

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFICIENT MOTIVATIONAL SYSTEM IN THE ROMANIAN LABOUR MARKET CONTEXT

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***Abstract:** We live in times when staff motivation has become one of the critical aspects of any organization in Romania. It is not difficult to argue why motivation is always an extremely important issue for organizations. But it is imperative to note that in the current context of the workforce, motivation is no longer a particularly important aspect, but a critical one. Motivating people to achieve some ambitious targets, is something that many entrepreneurs get the most satisfaction in the complicated business environment. About motivation is written hundreds of pages and there are approaches that are more theoretical or practical. This paper presents the characteristics of a complex motivational system which should be functional in the current labour market context.*

***Keywords:** job motivation, job satisfaction, work performance, motivational optimum, motivational system*

1. Introduction

Job motivation is a very important aspect both for employees - as work represents the central area of human activity, since people spend most of their adult life in a state of employment - and for employers, due to the direct implications of motivation on performance.

Viewed in the context of work, motivation can be defined as the degree of availability of the employees to become involved in their work and to make sustained effort in order to meet some professional objectives, which can be defined individually or organizationally. In this context, motivation can be considered a result of the interdependence between the individual and the organizational context where he/she works, rather than a result of the prevailing individual motivations.

As concerns performance, it is obvious that there motivation and performance are mutually conditioned. It is believed that, when there is an overlap of individual expectations and organizational requirements, there is

also a chance of obtaining professional performance; in the opposite case, performance is more difficult to obtain and/or maintain.

It is certain that any manager looks for employees that are involved in their activity, but it is less obvious whether managers also look for properly motivated employees.

Another major aspect is the fact that people are not always motivated in their work, although most people look for activities that will stimulate them from the point of view of professional fulfilment. Thus, there are also people who are motivated by many other activities, but not by the work they do as employees in a company. The place given to work may be a secondary one in the hierarchy of their individual motivations, even if work comes first in the order of material needs. This fact is rather generated by the attitude component of human behaviour, which is shaped through education and influenced by culture (the mentality towards work). This is one of the reasons for using some instruments for evaluating motivation in the professional context; these instruments can sense motivational dimensions located rather at the attitude pole of the personality, with a direct influence on individuals' performance.

In a company's management, the true meaning of the employees' actions and behaviour can only be discovered based on the knowledge of the reasons and motives that have generated them. Knowing the reasons not only helps increase action efficiency and the possibility of explaining and predicting human behaviour, but it also helps to decode its moral value.

A bad motivational system can destroy the organization.

There are two questions that should concern both the HR department and any level of management: "How do we make people come to our organization?", "How do we make people stay in the organization and inside it to perform?"

This paper presents some characteristics of a complex motivational system which should be functional for the current labour market.

2. Considerations on job motivation and the connection job motivation-job performance-job satisfaction

In the work process, motivation is the psycho-social factor determining performance and linking the individual's interests with those of the organization. The individual can be motivated by knowing the variety of his/her personal needs and making it possible to satisfy those as the company's objectives are being reached. Any manager-employee relationship affects motivation. Perceiving the degree to which some need is satisfied has profound implications in employee motivation.

A company can only stay competitive if its management performs well in the use of human resources. Human resources are equally important and expensive in any organization. Among these resources, individual performance must be high enough for the organization to reach excellence. Individual performance depends on the system of motivation, on the employees' desire to make the necessary effort in their job, on employee improvement and training, as well as their capacity to do what they are required.

There are many approaches on this topic from various perspectives: psychological perspective, psychoanalytic perspective, sociological perspective, and so on, which are centred either on the individual or the individual-environment relationship.

Approaches that are centred on the person have a relatively low explanatory value, because motivation is viewed through the prism of individual internal characteristics (needs, instincts, personality traits and so on).

These approaches fail to consider the context in which the person works and his influences. Therefore, under this approach motivation is only determined individually, from inside. This category includes authors like Maslow, Alderfer, McClelland, Freud, that interpret motivation from psychological and psychoanalytic perspective, as the factor which pushes the person to act according to its needs, a tension that puts the body in motion to reduce pressure, or the force that causes the body transition from sleep state to need state.

