MYTHS AND QUESTIONS OF MANAGERS ABOUT MOTIVATION FOR EMPLOYEE CREATIVENESS

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Abstract

It has resulted from the recently processed study among metallurgical and cooperating companies that many of the companies’ managers did not motivate their employees to improvement ideas submission at all, some of the companies even had discontinued any such already existing form of motivation incentives. At the same time there were only few companies that had their employee motivation systems well prepared according to their specific conditions. The paper attempts to explain the importance of well prepared and implemented motivation system for employee creativeness. It also warns from steps or elements of the preparation process.

Keywords: creativeness, employees, motivation, Czech industry

1. INTRODUCTION

Firm’s capability to promote innovation and creativity is one of the key drivers of competitive advantage [1]. Any firm needs creative employees to develop and apply their creative potential to be able to offer innovative products. Organizations must place a premium on employee creativity. The main reason is the consumers` behavior in the „advanced“ western world – the products have shorter and shorter lifespan or the desire to be “in” will, for example in case of technical incompatibility of computers, force the consumers to put the products among useless junk. [2] Employees able and willing to generate creative ideas as the source of innovation and thus the source of an organization’s competitive advantage must be motivated. [3]

Employee motivation is a very common topic of scientific papers and surveys. Therefore, there exist many manuals on how to motivate and evaluate employees.

Any company is filled with creative employees. Some of them are easy to involve but many others are keeping their creative potential „secrecy“. Learning how to motivate creative employees can give an advantage over the competition. The way creative employees are treated has a snowball effect on the organization as a whole. By creating a culture that inspires creativity, employees can be motivated from all areas of the company to offer more ideas. That diversity improves business ideas pool and increases its chance of success. In the crisis times it is necessary to realize that, fortunately, financial remuneration tools are just one but very important part of the motivation process.

There exist many myths or even blindness among managers and owners of companies regarding the necessity of employee motivation. The following text uproots some of the most common.

2. METHODOLOGY

As the source of managers’ myths, results of the survey made among Czech metallurgical and cooperating companies between the years 2009 and 2011 were used. The survey aimed on the area of innovation management in the companies. Logically, one group of questions was dedicated to the area of employee creativeness and related motivation tools.
Authors in their previous paper [4] analysed the motivation for employee innovation activities and creativeness as whole. It discovered that many of the companies either unintentionally or, in worse case, intentionally hinder employee creativity. As mentioned in the introduction many studies and following manuals recommended motivation tools as incentives for employee creativeness. Some ideas from the studies and specially their applicability in the Czech industrial companies will be applied in answers and explanations to most frequent questions and “alibi” of managers who partially denied the need of employee creativeness motivation.

3. EXPERIMENTAL PART

From the survey there appeared certain questions from managers who were not very pro-motivating to their employees. It is necessary to motivate the management at first. It is necessary to convince managers about the importance of such motivation tools implementation. The four most frequent as well as the most important questions will be answered below:

**Question 1:** Why should we spend some extra money or effort on our ordinary employee creativeness? We do not expect our basic workers to be creative as they cannot offer us a sufficient return on these investments.

**Answer 1:** More and more often successful and highly competitive companies do not rely on seeking highly creative and innovative employees. They are very expensive compared to “normal” employees and moreover, it is not easy to find those who would fulfill a specific focus of the companies. It becomes more efficient to motivate, train and then involve “ordinary” employees who would fit the company’s demand as for their basic qualification and experiences. Just like the Toyota and other highly innovative companies have been practicing for decades, it is more efficient to develop own creative employees from the ordinary (replaceable) low-skilled mechanical workers to (unique) life-long-learning human resources. There are two main drivers supporting this development: First, all workplaces are becoming more and more complex. In industrialized countries, simple physical work has long been almost fully automated what in turn means that employees need increasing skills and expertise to handle their equipment. Second, future employees increasingly expect to realize their potential at work, to develop and challenge their professional talents, and to be taken seriously as organizational members. So they demand satisfying jobs. So firms must compete to attract and retain the best human talents to stay competitive. [5].

