An Inductive Analysis of Relation Maintenance Strategies with Employees (An Analysis of Public Sector in India)

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Abstract

The slowdown in the economy has put a great deal of pressure on different corporate to cut down on the vicarious expenditures that they have been doing on the name of maintain relationship with their internal customers i.e. employees.

Communication channels form the lifeblood of the organization. Organization today are searching out ways to bring transparency in their system by opening up of communication channels for their employees.

The paper would primarily focus on different strategies being adopted by inclusive to foster participation from different quarter of their workforce.

The central pillar of the paper would revolve around advent of suggestion schemes and open door policy being put in to practice in Indian firms. Paper would also throw a brief light on Satyam's and Infosys way of providing open communication platform to their employees.

1. Introduction

The economic downturn has put a great deal of pressure on employers to find creative ways to motivate employees. Gone are the days of quarterly bonuses, performance-based pay raises, and other financial incentives that once kept noses to the grindstone. Monetary incentives can be diverse while having a similar effect on associates. While money is one of the proven ways to motivate employees, there are also other ways to encourage your team to put their best foot forward. Managers are constantly searching for ways to create a motivational environment where associates (employees) work at their optimal levels to accomplish company objectives. Motivating without money is a challenging task, but it can be done with the right combination of leadership and management skills. The purpose of non-monetary incentives is to reward associates for excellent job performance through opportunities.

Studies have proved that the employees today require something more than just monetary rewards to make them committed and loyal towards an organization. Aspirations of different generations are varied. With infusion of more and more of generation X employees in various organizations it is important for all organization to put a step forward to come out with strategies to motivate these highly vulnerable set of employees. Mere double figure salary alone can't get them going. Similar is the case with experienced employees; pertaining to changing social structure of our society.

Study done by Nelson resulted in varied non monetary dimensions considered important by different generations of employees.

Further this was also quite evident at world largest human resource summit recently where motivational speaker Steve Penny drew the maximum crowd at the first day of the summit when he elaborated the uses and different ways to motivate the employees by non monetary techniques in his speech on "How to motivate people with

non monetary rewards." He claimed to state that Employees like Non-Monetary Rewards because most people value personal satisfaction over money. Studies consistently show workers value 7 Non-Monetary Rewards as the most vital components of job satisfaction, motivation and employee retention. Experts from that speech emphaze on increasing dependence on these zero investment motivational methods:

According to Steve Penny people are motivated when:
1.   Treated With Respect
2.   Told What They're Doing Right
      (Demotivated by Hearing Mainly Negatives)
3.   There's Clear Communication of Goals
4.   They Feel Their Ideas are Listened to Fairly
5.   The Person Closest to the Job is given as Much Independence as Possible to Solve Problems heir Own Way
6.   Learning New Things
7.   Pride in Feeling They're Part of Something Bigger than Themselves

This clearly put light on one of the most important aspect of any organization; something that is considered as the life blood of any organization - Communication.

For keeping your employees committed to your organization it's important to keep the systems in an organization transparent enough to let your employees feel part of the organization they are working in. It's important to let the employees know the whys and how of decisions rather than imposing it on them from outside. Otherwise this is going to result in employees attributing vicarious reasons themselves according to their own perception and frame of reference. Penny suggested to motivated employees without money by using rapport building questions that clarify expectations, counter negativity in the workplace, and give people the language to express criticism and feedback without hurting morale. All these bring focus on relevance of having open communication channels in an organization. Importance of communication as emphasized by Steve Penny in different ways can be elaborated as follows:

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Mature Workers	Baby Boomers	Generation X'ers	Generation Y'ers
Flexible schedules	Retirement planning	Flexible work schedules	Flexible work schedules
Part-time hours	Flexible retirement options	Professional development	Professional development
Temporary hours	Job training	Feedback	Feedback
	Sabbaticals	Tangible rewards	Tangible rewards
		Work environment	Work environment
			Attentive employers

Source: http://www2.inc.com/search/16431.html (Nelson, 2012).