Also this category includes American psychologists, Newcomb, Turner, Converse. They consider motivation as "the state of the organism in which the corporal energy is selectively mobilized and directed to a set of elements called purpose. The person becomes motivated only when he is simultaneously characterized by a state of energy mobilization and by behaviour directing towards a specific goal preferentially chosen of several possibilities ". [6]

For other specialists, such as Ivancevich, Donnelly, Gibson motivation is "a process that is designed to influence the direction, persistence and vigour of an individual's behaviour directed towards a specific purpose". [4]

Approaches concerning motivation from the perspective of individual-environment relationship (situational perspective) take into account the influence of factors outside the individual: its business environment, nature of work, relationships with co-workers and bosses etc.

In this category are mainly sociologists, for example Ph. Bernoux, who believes that "motives depend on the individual role that was assigned by the company or organization and also depend on the individual's relationship with the social context." [1]

Psychological studies show that employee motivation within a company, for the purpose of obtaining high-performance results, contributes to the increase in work efficiency, but the rise in performance is not always directly proportional to the intensity of the motivation.

Psychology researchers have come to the conclusion referred to as "the Yerkes - Dodson law", according to which the relation between motivation intensity and performance level depends on the complexity of the task to be fulfilled by the individual: in the case of complex tasks, an increase in the intensity of motivation only determines the increase of performance up to a point, after which there is stagnation and even a decline. [10]

According to this law, excessively strong motivation can lead to nervousness, which in turn determines a certain degree of disorganization, thus hindering progress and even leading to a regress. The moment when decline starts depends on the complexity of the task: a difficult task speeds the arrival at the point of inflexion and therefore the decline, while in the case of simple, repetitive, routine tasks, this point is reached at a very late stage or not at all. Thus, the concept of motivational optimum emerges, meaning that degree of motivation intensity that makes it possible to obtain high performance.

The motivational optimum can be obtained by working on two variables: on the one hand, getting the individuals used to perceiving the difficulty of a task as accurately as possible (by drawing attention to its importance); on the other hand, manipulating the intensity of the motivation so as to increase or decrease it, depending on the situation. In order to reach the motivational optimum, we must consider a permanent combination of positive extrinsic motivation with the intrinsic motivation, aiming not only at increasing performance, but also at developing the human potential of personal life.

In this context, the employees' individual psychological features play an important role (nervousness, balance, self-control, etc.), these being elements which can both stimulate and hinder task fulfilment.

On defining or establishing the relationship between motivation and satisfaction and between satisfaction and performance is still not complete agreement among experts, given the complexity of the phenomena studied.

Over time, the relationship between motivation and satisfaction has been addressed in organizational psychology, in many ways.

The issue of the relationship between satisfaction and performance is also at least as controversial as the issues discussed above with respect to these phenomena. In connection with this relationship existed in the literature, over time, at least three points of view which held that: a) satisfaction causes performance; b) performance causes satisfaction; c) rewards are involved between satisfaction and performance.

The first belongs to authors considered that only motivation leads to behaviour change, representing the impulse in this respect, while satisfaction no involves such change, it is a subjective state of pleasure. It is thus inferred that only motivation affects work performance, but not the satisfaction. Research has shown a clear link between satisfaction and productive behaviour.

Other authors insist on the relationship between motivation and satisfaction, which is presented unilaterally, only from the motivation to satisfaction, which is considered as an effect of motivation.

Human relations movement generalize inverse relationship from satisfaction to motivation, considering satisfaction as the direct cause of motivation.

Each of the three perspectives emphasizes one aspect of the phenomena analyzed without explaining the interaction between them and without regard to their unit.

In the literature of our country, a clear approach to the problem of interaction between motivation and satisfaction is given by Professor Mielu Zlate witch shows that [10]:

- The Status of satisfaction or dissatisfaction is an indicator of motivation;
- Motivation and satisfaction appear in a double capacity: cause and effect which means that motivation leads to satisfaction and vice versa;
- Both motivation and satisfaction relate to job performance and they can influence it either positively or negatively; the satisfaction obtained as a result of the participation of individuals in organizational life is not only an individual problem but also one of their organizational repercussions on its; the influence of motivation and satisfaction on job performance is essential for managers to pay particular attention of these elements.

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The first and second terms have not been confirmed by empirical research, they actually demonstrating that satisfied workers are not more productive than dissatisfied.