**Question 2:** In our company there employees earn salaries above the average level in our branch. And still we receive nor innovation incentives, nor improvement ideas neither extra working effort from them. We do not believe that any extra pro-motivation environment would change this state.

**Answer 2:** Creativeness does not come first. It is expected as the second employee contribution to their employers. Workers cannot just create new ideas, have innovative thoughts or suggest some improvements without doing what they were hired for primarily – their job. Unless they are working in a creative business area such as promotion, advertisement, design and so on. This paper focuses on all employees in metallurgical and cooperating industries. They are not primarily hired to bring new ideas and innovate on the first place of their list of duties. That is understandable. What is not understandable is the fact that most of them never learn from their managers that they could bring any ideas for improvement into their work, working processes and organization of their work places and to be evaluated for it.

Salaries themselves are not a motivating factor as already Frederick Herzberg in his Motivator – hygiene theory taught [6]. Any financial remuneration for employee creativeness would be useless without existence of a system motivating environment which encourages and motivates employees to their work tasks at first. The data of the survey [7] among employees of the metallurgical and cooperating companies in the North-Moravian region of the Czech Republic collected between the years 2009 and 2011 enabled to define five key signs of motivating working environment:
- **Appreciation, security and stability**

When employees feel appreciated, acknowledged and respected they give hundred percent of their time, effort, and work devotion to their employer in return. Any manager should create a work environment that provides employees with the opportunity to achieve their goals via their experiences what they value most in their professional lives. Employees feel more secure (and so more comfortable and so happier) knowing that they work for a stable company with certain tradition, a level of prestige and a good name in the labour market offering a good working conditions. For example, if the company offers to its employees' outplacement services, employees feel more secure that even in the worst case – that they would be released from the company, they would be taken a professional care of. Having or not having such safeness feelings make a huge difference in employees’ performance.

- **Mutual goals**

If an employee feels as an equal member of the company family, just like every other employee regardless a level he/she works it is easier for him to accept company’s goals as his own. That reflects in the intensity of his participation in the goals achieving. There should be some clear relation between the company’s turnover (or another economic variable) and employee year or half-year bonus.

- **Joy instead of fear**

Fear should never be used as a motivation strategy. It may get managers what they want at the moment, but in the future managers will face employee anger, resentment, and lack of enthusiasm and commitment. When employees feel that supervisors or managers care about them and that they are perceived as respected and valuable members of the organization, they are more cooperative, enthusiastic and committed to organizational goals, both in the present and in the future. Laughter is good for the soul but for the mind and body. Having fun and joy is a basic human need, and when it’s met in the workplace, productivity goes up. Happy employee is less often sick, what’s a good news for his employer. When employees feel nurtured, appreciated, acknowledged, and respected, they'll give 100% of their time, effort, and commitment in return. The job of the manager is to create a work environment that provides employees with the opportunity to attain their goals and experience what they value most in their professional lives.

- **Respected and considerate managers with a feedback policy**

Modeling the behavior managers want from their employees is the most effective way to change any behavior. Employees rather obey a manager, who is their mentor, their behaviour patter than if they are expected to obey an uppity manager with no sense of empathy, no charisma and no natural respect. For example, if managers want employees to arrive on time, they should be in early or at least arrive at an acceptable time. If managers expect motivated employees, they need to become a role model for motivation. If they want a feedback or ideas for improvement they must be ready to hear and especially bear a critique too.

Stakeholders need managers who make good decisions on innovation. Nevertheless, such decision-makers need from owners/stakeholders specific and context-based information, including [5]:
- an overview of the firm's activities - routines the company currently carries out and how successful it is;
- related insights into the company's general strategy, its targets, and its future plans;
- knowledge of the environment in which the company acts and an idea of future trends with respect to markets, technological developments, regulations, and so on.
Never-ending process

Some managers set a great motivation system in the beginning of their “management” and think their work is over in this area and focus on production only. They are so wrong. Motivating employees is an ongoing process because people are continually growing and changing. As they achieve something they want or value, they then seek to achieve more of the same. If motivation is not kept on managerial front burner, the extra effort, enthusiasm and engagement of employees slowly fade and die out.

