

Full Length Research Paper

The importance of certain factors which motivate employees of the PhuongDong Petroleum Tourism Joint Stock Company (PTC)

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Employees are a valuable resource that may contribute in several different ways to a company's activities, provided that the company gives them an appropriate chance. In order to be successful, a company needs employees who act toward the goals of the organization and have a strong desire to remain in the company. This paper intended to establish a set of factors that can motivate employees of PTC and to establish the policy implications of these factors for managing staff of the PTC. It was found that good salary is the most important motivational factor followed by good working conditions. The paper revealed that these two factors are not the only factors that are needed to motivate employees of the PTC. Other factors, including Organisational/Management styles, and Training and Promotion, are equally important depending on the type of motivational theory that is adopted. The study finally stresses the avoidance of disparities in pay/reward among staff of the same rank as a strategy to motivate and retain high quality staff in the PTC. The study thus raises red flags that warn the management to be extra careful in their attempt to motivate staff of PTC for effective performance.

Key words: Employee motivation, employee performance.

INTRODUCTION

Effort towards developing a motivated workforce for the purpose of improving productivity remains the single most crucial function of heads of institutions in recent times. The reason is provided by Kreisman (2002) who argues that the most valuable and volatile asset of any institution is a well-motivated and stable workforce which is competent, dedicated and productive (Tonkiss et al., 1999). Interestingly, what motivates employee's changes constantly? Explaining the dynamic nature of motivation, Kovach (1987) cites the example that as employees' income changes, money ceases to be a motivational factor; and as employees grow older, interesting work becomes a motivational factor (Prahlad, 2011). Hence, the declaration by Lindner (1998) is justified to write that of all the functions a manager performs, motivating employees is the most complex, as employee motivation is a never ending challenge. Heads of institutions thus face difficult challenge of motivating and retaining

employees especially in an environment of increased uncertainties such as PTC where groups of workers usually deliberately stop working because of disagreement about pay and conditions of service and transferred to the private companies, corporations increasingly by better treatment policy. It would however look absurd for the university authorities to attempt to motivate the employees when the authorities do not know what motivate these employees.

Objectives of the study

The key to motivating employees is to know what motivate them and design a motivational programme

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based on those needs. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to describe the importance of certain factors which motivate employees of the PTC. Specifically, the paper seeks to describe the rank importance of some selected motivational factors, taking into consideration some theories of motivation. The selected factors (indicators) are: career development opportunities, job security, good salary, good working conditions, welfare, supporting colleagues with personal problems, organisational/management styles, personal loyalty with employees, personal recognition, and reputation of institution.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The term motivation has been defined variously by different authorities in the study of Psychology, Management and allied disciplines. According to Cole (1995), motivation is essentially about what drives a person to work in a particular way and with a given amount of effort. To Buford et al. (1995), motivation is a pre-disposition to behave in a purposive manner to achieve specific needs. Lindner (1998) perceives motivation as a psychological process that gives behaviours purpose and direction. Obviously, there are divergences in these definitions, though some common threads seem to exist. What is common to the foregoing definitions, among others, is that something has to trigger an employee to perform in an exceptional way. For purpose of this paper, motivation is operationally defined as a set of indefinite factors that cause a person (an employee) to perform his or her duties in a special way. The factors are described as indefinite because they constantly change with time, as pointed out by Kovach (1987). What is implicit in this definition is that an employee will not work in 'that special way' if he or she is not encouraged (motivated) to do so. An understanding of this definition depends on the appreciation of some existing theories of motivation.

According to Stipek (1996), early approaches to the study of motivation were rooted in the literature on extrinsic reinforcement. Within this literature, all behavior, including achievement, was believed to be governed by reinforcement contingencies. Proponents of this approach included B.F. Skinner, who identified different types of reinforcers. Positive reinforcers, or rewards, are consequences that increase the probability of a given behaviour they were made contingent on, whereas negative reinforcers are consequences that increase the probability of a given behavior by removing or reducing some negative external stimulus. Punishment, on the other hand, refers to unpleasant consequences that decrease the probability of a given behavior. Under this framework, the teacher's job is clear: to use good grades and praise to reward desired behavior and bad grades or loss of privileges as punishment. As Stipek notes, this

approach is limited to the extent that rewards and punishments are not equally effective for all students, and desired behaviors (such as paying attention) are difficult to reinforce. Moreover, the benefits of extrinsic rewards tend to decay over time (Stipek, 1996).