This led to the hypothesis that the performance when it is followed by rewards, causes satisfaction. Porter and Lawler showed that satisfaction does not lead to job performance and job performance not lead to satisfaction unless certain conditions are met. [7]

Thus, employees' performances lead to extrinsic or intrinsic rewards. The rewards themselves do not lead to the emergence of satisfaction, but only if they are perceived as fair in relation to the effort and to the rewards of others. Therefore, the rewards perceived as fair, resulting in drivers of employee satisfaction to make a new effort, to obtain new achievements.

The conclusion reached by researchers is that "job satisfaction and job performance are virtually unrelated, a significant relationship only emerges when considering the role of rewards and the circumstances in which they are granted." [9]

We believe that this view is quite real and can be verified by each of us.

The implication of this conclusion is very important for the organization management and it is about ensuring a rigorous results assessment and rewards based on fairness, transparency, openness, leading to fair rewards for employees, coupled with the results obtained.

Experts have questioned the type of relationship existing between job satisfaction and job performance. Between the two variables there is a divergent relationship, or a convergent relationship? Thus, there are some researchers who claim that there is a negative, divergent relationship between the two variables, which can be explained as follows: increased productivity (that is, high performance) can be achieved only by increasing human strain over the accepted level for a human being. This means that obtaining performance would result in lower satisfaction. In this respect, increased job satisfaction could be obtained by decreasing productivity and thus, economic profitability.

The research reached the following conclusion: “divergence or convergence of two factors, job satisfaction and job performance, is not a matter of principle, but depends on the methods of work organization, social and psychological conditions in the organization, which means that in some circumstances the two factors are actually divergent while in the others circumstances they are converging.” [10]

Thus, the thesis of divergence between job satisfaction and job performance is valid in exploited labour conditions, conducted in a socio-cultural environment in which the people and the quality of human life have a lower value and in the organizations that use predominantly extrinsic and negative forms of motivation. The thesis of convergence is valid in organizations that promote employees’ participation, cooperation and use complex and varied forms of motivation. Relationship of convergence between job satisfaction and job performance is much higher if the work is complex, involving a high degree of responsibility, unless simple work, repetitive, poorly qualified.

The issues presented in this section lead us to conclude that the connection between job motivation, job satisfaction and job performance is not a linear connection or a constant connection and must be interpreted nuanced, depending on the conditions under which it manifests itself. This indicates the importance of work environment in increase both performance and satisfaction, and in terms of management, the need to develop an organizational culture that promotes values, creativity, fairness and justice, aimed to obtain both the organizational performance and employee satisfaction.

The relationship between satisfaction and performance or the relationship between motivation and satisfaction are not constant or linear relationships. These relationships should be interpreted nuanced, depending on the conditions of occurrence.

3. Characteristics of an efficient motivational system in the Romanian labour market context

What conditions must be met by a motivational system to be effective in the current context of work?

Which should be the component of such a system?

There are two types of approach to this responses: **those who consider that material aspects have the most important weight** and **those who believe that other aspects, called soft aspects, have the greatest share in creating a context in which people are motivated to**

stay in organization and to contribute to its development, or to come to it.

First of all, motivation is personal. It is strongly related to the different needs that individuals have, so is recommended a study (especially for management levels) to show what motivates each one more strongly.

A second aspect related to the two approaches is as follows: advancing on Maslow's pyramid, from the bottom up, we see that the importance of criteria that determines motivation, tends to soft aspects, the more we move away from the bottom.

Let's discuss the famous whip and carrot motivation method, or better known as "bonus and malus" method. This system is the basis of material motivation and is based on an assessment. It mainly refers to the granting of bonuses, depending on the achievement of some indicators. We must recognize that in large organizations, this method is the most efficient system. Without excluding other types of motivation, this method can be applied on a large scale.

Like any system, it will produce positive results only to the extent that it is properly designed and applied, and only if it is based on a properly constructed assessment. A misconceived or applied motivational system can also destroy an organization or lower its performance. In general, for the purposes of evaluation, it is intended to achieve indicators that are specific and / or generic.

The indicators result from an in-depth study that starts from the objectives of the organization and identifies the critical factors of success, i.e. those factors whose presence or fulfilment directly determines the achievement of the objective. An example would be: if the organization's goal is to become the most profitable supplier in the industry within one year, a critical success factor would be to lower specific spending per unit of product sold.

For the critical success factor one or more indicators are set, such as in our example: the specific expense per unit of product - a 10% decrease.

