Factors that Contribute to Increases in Human Performance and Employee Morale

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Abstract
This research paper focuses on training and other factors that increase employee morale and performance. In regards to training, this researcher focuses on its benefits and its place within the corporate organization, while offering suggestive methods such as motivation, employee recognition and succession planning, for increases in employee performance. The purpose of this paper is to show how organizations do not have to increase overhead in order to reach their goals with every employee. Employees do not always need to sit in a training class to correct a problem that can be resolved by motivating the employees, recognizing and rewarding employees' good habits, or involving them in the process of succession planning for the future of the organization.

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Abstract

This research paper focuses on training and other factors that increase employee morale and performance. In regards to training, this researcher focuses on its benefits and its place within the corporate organization, while offering suggestive methods such as motivation, employee recognition and succession planning, for increases in employee performance. The purpose of this paper is to show how organizations do not have to increase overhead in order to reach their goals with every employee. Employees do not always need to sit in a training class to correct a problem that can be resolved by motivating the employees, recognizing and rewarding employees' good habits, or involving them in the process of succession planning for the future of the organization.
Introduction

While working in an area of global learning and development, this researcher often hears from managers, “How can we as a developmental department for employees within this organization, remain proactive and help other managers develop their employees with the skills and knowledge needed for their roles within the organization, while increasing employee performance without increasing the enterprise’s overhead via salaries or unnecessary training?”

Many researchers have found that numerous outside factors contribute to employers reaching their goals of increased employee performance via motivation, employee recognition, and succession planning, which inspires employees and these factors are "directly related to nearly every facet of the workplace" (Brown, 2001, p. 69).

Corporate training has evolved as an “end all” answer to all employee deficiencies and problems; however, employers are starting to search for alternatives to develop employees in order to increase their performance and morale. Within the last few years, many companies have been finding answers to the question, “What factors outside of training have an impact on employee performance?” Before the question posed can be answered, training must first be understood and its place in the organization must be acknowledged. Once managers understand the purposes of offering training to employees, they can then move on to examine the alternatives that companies are now practicing as a
way to reach employees to help them develop and enrich their skills.

Teleometrics' research has found that the commonly assumed premonition that "managers bear the responsibility of motivating employees toward organizational goals" is invalid, rather, they have found that since motivation is internal, "managers must provide the proper work environment to prompt employee self-motivation" (McNamara, 1999, p. 2). The three alternatives to training that apply to the goals of increased employee performance and morale that this researcher will examine are motivation, employee recognition, and succession planning.

Methodology

This topic was chosen because of this researcher’s focus and responsibilities within a corporate organization. Currently, this researcher is the internal business owner of the newly implemented, on-line, global performance management system. The rollout and initiative of a performance management system in this researcher’s organization was crucial because it was the top priority of senior management and received great visibility from the Chief Executive Officer.

The way that employees reach their goals and acquire the skills and knowledge needed to reach their objectives and perform their everyday jobs became an important topic within this researcher’s Department of Global Learning and Development. Since this researcher did the training for
performance management's system and process, she became motivated to know of additional ways, besides training, employees may develop themselves and how management can directly or indirectly encourage employees to develop attainable, personal goals. From this perspective, the researcher focused on the employer's responsibility for motivating employees and working with employees in order to get the desired results. This is why motivation, employee recognition, and succession planning are the three alternatives this researcher will discuss in regards to non-training options.

In searching for information on this particular topic, it was beneficial to use numerous business magazines, journals and books that focused on employee-employer relationships and training. These resources were good choices because they not only focused on the problems or situations at hand, but they also offered suggestions and ideas for improvement. This researcher also tried to apply and analyze a number of practices that are currently used in her personal work environment in respect to performance management and its tie to succession planning. It is interesting to see how the methods spoken of in her organization are similar to those mentioned in the resources.

Analysis and Discussion

Training and its Benefits

Training proves itself to be very beneficial when the approach to training "covers needs analysis, sets objectives, lets objectives dictate content and
methods, and controls the learning experience and finally, allows for evaluation” (Hickerson, 1997, p. 2). However, many people still must understand that training is effective only “when fully understood and supported by management” (p. 1) and should be avoided when it is not the right solution for the problem. Management must not view training as the answer to all problems. If managers seek to increase human performance, before sending an employee to training, they must recognize why they are sending this employee to training, then they must incorporate the lessons learned into the employees daily work responsibilities.