Showing Respect - As Simple as Telling People What Impact they've had On You!

The simplest and most important way you communicate respect is with genuine expressions of caring. On a practical, daily basis that means to as great a degree as possible make people a part of decisions that have an impact on their lives so they feel consensus rather than control. Communicating respect doesn't cost money but takes time and caring, two things that too easily gets lost in the daily rush of business.

Effectively communicating respect means actively bridging the gap between employee and employer's perception, because people feel respected where there's dialog and feel their input counts, disrespected when it's felt you have to take someone on their own terms. The simplest ways to motivate employees in the workplace and keep your staff motivation high is to tell them what impact they've had on you. Remind them of something they said or did you never forgot. Make it specific, personalize it by using their name, and most importantly mean it. Your own sincerity is always your greatest asset for being heard.

Negativity is a contagious emotion that feeds on itself. To counter negativity in the workplace try to communicate clearly what it is you feel you would like respected. Most people don't think of themselves as being disrespectful. If you can preface that you are asking for respect for whatever you feel you need you'll usually stand the best chance of being heard. The most important reason you treat people with respect is that's how you earn and keep their trust. Trust and sincerity are your greatest assets in establishing genuine rapport. It's something people carry from inside your organization to your customers clients and vendors.

As it is said, "Old is gold" which suffices with the role of motivation here, the older the people, more the experience and their adjustment into a concern which can be of benefit to the enterprise. Stability of workforce is very important from the point of view of reputation and goodwill of a concern. The employees can remain loyal to the enterprise only when they have a feeling of participation in the management. The skills and efficiency of employees will always be of advantage to employees as well as employees. This will lead to a good public image in the market which will attract competent and qualified people into a concern

2. Innovation in Communication Channels

Corporate today are well aware of the importance of having free flow of ideas and are there coming out with new and innovative practices to open up communication channels in respective organizations. Some of the major practices being undertaken by different companies are as follows:

2.1 Suggestion Boxes

Markets today demand greater innovation. Changes are coming faster than ever before. Your competitors are ever more nimble. Customers have rising expectations. You need ideas, better processes, more innovative products and services and more effective ways to build strong futures with those customers. Companies can no longer survive with staff members who expect management to provide "all the right answers". Today companies require a steady flow of ideas and solutions from those who are closest to the processes and the customers, those with their "ears to the ground". Every employee has an idea on how to make their job easier, better, faster or safer.

To maintain an adaptable and responsive organization, you must develop a culture that actively solicits input and recommendations from every level of your staff. By listening to employees, and implementing their suggestions, employers can boost profits and morale.

Fortunately, senior managers are more receptive to this approach than ever before. But, how can you transform the mindset of staff, which, for years or even generations were trained to "keep your mouth shut, lay low, just follow orders"? How can you encourage your frontline staff to open their minds, explore new ideas and share their best recommendations?

One technique is the "Staff Suggestion Scheme" a time honored process of wooden boxes and pre-printed forms for staff to write out their ideas and submit them for management considerations.

2.2 Suggestion Boxe Scheme at NTPC

The Ministry of Labour, Government of India has been operating the Viswakarma Rashtriya Puraskar since 1965. It covers the workers in factories, mines, plantations and docks. The scheme is open to only such undertakings where suggestion schemes are in operation. Suggestions accepted by the management and adopted during the previous calendar year in respect of any of the following qualify for the grant of Rashtriya Puraskar.

- Raising productivity
- Increasing the efficiency of the organization and management
- Inventions and improvements that bring about saving in materials including fuel, power and explosives, reduction in production time and improvement in the utilization of plant and equipment.
- Improvement in quality of products or their designs.
- Lightening physical efforts in certain operations and thereby leading to increased productivity.
- Better utilization of waste or scrap material.