Among the earliest and well-known researchers in the motivation domain were Homans (1950) and Maslow (1954). The former identified three key elements (activities, interactions and sentiments) as the controlling factors of members in an informal group. Homans (1950) defines activities as the task performed by the members of an informal group. He refers to interactions as the relationship among the members; and explains sentiments as the individual and collective attitudes of these members (Kramer et al., 1984). Homans regards these three elements as independent because, according to him, a change in any one of them affects the other two elements. Maslow (1954) on the other hand developed the need-hierarchy theory. In his theory, Maslow postulated that people's (employees) needs are arranged in a hierarchy in which basic needs generally have to be satisfied before higher needs come to play. Maslow's idea did not escape criticisms and has hence been modified by other theorists notably Alderfer (1969) who introduced the idea of need along a continuum rather than in a hierarchy. Herzberg (1987) views motivation with different lenses. Their idea is today known as the Herzberg two-factor theory as it reduces the factors of motivation to two namely intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The former, which includes achievements and recognition, produces job satisfaction, whilst the latter comprising good salary and job security is often a source of lack of motivation on the part of employees. There is also the McClelland Achievement Theory which is based on the idea that the single most important motive is the need for achievement. McClelland (1979) suggests that the need for achievement is a key human motive, which responds to, and is a product of, personal experience and cultural background. This can be indoctrinated by means of training and other attitude-forming activities. The theory advocates that the three most important employee motivational factors are the need for achievement, the need for power or authority, and the need for affiliation or belonging, in that order. One other theory of motivation which seems to be accepted by most scholars in the present century is the Adam's Equity Theory. The basis of this theory, in the work context, is that people make comparisons between themselves and others in terms of their inputs and what outcomes they receive from their inputs. The theory states that when employees perceive an unequal situation, they experience *equity tension* which they attempt to reduce by appropriate behaviour. Employees may either act positively to improve their performance and /or seek improved rewards, or may act negatively (show lackadaisical attitude to work) on grounds of being under - paid. Logical as they may be, all

Table 1. Categories of staff in the registrar's office.

Category of staff	Quantity of staff		Respondents	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Managers	11	10.1	11	15.7
Receptionist staff	46	42.2	32	45.7
Office staff	52	47.7	27	38.6
Total	109	100.0	70	100.0

Source: Author's construct (January 2012).

these theories and several others have their loopholes and are hence seen as inconclusive in contemporary literature, but they provide some interesting insight into employee motivation. They are, in fact, relevant and a useful way to understand employee motivation.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

Descriptive and narrative survey methods were used to describe the rank importance of ten motivational factors, organized in the form of a structured questionnaire, and distributed among a sample of 80 respondents randomly selected from 109 employees at the three branches of PTC. The 70 respondents, representing 64.2%, were selected at random through stratified sampling technique where the various categories of staff in the department constituted the strata. Details of the staffing situation in the Registrar's Offices and the distribution of respondents over the strata are indicated in Table 1.

Procedure

The study intended to collect data from employees at PTC through questionnaire survey. Questionnaires were distributed to target respondents. This adequately increased the response rate and in total 70 questionnaires was received. Among them 70 were found legible and up to the mark. Data analysis was computer-aided, using the SPSS 17.0.

PTC INTRODUCTION

Corporation Petroleum Phuong Dong Tourism (PTC) is a precursor state enterprise Phoenix hotel, then Hotel Tourism Company Orient, established by Decision No. 2057 QD / UB 26 / 12/1994 of People's Committee of Nghe An province. On April 2, 2007 approval of the provincial People's Committee of Nghe An, Petro Vietnam National Company has received hotel Travel to Eastern as unit members and renamed the Tourism Company Oil Air Orient (PTC). On January 21, 2008

Tourism Company Orient Petroleum Congress held shareholders established and officially renamed Corporation Petroleum Phuong Dong Tourism.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Each factor of motivation was ranked, and a tally of the scores from the 70 respondents is indicated in the appendix. 'Good salary' was ranked as the most important motivational factor. 'Good working conditions' were ranked the second most important motivational factor. All the factors were ranked, with 'supporting colleagues with employees' as the least important. A summary of these results, which show the rank importance of each motivational factor, is shown in Table 2.

A comparison of these results to the afore-mentioned theories of motivation provides some insight into employee motivation. The summary of results shown in Table 2 indicates that 'good salary', which is a physiological need, is the number one ranked motivator. The number two ranked motivator, good working conditions, is also a physiological need. The number three motivator, job security, is a safety need. The number four motivator, organisational/management styles, is also a safety need. The number five motivator, Training and Promotion, is a self actualizing need. Therefore, according to Maslow (1943), if the PTC's management wish to address the most important motivational factor of employees at PTC, good salary must first be satisfied. That is to say that strategies needed to increase employees' salaries should be a serious agenda for the PTC.

Similarly, if the management wish to address the second most important motivational factor of PTC employees, 'good working conditions' must be given a high premium. These two motivational factors, being physiological needs, confirm Maslow's theory that basic needs generally have to be satisfied before higher needs come to play. The analysis further justifies Maslow's theory with the third and fourth positions in the analysis being occupied by safety needs. Beyond this level, the range of motivational factors is mixed in the study. The

Table 2. Ranked importance of ten motivational factors.