Managers can benefit from the process of training by “knowing the territory” (Mager, 1999, p. 8). When managers understand the territory of training, they can as Mager suggests:

1. Determine why the performance of their people is not meeting their expectations-and what to do about it.
2. Ensure that their workers possess the job-relevant skills they need.
3. Get training done in the least amount of time and at the least cost, whether the training is obtained internally or outsourced.
4. Avoid having their people away from their jobs any longer than is absolutely necessary.
5. Save 100 percent of proposed training development and implementation costs when analysis shows that a non-training solution will work better (p. 125).
Since training is a means to an end, with an end often known as performance, and "employees' contributions act as an aid toward the success of the organization" (Mager, 1999, p. 9), organizations and managers must review the benefits of training and its place in the organization.

Most people often have trouble identifying the differences between "problems and solutions related to human performance" (Mager, 1999, p. 49). Problems exist when performances are not meeting a manager's expectations and there is a gap between desired and actual results. Solutions are results that must take place to reverse or correct the problems and "training is what you do to get rid of a problem, such as a lack of skill or knowledge" (p. 50).

When correcting a lack of skill or knowledge, the training is giving employees confidence and employee retention is increased because they are properly trained (Bechard, 2001). In the pages to follow, this researcher will provide other examples of "powerful tools that will get managers the performance they need, faster and cheaper than training" (p. 3).

Motivation

Leadership means, "instilling employees with the courage required to show up for work" (Friedman, 2001, p. 4), while motivating their minds and spirits to excel and make a commitment to their employers. The concept of motivating employees is extremely important to all levels of management. However, McNamara (1999) suggests there are a number of myths that exist that
hinder managers in motivating employees. We must examine a number of motivational myths that can be detrimental to employee-employer relationships:

Myth #1: "I can motivate people".

Myth #2: "Money is a good motivator".

Myth #3: "Fear is a damn good motivator".

Myth #4: "I know what motivates me, so I know what motivates my employees" (p. 7).

Because they do not fit nor answer the need of the employee, these myths should be eliminated from managers' thinking. The statements provided by McNamara (1999) are solutions offered through management's eyes, rather than the employee's perspective. In order to avoid the repercussions resulting from the continuation of these myths, managers should adopt certain principles that are more closely aligned with the employee's needs.

This situation is similar to the concept of needs analysis in Instructional Design. In order to be proactive in problem resolution, managers must first understand the problem or what their audience, in this instance, employees, need in order to be more productive and empowered. Managers must not assume they know what their employees need, rather they must inquire and converse with employees to find methods of addressing their needs, while meeting their management goal of increased performance and employee morale.
If managers do not take the time to communicate with and understand the employee, then their initiatives or actions are in vain and nothing will be accomplished. A strategic plan that describes exactly what managers expect from employees helps managers to develop a successful motivational strategy.

Jackson (2001) has noted that the mindset of managers viewing themselves as managers must change. "Managers must begin to look at themselves as 'COACHES' and begin to look at their employees as a 'TEAM'" (Stark, 2001, p. 4) within their organization working towards the same goals and corporate objectives. A coaching approach with the employee team increases motivation because everything becomes a "we" effort and not a "me" effort.

Everybody knows the team's mission, and everybody is there to help everybody else make the team invincible. Each person on the team has their particular assignment, and the coach makes sure that every person knows exactly where they fit in and how necessary they are to the team effort (Stark, 2001, p. 4).

Mager (1999) describes a beneficial activity called team-building. His team-building activity is where the employer stages enjoyable activities such as golf, baseball games, river rafting, etc. as a means of becoming more familiar and affiliated with employees. This serves to open channels of communication and develop "new channels of communication" (Mager, 1999, p. 82). This eliminates
any “team member” from exclusion and not being recognized for his or her contribution to the team.

Employee Recognition

Employee recognition has become an intricate part of many organization’s management plan in regards to a comprehensive employee retention program. “Recognizing and applauding an employee’s contribution is critical to reinforcing a desired behavior” (Brown, 2001, p. 32). Various types of employee recognition, such as a pat on the back or words of praise after employees have performed well or exceeded expectations has a huge impact on increasing individual and team morale while improving human performance. Many companies have found that incorporating employee recognition into their culture makes good business sense.