- Improving ways and means for using indigenous articles in place of imported ones.
- Improvement of working conditions including safety, health and welfare and in the case of mines improvement of strata control support of mine workings, safety standards, safety devices and environmental conditions and improvement in methods for prevention for industrial diseases.
- Make working and general environment safe.

NTPC for years has been awarding the best suggestions on yearly basis in – house as well. The recipients of the prize winners are from almost all levels ranging from foreman to managerial level. This in turns helps in making the culture and climate of the organization conducive enough to foster innovation and creativity that ultimately results in building a brand for the company.

However, implementing a suggestion program without buy-in from senior managers and time can do more harm than good. There are pros and cons of an employee suggestion box, and often, you really need a good plan to succeed in this venture.

Pros of Suggestion Schemes	Cons of Suggestion Schemes
Suggesting Anonymously is Key	Employee Nonsense
Suggestion Box Planning	Harassment Comments
Consider the Good Stuff	False Accusations
Explain the Box	Employee Adversity
Business Owner Blindness	Wasteful Insights

The reason a lot of suggestion programs fail comes down to poor communication, he says. People put a suggestion in an old fashioned suggestion box and they never know what happens to it. It might sit in the box for six months - they don't know. Therefore it's important to Track suggestions, time yourself and train your staff and make sure thatb the benefits of the suggestion are spread to all levels of employees.

2.3 Brown Bag Meeting

A brown bag seminar, session or lunch is generally a training or information session during a lunch break. "Brown bag" is representative of meals brought along by the attendees, or provided by the host. In the USA, those are often packed in brown paper bags. Brown bag seminars normally run an hour or two.

The aim is to use regular breaks, e.g. the lunch break, to provide some information to the attendees in a voluntary and informal setting. It is often followed by a discussion of the topic. It provides a forum for all employees to get I touch with high honchos of the firm, learn from their experience and share any kind of problem that may be finding in their jobs.

Mr. Aditya Birla quite often walks straight in to the cafeteria of the office premises and share a cup of coffee with his employees while lending a patient ear to them to ,listen to their ideas and problems. All this ultimately helps in mutual growth of the employee and the organization.

2.4 Open Door Policy

An organization is a setup where individuals from diverse backgrounds, different educational qualifications, varied mentalities and temperaments join hands to work towards a common goal. It is the culture of the workplace which unites all the employees, help them enjoy their work and deliver their level best.

The values, policies, ideologies and beliefs of an organization form its culture. The culture of any work place decides the way employees behave with their fellow workers. The employees are the assets of an organization who must contribute effectively to achieve the targets within the desired time frame.

One should not treat his organization as a mere source of earning money. It is essential for an individual to prioritize his work over other things. The employees must have a cordial relation with their superiors and the management for smooth flow of information and better understanding at workplace. Transparency is essential at all levels in the hierarchy to avoid conflicts and unnecessary disagreements. No one should feel neglected at work. Problems arise when queries remain unattended and bosses do not have time for their team members.

To avoid the above situation, organizations have introduced a policy named "Open Door Policy.

According to open door policy, the doors of the offices of superiors or the management (including the CEO) must remain open for the employees to have an easy access in cases of queries. The team members should have the liberty to walk up to their team leaders and discuss issues with them on an open forum.

The role of the managing director, chief executive officer or the chairman is not just to sit in locked cabins the entire day and shout on the employees; instead they should act as a strong pillar of support for them. A healthy interaction amongst the employees is essential for a positive ambience at the workplace. The management must address the employees from time to time to motivate them and expect the best out of them.

2.5 HP's Open Door Philosophy

HP is committed to creating the best work environment - a place where everyone's voice is heard, where issues are promptly raised and resolved, and where communication flows across all levels of the company. Openness is an essential to quickly resolve customer concerns, to recognize business issues as they arise, and to address the changing needs of our diverse and global workforce.