Another important aspect is the pyramidal distribution of objectives, critical success factors, and ultimately, the indicator system. That is, the indicators applied to the production manager are not relevant to the worker on the production line but must be related to them. A good question to check this pyramidal distribution is: How does the indicator X contribute to achieving the goals?

For the efficiency of the indicator system, they also have to meet other criteria such as:

- Relevance - are the indicators relevant to the organization, the achievement of its objectives, and last but not least, for the post and the person to whom it applies?
- Tangibility - indicators deemed to be non-tangible will create frustration and will be abandoned by the one to which it is applied, generally without openly communicating it;
- Acceptance - we must accept and believe in the indicators we receive, we need to see very clearly what is the relevance of the indicators for the organization and implicitly for us, in order to find the strength to overcome our performance.

An effective motivation system has around five indicators.

The indicators are divided into two broad categories: lagging indicators and leading indicators.

A lagging indicator is characterized by being easy to measure but hard to influence. A leading indicator is difficult to measure but in principle easy to apply.

An effective motivation system should not have more than five indicators, which will include both specific and generic indicators, lagging and leading indicators.

Indicators may be applied monthly, quarterly, or annually, and in principle the more the post is placed at the bottom of the organization and the activity is more repetitive, the more often the frequency of indicator measurement is recommended (monthly if it possible).

The effectiveness of a motivational system based on assessment by indicators, properly built and applied, is undeniable, as it is undeniable that, in order not to lose people and attract new specialists, the application of such a system is not enough.

In order to implement a complete and functional motivational system, we identify four very important factors, in the absence of which we can witness the loss of particularly precious people, who were apparently satisfied with the material aspects of the collaboration:

Recognition:

Recognition by obtaining a maximum bonus meets material needs and is generally confidential or known in a narrow circle. People feel the need for a wider recognition of their role and action in the organization. Any system that makes this kind of recognition possible is able to bring satisfaction and stabilize staff.

Personal development:

Booth professional development and the development of other skills and knowledge are aspects that employees increasingly take into account. Providing a framework in which people feel they can evolve is extremely important for retention and staffing.

Aligning values:

The values of the organization largely ensure the organizational context, so employees will feel their presence at the reception. Sooner or later, any misalignment in the values between the organization and its member will turn into a crack and later into an unbelievable gulf. Values must therefore be promoted, explained, accepted and shared.

Ensuring a proper communication context:

Organizations are nothing more than a communication network. The environment and the message of this communication are essential to provide a climate conducive to performance in which people feel motivated and respected.

4. Conclusions

The organization, the company, can cope with the changes required by competitiveness and progress only if managers direct their efforts towards employee motivation and satisfaction. Proper motivation of the employees is the main purpose lying at the foundation of good company leadership. Poor leadership quality is the main cause of employee dissatisfaction, people being unhappy with their work.

Motivating the staff means creating possibilities to meet certain individual and team goals, to take responsibilities, to gain recognition, rewards, etc. Taking responsibilities creates the possibility of achievements, which in turn offer a chance for individual or group recognition, which further ensures the possibility of personal promotion. Achievements contribute to the company's business success and promotion ensures the employee's success in his/her professional career.

Employees can be motivated by a range of financial and non-financial policies and actions in response to their aspirations, their needs for individual development, respect, and self-achievement. The company must satisfy the employees' needs in the same way it satisfies the customers' needs. To this purpose, companies must develop staff strategies that should respond to employees' needs and be integrated into the company's global strategy.

Motivation is the responsibility of the organization's management.

The role of motivation is complex and ultimately refers to bringing passion and satisfaction into the work of people. In a correct organizational context, motivation is easy, natural. In an inappropriate context, it is inefficient and difficult to apply. It's not mathematics, it's about leadership. It's not a HR trick, it's a top management responsibility.

If we consider what is happening now on the Romanian labour market, we can say that any situation has something good or something bad in it. It is a bad thing that many people are leaving the country to work abroad, it is a bad thing that we have an education system that does not prepare pupils and students for working in the real world, but it is also good because it reminds us how important people and education are. That will make us invest and worry about it.

It is a capital concern of this leadership to invest time and financial resources to design and implement a motivational system capable of giving people the opportunity to exert their passion, develop with the organization, and feel recognized and appreciated, to be part of a common project with others, built on shared values. It seems simple and it is not, or seems impossible and it is not.

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