motivated which includes incentives, rewards, leadership, and the organizational context within which they carry out the work (Armstrong, 2006). In general, it can be described as the direction and persistence of action. It is concerned with why people choose a particular course of action in preference to others, and why they continue with chosen action, often over a long period, and in the face of difficulties and problems (Mullins, 2005).

Motivational strategies are the plans that can help achieve success through ensuring the good working life of employees within an organization. According to Accel-Team (2008), seven motivational strategies are as follows: positive reinforcement/high expectations, effective discipline and punishment, treating people fairly, satisfying employees' needs, setting work related goals, restructuring jobs, and base rewards on job performance.

These are the basic strategies, though the mix in the final will be different from one institution to the other, and a situation to another situation. Essentially, there is a gap between an individual's actual state and some desired state and the manager tries to reduce this gap. Motivation has therefore been defined as a means for reduction and manipulation of this gap. It is inducing others in a specific way towards goals specified by the motivator. Naturally, these goals, as also the motivation system, must conform to the corporate policy of the organization. The motivational system must be tailored to the situation and the organization (Accel -Team, 2008).

Motivation and performance

Motivation alone does not dictate all of a person's behaviour. A person's ability clearly also matters, and so do factors like the resources a person is given to do his or her job. Successful work performance can arise from a variety of motives. In many workplaces, incentives and performance management systems reward some aspects of work behaviour more than others. Also, different behaviours may be rewarded in different ways and particular ways may suit some people better than others. Performance is the systematic assessment of the adequacy of execution of a particular or general behaviour that is germane to the achievement of organizational tasks. Performance is considered to be a function of ability and motivation thus: $\text{Job performance} = f(\text{ability})(\text{motivation})$ (Accel-Team, 2008). Every manager tries to motivate his or her employees to greater and higher performance towards the achievement of organizational goals. According to Rose, Kumar and Yen (2006), performance is dependent on three factors namely: motivation, ability and environment which can be expressed as follows: $P = M + A + E$ (Rose, 2006) where $P = \text{Performance}$, $M = \text{Motivation}$, $A = \text{Ability}$ and $E = \text{Environment}$.

Stum (2001), (as quoted in Mullins, 2005; Osabiya, 2015) studied the dynamics between an individual and the organization and proposed a new worker and employer social contract that enables organizations to improve worker commitment and retention. The five levels of the workforce needs hierarchy are as follows:

- Safety/security: The need to feel physically and psychologically safe in the work environment for commitment to be possible.
- Rewards: The need for extrinsic rewards in compensation and benefits.
- Affiliation: The intrinsic need for a sense of belonging to the work team or organization.
- Growth: Addressing the need for positive individual and organizational change to drive commitment.
- Work/life harmony: The drive to achieve a sense of fulfillment in balancing work and life responsibilities.

Providing recognition for good performance is the best place to start motivation. Recognizing good performance anytime it is encountered with just a "Thanks" or a literal pat on the back can be enough to get the motivational engine working (Accel-Team, 2008). Boateng (2011) reveals that, if pay system is designed properly to fit all strategies, it can have a positive impact on overall performance. In a similar view, Aguinis, Joo, and Gottfredson (2013) stated that monetary rewards can be a very powerful determinant of employees' motivation and achievement which most often results in important returns in terms of an organizations' level of performance.

Motivation and job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a person's affective response to aspects of work. Nkereuwem (1986) describes job satisfaction as an affective response to work. In other words, job satisfaction is a level of reaction, an emotional response, a feeling of liking, a positive or negative emotional state associated with one's work. The term is often used interchangeably with

the term morale. Theory and research suggest that focusing solely on satisfying workers will not result in increased performance or productivity.

The job satisfaction and motivation of many professional and non-professional groups such as nurses, assembly workers, insurance agents, accountants, have been studied by various scholars. Garg and Rastogi (2006) as cited in Sekhar, Patwardhan and Singh (2016) came up with a dynamic managerial framework which is required to enhance workers' performance to tackle the global challenge.

Content theories propose that job satisfaction relies on the maintenance of two sets of factors: motivators and hygiene factors. Motivating factors are said to be inherent in the job itself and lead to strong feelings of satisfaction with work. These may include achievement recognition, and chances of advancement. On the other hand, hygiene factors relate to the environment in which the job is performed including organizational policies and management, supervision, interpersonal relationships, salaries, wages and benefits. Hygiene factors that are unsatisfactory act as de-motivators but the motivational effect is limited when satisfied. The psychology of motivation is quite complex and Herzberg et al. have explored several myths about motivators such as a shorter working week, increasing wages, fringe benefits, sensitivity/human relations training, and communication (Accel-Team, 1980).

Motivation and productivity

Productivity has been generally defined as a ratio of a measure of some or all of the resources used to produce an output. The productivity definition is utilized by economists at the industrial level to determine the economy's health, trends and growth rate while at the project level, it applies to areas of planning, cost estimation, accounting and cost control. This is mathematically expressed as follows: $\text{Productivity} = \frac{\text{Output}}{\text{Input}}$. Surely, there exists a positive correlation between productivity and some variables namely: energy, equipment, labour, material, capital, and management. Total factor productivity gives a more general definition of productivity and it takes into consideration the combination of various input factors and is measured as follows: $\text{Total Factor Productivity} = \frac{\text{Total Output}}{\text{Total Input}}$ (Accel-Team, 2008; Heizer & Barry, 1999).

Labour productivity has several factors that affect it and the dominant among them for effective labour force is basic education. Moreover, motivation, team building, training and job security have a significant bearing on labour productivity. Coupled with the afore-stated factors, labour productivity cannot be achieved without maintaining and enhancing the skills of labour and human resource strategies. Better utilized labour with stronger commitment and working on safe jobs also contribute to affect labour productivity (Wiredu, 1989; Osabiya, 2015).

Summary

In summary, a person becomes motivated in order to achieve their own personal goals as well as the organizational goals. The more motivated an employee is, the more likely they

are to have organizational commitment and identify themselves with the organization. This will meet some of the unmet needs, and connect them with the organization. If willing, the manager is able to give the employee incentives to meet their own goals and the goals set by the organization.

Conclusion

Motivation of staff is a critical aspect of human resource management. Often there exists a gap between what staff consider most beneficial and what they actually receive from their organizations. According to the literature, this situation is the result of a multiple of interrelated reasons. First, there seems to be a lack of understanding on the part of management on the needs, aspirations and nature of human beings, and what they value. This lack of understanding therefore makes managers turn all workers into a homogeneous entity, thus ignoring their individual differences in terms of valence.

Recommendations

Based on the presentation of this paper, the following recommendations are made for the school management to motivate and improve staff productivity in Nigerian universities:

1. Teamwork: Management is encouraged to form work groups when possible with the hope that peer pressure will induce high levels of performance of worker. This has been shown as an effective means of motivational strategy because staff appears to be more concerned with living up to the expectations of fellow employees rather than the expectations of their bosses.
2. Personal involvement: Staff who are given the free hand to lay down their own performance levels will usually try to meet their own expectations. It is important to have the workers make a verbal commitment regarding their anticipated achievement levels.
3. Setting targets and measurement of improvement: The setting of targets so as to work towards them can be said to be a major morale booster in institutions. So it is essential for the universities to set targets and make them known to employees that will guide them to improve their performance and productivity.

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