Rank	Motivational factor
1st (most important)	Good salary
2nd	Good working conditions
3rd	Job security
4th	Organisational/management styles
5th	Training and promotion
6th	Welfare
7th	Personal recognition
8th	Reputation of institution
9th	Personal loyalty with employees
10th (least important)	Supporting colleagues

explanation is that, with the principles of the theory, the next motivational factor must be a social need. However, the analysis shows that the next factor, Training and Promotion, is a self actualization need. Therefore,

Maslow's conclusions that lower level motivational factors must be met before ascending to the next level on the hierarchy were not confirmed by the study. This paper however gives an idea about the relevance of some other theories of motivation. In the study, the most important factor of motivation, good salary, is one of Herzberg's

Two-Factor Theory classified as an extrinsic or a hygiene factor. The theory stipulates that the absence of good salaries (or poor salaries) certainly causes most employees to look for better job opportunities elsewhere. In fact, good salary as a motivational factor is so independent with other factors that it is impossible to separate it out as a factor having an independent effect. Therefore, although good salaries have been shown in the study as the most important motivational factor among employees of PTC, this factor of motivation will not separately lead to motivate the employees even when they are handled generously by the employer. Even though Welfare, as a motivational factor, is not well placed on Maslow's needs hierarchy (sixth most important factor), it is a very important factor of motivation in the work place as contained in the Adam's Equity

Theory. According to the explanation of Adams (1965), if an employee (at PTC) feels that there is lack of appreciation for work done, as being low relative to another employee, an inequity may exist and the employee may be de-motivated. Implicit in the Adam's theory is that employees will attempt to restore equity through a variety of ways, some of which may be counter-productive to the goals and objectives of the PTC. Again, Training and Promotion relates well with the McClelland Achievement Theory. This theory advocates that the most important employee motivational factor is the need for achievement which comes about as a result of career development. There is no doubt that there are

some employees who accepted appointment to PTC because they expect to benefit from available Training and Promotion. When they find their expectation to be a mirage, their level of motivation will be very low despite good salaries.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT OF PTC

The ranked importance of motivational factors of employees at the Registrar's Offices provides useful but complex information for the management of the PTC. The strategies for motivating the employees depend on the type of motivation theories used as a reference point. If McClelland Achievement Theory is the point of reference for motivating employees, management should begin by focusing on staff development rather than good wages. In terms of the Maslow's needs-hierarchy theory, the converse should be the order. However, if Adam's Equity Theory is followed, management should begin by focusing on areas where there may be perceived inequities (for example, disparities in allowances for staff of the same rank) before focusing on good salaries or staff development programmes. Regardless of which theory is followed, good salaries and good working conditions appear to be important links to higher motivation of employees of the PTC. However, management should not lose sight of inequities in allowances among staff of the same rank. An employee would not be motivated by good salaries if his/her colleagues receive high allowances when he/she does not. Such a condition has a spread effect: employees who feel they are caught in the inequity trap find no affection or love from the authorities; neither do they feel to belong to the group of PTC staff. Their presence in the PTC therefore is only influenced by the increasing unemployment situation in the country. Lukewarm attitude by such employees is obvious, and the damage their attitude can do to others cannot be under-estimated.

It hooves the authorities to avoid any inequities in the

PTC reward system in order to maintain a high level of motivation among all staff. However, employees at PTC should let the employer know what motivate them. The employer must be willing to design rewards systems that motivate the employees. While seeking to know what motivates employees of the PTC, the authorities should also identify those factors that are likely to cause some dedicated employees to budge from the PTC. For example, an employee who is motivated by a high degree of appreciation of work done is likely to resign if whatever he/she does is met with contempt. Similarly, an individual who is motivated by personal recognition is likely to resign if he/she is not acknowledged for a good work done. It is important for the super-ordinates to motivate their subordinate staff by giving them feedback on their performance. The authorities should further motivate their subordinates by treating them with dignity and respect, and by giving them recognition, which enhances their self-esteem, and encourage them to continue to work effectively and efficiently.

This study has shown that every motivational factor is important. It emphasizes that the degree of importance of each motivational factor depends on the type of motivational theory that is adopted. It has also established that both the employer and the employee must establish a mutual relationship by working together to agree on the best way to motivate the latter. Such a relationship has a spiral effect because as Kreisman (2002) puts it, how long an employee works in an institution and how productive he/she is, while working in the institution, depends on his/her relationship with his/her employer. Emphasis is placed on avoidance of inequities among staff of the same rank. In as much as inequity exists, some workers would always be aggressive. Their actions can damage the attitudes of other workers in the university. For example, absenteeism and tardiness on the part of aggrieved employees, and their low level of cooperation with the authorities can cause far reaching problems. Additionally, they can behave in a condescending critical manner towards their colleagues, who eventually are likely to be spiteful. Therefore, the challenge for the management of PTC is not only to find ways of motivating the staff but also to create an environment in which their self motivation can flourish, and in which they do not become de-motivated.

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