“Rewarding strong performers is a smart business strategy for any hiring environment,” says Hublex (cited in Applegate, 1994, p. 6). When performance is followed by events and rewards that employees view as favorable, the employee will most likely repeat the positive behavior in the future. By recognizing outstanding results, managers motivate employees to achieve greater productivity while also enforcing exemplary behavior.

Succession Planning

Succession planning, a continuous process of strategically identifying, evaluating and developing employees to ensure leadership stability for all key positions within an organization, is an important factor that could help increase
employee morale and performance once employers include employees in the succession planning process and prepare them for a particular role in the succession plan. Most companies do not have a plan for succession. To begin, the researcher believes they must ask themselves a few questions: Does my company have a plan for leadership growth to keep pace with business growth? Who is being developed and groomed? Do I have a plan in place to fill the gaps and does my organization have plans for current employees to step up to the plate to fill those positions? Do I have an objective plan in place to identify and develop the future leadership? How can my organization maximize the human potential and alignment of strategic objectives?

According to the Gale Group study (1996), organizations are now learning that they cannot depend on the "traditional employee development and advancement systems" (p. 2) of succession planning and succession development. Succession planning identifies the most potentially qualified managerial employer and determines their individual needs in relation to career development. With succession planning comes the need for comprehensive succession development that "examines the specific critical competencies needed for the successful performance of a job" (p. 2).

Developing detailed succession plans assist in supporting management philosophies and serve as important organization tools for immediate business planning. "The difficult aspect of succession planning is that the majority of top
level management is too concerned with their current jobs and responsibilities, that they do not formulate good exit and succession plans” (Fulmer, 2001, p. 67). When good succession and exit plans are not in motion, the organization is affected when a manager leaves because they may not have any individuals qualified to act as the appropriate successor.

As Nicolas Machiavelli (cited in Gale Group, 1996) once said, “A prince should show his esteem for talent, actively encourage able men and honor those who excel in their profession” (p. 3). This approach builds an organization with a strong foundation based on honesty and great strategic planning. Many chief executive officers (CEOs) fail to realize that unstable planning for succession brings about “antipathy within employees towards him or her because they are forced to prove themselves to the new CEO once the old CEO leaves the organization” (p. 3). Prokop (cited in Gale Group, 1996) says that succession planning benefits both the employee and employer because “…it absolutely goes to the fundamentals of power and knowledge sharing. It lets the employees know their worth and sets expectations that we as an organization feel strongly about you, the employee, that you can ascend to these positions” (p. 3).

Job dissatisfaction leads to a higher turnover rate for organizations, which makes it hard to plan regularly and for succession. Prokop (cited in Gale Group, 1996) says she develops the succession plan for her replacement and meets with her subordinate employees to draw up a plan for their replacements. “I see what
type of training, schooling or work experience they need to prepare for that
eventuality” (p. 5).

Fulmer (2001), has noted that many Fortune 500 companies have
employed a Seven-Step Plan to their business organization and succession
processes. The plan consists of performing a job profile/job analysis, defining
managerial competencies, developing assessment approaches, designing a
succession-development administration system, conducting the assessment
process, providing feedback, and evaluating the success of the system. In
succession planning, managers learn how to develop homegrown talent and avoid
financial strains on the organization by not recruiting the over-priced manager
from a large, reputable organization. Stevenson says, “The best way to counter
career angst is to let your staff members know what you have in mind for them”

The organization for which this author works has just completed its first-
year implementation of an enterprise wide, global performance management
system, which incorporates plans for succession. In the process every employee
developed three to five performance goals and one to three development goals
that were aligned with his or her business unit’s objectives and goals for the
upcoming year. This allowed everyone to work toward organizational goals
because each unit developed goals based on corporate initiatives. This method
also eliminated the possibility of non-value added efforts by employees and employers alike.

The interesting aspect of this performance management system is that the organization is currently working on efforts to combine performance management and succession planning. This collaboration would function in an atmosphere where employees’ performance goals would lead to development strategies that assist in reaching those goals. Depending on their developmental actions, employees will prepare themselves for various positions within the organization that require certain experiences and expertise. Added to this, within the succession aspect, managers learn of employees’ expectations for the future via ongoing discussions throughout the year. Traditionally, non-communication between employees and employers wastes valuable time and money by preparing individuals for jobs in which they are not interested or suited.