Question 3: Are there any incentives for creative employees’ motivation without involvement of extra funds?

Answer 3: This question is very actual due to the economical crisis. A motivating and stimulating working environment is the base for employee creativeness. Individuals work for many different reasons. Financial rewards are frequently a key factor in influencing why individuals undertake certain jobs. However, money is not everything. Employees want to enjoy their work, be challenged by it and achieve personal fulfilment. Partially, the question was answered in the previous part. Non-financial awarding can be delivered only by respected and considerable managers. And specifically, managers who give feedback on new ideas are extra valuable as for the employee creativeness motivation. Generating new ideas takes time and effort, so employees need to know that their creativity is valued. Not just one-way asking employees to give feedback and suggestions. That needs to be a reciprocal road. Therefore a feedback plays an important role. When managers solicit creative ideas, a point person must be established to give feedback on each of them. The more employees understand why their ideas did or did not work, the more motivated they will feel to offer ideas again.

Also managers, who not only recognize but also reward collaboration are the right persons in their position. Creativity is typically an iterative process, where one person says the initial idea and others jump in to improve it. The best teams build off each other, so they need to be motivated to work together. People are competitive creatures so some managers think that announcement of some prizes for “best idea” can support creativeness. Nevertheless, prizes for the best ideas often encourage only competition not cooperation itself. What in the end paralyse any creativity and upsets those whose contributions go unrecognized.

People are motivated if they understand what their idea of improvement is good for. When a manager solicits creative ideas, his team must learn what he hopes to accomplish. Knowing a specificity of idea’s target empowers creative employees to succeed. Also clearly identified and promoted innovation opportunities of the company mean a base for employees to get motivated and involved in the innovation process. People get motivated when they become a part of decision-making process or at least feel that way. That is the mutual-goal-feeling mentioned in the previous answer.

Question 4: Aren’t there any restrictions or limitations of employees’ involvement into the company’s innovative processes?

Answer 4: Yes, there are also critical factors that may considerably hamper employees’ idea generation but also employer’s expectations. They are:

- time;
- resources [5].

As long as employees of metallurgical industry are not usually expected to come up with new ideas, there is no reason to allow time and resources for these activities. Employees of metallurgical companies should not be given a fix percent package of free time or even company’s resources for unlimited ideas generation juts like employees in high-tech industry. Thus, employees can only generate ideas using their own free or break time and resources. In the worse case they must be breaking the firm’s regulations and redirecting
resources. Managers should set clear regulations and conditions of “idea creation” within an official work period. It is closely connected with the manager's approach to employee ideas collection and reaction to them. A good manager will listen carefully to any new idea and will be able either to stop it in the beginning or, if he can see a potential in it, to enable the employee to develop the idea within a clearly defined time and resource limits.

4. CONCLUSION

Employees are the most valued source of innovation incentives and ideas generation. It is meant for all employees, not just those from R&D department. Metallurgical companies are not an exemption from that. As the survey from the years 2009-2011 proved, majority of managers of Czech metallurgical and cooperating companies have been very dubious as for incentives to creative and innovative activities of their subordinates. This paper answered to only few but most common questions, doubts and hesitations in this area. There is one clear recommendation mutual to all the answers and explanations: managers, as well as stakeholders must realize that when it comes to motivating employees to creativeness behind their job duties, the person of the manager is the key factor of a success or a failure of the employee creativeness incentive programmes. When they doubt it they are not in the right position. The need of employee participation in the company’s innovation process must be taken seriously, its intensity carefully considered and their duties and competences adjusted accordingly. It is also the motivating environment that encourages without extra funds to employee driven innovations. But still, no matter how well the incentive programmes were prepared for the company employees, the final output lies on managers who realize them.

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REFERENCES