3. Commitment to open communication - Open Door Policy

The essence of HP's Open Door Policy is open communication in an environment of trust and mutual respect that creates a solid foundation for collaboration, growth, high performance and success across HP.
It provides for a work environment where:

- open, honest communication between managers and employees is a day-to-day business practice
- employees may seek counsel, provide or solicit feedback, or raise concerns within the company
- Managers hold the responsibility for creating a work environment where employees' input is welcome, advice is freely given, and issues are surfaced early and are candidly shared without the fear of retaliation when this input is shared in good faith

3.1 Walmart Open Door Policy

At Walmart, they encourage all and expect all associates to actively participate in making the company a better place to work and shop. There open door philosophy is an integral part of there culture, reflecting a tradition of open communication and a culture of listening to our associates. The open door process offers each associate an opportunity to bring suggestions, observations, problems or concerns to the attention of any supervisor or manager without fear of retaliation. They also welcome early identification of opportunities and challenges and mutual resolution of complaints.

This policy applies to all associate who work for Walmart Stores, Inc., and all of its subsidiary companies in the United States (Walmart). It encourages and expects every associate to have open discussions on all matters related to the company through the open door process and treat everyone participating in the process with dignity and respect. While the door is open to anyone who chooses to write, e-mail, telephone or meet with any supervisor or managers, immediate supervisor should be given the first opportunity to listen to and resolve your concerns. However, if concern is about your supervisor or if one believes there supervisor has not satisfactorily resolved a concern they may contact next level of supervision. Walmart further takes appropriate action once the open door concern has been thoroughly investigated. If an investigation reveals that an associate has violated a policy or engaged in unacceptable conduct, that associate will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination and any other appropriate correlative action.

3.2 WEB PORTALS – Structured Platform for Employees Grievance

Infosys Technologies plans to continue the rollout of its iRace program under which the company's staff is required to wait longer for their promotions so that only the professionals with proven managerial skills can lead project teams. The new HR initiative — iRACE (Infosys Role and Career) — was introduced by the company last year. There is demoralisation in the team if you allow a manager to get promoted before his or her time.Its structures are in place and hiring plans, job description and performance management is connected to iRACE. It is a very lean and mean structure.

The platform defines roles, competencies and proficiency requirements while linking career movement to performance and business focus. There are 24 career streams in iRACE, which will enable employees to move from one stream to another with more transparency and clear vision.

However, all this was not accepted by the employees to start with. There was resentment from employee side with respect to the kind of wait they had to make for further climbing up the ladder in their respective careers. This was evident from the number of complaints that were made on company's web portal by different sections of employees. This was taken in to consideration and there were amendments that were made in the plan of action accordingly to let it be accepted amicably among all employees. Thus all these web portals also provide a platform to the grieved employees to put their point forward in a structured manner and saving company from any kind spiral effect of this kind of resentment from employee side.

3.3 Other Means For Open Communications

When Rajalingam Raju shook the whole world with his multicrore scam, it were the employees of Satyam that were most petrified with respect to their careers. The fact that more and more employees were shown the exit door every now and then spread anxious nerves to even the exsisting employees. This further had a telling effect the level of productivity of existing employees. To combat this fear of uncertainity, company open up a service named HOTMAILS. All the existing employees were provided with few telephone numbers on which they can call 24*7 and share any kind of query that they might have about the case related to their axed boss or related to their own and companies future. The person's attenting the calls were experonced counsellers who provided employees with first hand information related to the fiasco. Counsellers further use to send an update regarding Raju's case directly to employees inbox rather than leaving them at the mercy of media who turned and twisted the case as per there requirement.

4. Conclusion

Motivation is an internal feeling which can be understood only by manager since he is in close contact with the employees. Needs, wants and desires are inter-related and they are the driving force to act. These needs can be understood by the manager and he can frame motivation plans accordingly. We can say that motivation therefore is a continuous process since motivation process is based on needs which are unlimited. Markets today demand greater innovation. To maintain an adaptable and responsive organization, you must develop a culture that actively solicits input from every level of your staff

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