Recommendations

Training and its Benefits

As stated earlier, training has a place within the organization. However, many organizations will find themselves putting forth efforts that prove to be in vain, if it is not understood where and when training is appropriate. Mager (1999) describes how and why training no longer needs to have the same priority as it once did where “...training was just one of those things you had to send people to now and again. If people were not worth more after the training than before, it
merely confirmed the expectation that the training had no value” (p. 32). On the other hand, trainers can ensure that their training is effective by measuring the “important effects of training and matching the training to the needs of the individual trainee” (p. 32).

In order for managers to confidently know how to get and use training, there, are a few cost-effective methods, as recommended by Mager (1999). Managers need to know:

- What it takes to make the performance they want happen
- How to make sure they will get the training and other services they need
- How to deal with trainers
- How to get full value-how to make sure people do not lose the skills they have learned
- How to decide when to train, and when to do something else
- How to produce the same effect by utilizing other methods themselves (p. 9).

**Motivation**

Most recommendations for motivation seem quite simple, but many managers have discovered that they are hard to implement. Below are several recommendations offered by Brown (2001) to correct the myths earlier mentioned:
Myth #1: "I can motivate people." People have to motivate and empower themselves. One thing managers can do is establish an environment that is conducive to employees motivating and empowering themselves.

Myth #2: "Money is a good motivator." Although, some factors such as money, an office (not cubicle), and job security can help employees from becoming less motivated, they do not necessarily help employees become more motivated. A manager is encouraged to take the time to "understand the motivations of each of his/her employees."

Myth #3: "Fear is a damn good motivator." Fear has no purpose in the workplace unless an employer's goal is to incorporate a distrustful environment with employees.

Myth #4: "I know what motivates me, so I know what motivates my employees" (p. 71). No one should ever assume that their needs are the same as others' needs. Different people are motivated by different factors.

In conjunction with this recommended change in a motivational approach, managers should learn to listen and understand their employees' concerns, provide them with constructive feedback, and when disagreement arouses, resolve conflicts fairly. In a supportive environment, the manager should acknowledge the potential greatness within each employee, look for positive intentions, challenge the employee, and support his or her growth and development.
Employee Recognition

There are many ways of informing employees of a job well done. Four recommended ways, suggested by Kahl (2001), for managers to inform employees that the work they do matters are:

1. Speak up: "Never assume that your employees know they have done a good job" (p. 7). If managers do not tell their employees that they have done a good job, they will not know the behaviors to practice on a constant and consistent basis.

2. Go beyond the bank: "Not everyone expects or wants money as a reward for a job well done" (p. 7). Employers should become creative by offering an extra day off, recognizing the employee in a staff or departmental meeting, or taking the employee out to lunch.

3. Document it: "Express your appreciation by letting others know that your people are getting the job done" (p. 7). Document the good behavior by informing other employees of the affect a particular employee has had via a company newsletter or e-mail.

4. Celebrate often: Do not get into the habit of only rewarding employees at the end of the year at a company function, employers should "reward employees as often as they deserve it…this will contribute to a more positive work environment" (p. 7).
Succession Planning

To counter the lack of succession planning, many companies have found it useful to initialize a formal mentoring process that is part of everyone’s annual goals and objectives. Stark (2001) suggests employing these five points:

1. It is wiser to have several contederees rather than one official successor.

2. Be prepared to invest time and money in educating and mentoring successors.

3. Consider picking successors by committee rather than letting one manager decide his/her staff’s future.

4. Avoid appointing sycophants to positions of authority.

5. Do not look for your mirror image, but do pass on your organization’s philosophy (p. 12).

Many employees want to do a great job and often wonder what it takes to get to where they want to be within an organization. Sometimes, it is not the employee’s performance, but the structure and culture of the organization that inhibits growth, development and advancement.

Conclusion

The proposals mentioned in this paper present suggested starting points for organizations to reach their expectations of increased human performance and employee morale without spending unnecessary dollars on superfluous training.
and non-value added work. However, employers and employees must agree to make the appropriate changes in order for them to prove effective. Both parties must understand and accept the factors that contribute to increases in human performance and employee morale such as training, motivation, employee recognition and succession planning.
References


