

MOTIVATING THE EMPLOYEES DURING CRISIS

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Abstract: Motivating employees is essential for the organizational sustainability and success, because it creates and maintains an interest among the employees to fulfill organizational goals. It is crucial in the business world, due to the benefits that it brings to the company: improved employees' satisfaction, continuous employees' development and increased productivity. Motivated employees have high levels of loyalty and commitment towards the organization, which significantly reduces the staff turnover and the need for constant hiring of new employees. Business leaders must engage the employees to communicate and collaborate in order to fulfill the organizational mission and vision. In the process of creating motivational tools, the leaders must always take into consideration that individuals decided to join the company because they felt that their personal goals would be satisfied within that organization. Inspiring other people is not an easy task in normal times, and during complex times, when businesses are literally struggling to survive, motivation is even more difficult. When business results are less than promising, the employees develop negative emotions, such as uncertainty and fear, that have serious negative impact on teams' performance. On the other hand, during difficult times, the managers are constantly under great pressure, due to all the urgent matters that are weighing in from every side - securing finance, balancing between the expectation of the stakeholders and impact of crisis on business results, maybe even not being sure if the business will have a team to motivate in the near future. However, in times of crisis, team motivation needs to be the top priority of every leader. It is common knowledge in the business world that crisis can make or break a team. When everything seems to be going wrong, the employees need a support from their manager more than ever. When a manager helps employees transition during difficult times, the employees will remember him or her as a leader who was supportive, which leads to their increased engagement and motivation. With a growth-oriented mindset, the right strategies, and the right words and attitude, the leader will be able to keep the team from falling apart and will be able to guide, encourage, and reassure the team to deliver excellent business results. It is essential to build relationships and connect team members. Knowing how to motivate the workforce, will help ensure they are enthusiastically bringing their best efforts each day and helping the company fulfill its goals. Teams that succeed to overcome times of crisis, will become stronger than ever.

Keywords: Motivation, management, leadership, crisis.

1. INTRODUCTION

The world has been through many different global crisis. During 2020, we are facing the crisis unlike any other seen before-COVID-19 pandemic, which has a great negative impact on the global economy. Doing business is very challenging in normal times, so in times of global crisis the obstacles and difficulties are much greater and more dangerous. One of the solutions on keeping the business alive and ensuring it's further development during the global economic crisis, lies in the capability of management to recognize the importance of human resources and of increasing their motivation, in order to contribute to improved productivity and efficiency. The strength of a company lies in the capabilities of all its employees (Hussey, 2020). Motivated employees carry out their responsibilities to the best of their ability. However, motivating people is one of the most difficult tasks for managers, especially in times of crisis. Each employee is an individual with its own needs and beliefs. In difficult times, managers have to find the way to create a required environment for each employee.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper is descriptive in nature, and it is based on data collected from various sources: books, journals, papers and websites, in order to inspect the strategies for motivating the employees during times of crisis, based on motivation theories and business practices.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Theories of motivation

Understanding what motivates employees has been the subject of numerous research studies. To motivate is to induce people to act in a desired manner (Koontz and O'Donnell, 1972). Motivation refers to a hidden will power in an individual, which impels or encourages him or her to convert "Capacity to work" into "Desire to work" It is an inner state, which energizes, activates, or moves a person's behavior in a particular direction (Lata, 2017).

Abraham Maslow, in 1954 presented his general theory of motivation, called the “Need hierarchy theory“. According to him, humans have a chain of needs that he categorized according to priority. Maslow stated that there are five levels of needs: *physiological* (needs essential in terms of survival, such as food, water, clothing, sleep, and shelter); *safety* (non-threatening surroundings and financial security such as work position, insurance and retirement package); *social* (the need to feel a sense of belongingness or to be loved), *esteem* (self-respect), and *self-actualization* (self-realization). Maslow forms his theory in a hierarchical way, so that physiological needs are in the bottom of the pyramid and self-actualization on the top. According to him, you would not be able to motivate someone with positive feedback if their basic physiological needs are not met, and people are always striving to be better and use their talents in new ways. Maslow’s theory can be a powerful tool for every manager.

Frederick Herzberg was an American psychologist who developed motivation hygiene theory. He conducted research through interviewing 200 accountant and engineers, who were asked to state elements of their job, which made them happy or unhappy. The results of the research revealed that feeling of unhappiness or dissatisfaction was related to the working environment. On the other hand, feelings of happiness were related to their jobs. According to Herzberg, the maintenance or hygiene factors are necessary to develop and sustain a required level of satisfaction among employees. These factors do not provide satisfaction to the employees, but their absence will create dissatisfaction, and therefore, these factors are called dis-satisfiers. Motivating factors are divided into two parts: *motivators* (achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, promotion, etc.), and *hygiene factors* (supervision, company policy, working conditions, salaries, security, relations with colleagues).

Douglas McGregor has developed his motivation theory (called “Theory X and Theory Y”), based on hypothesis relating to human behavior. According to McGregor, there are two sets of assumptions: theory X and theory Y. Theory X is negative in nature, whereas theory Y is positive. Theory X claims that all employees try to avoid extra tasks, because they dislike working. Additionally, it says that people lack self – motivation and are afraid to take responsibility, so they must be guided and controlled closely. Theory Y, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of a pleasant environment within the company, and claims that an employee can motivate himself in a pleasant working environment and assumes that in such work conditions, a worker will not even be afraid to take responsibility, and will try to work more and harder.

There are also other motivation theories, such as the *goal setting theory*-based on the fact that humans have a natural instinct to set and strive for goals, so that goals are immediate regulators of human actions. Another approach to motivation is the *reinforcement theory*- based on the idea that behavior with positive consequences tends to be repeated, while behavior with negative effect tends not to be repeated, which leads to conclusions that we can change anyone’s behavior by using reinforcement, punishment and extinction.

Types of motivation

The way management selects the method to inspire the workers will depend upon the understanding of the employees needs. Thus, motivation can be classified as: positive motivation and negative motivation.

1.Positive Motivation

This type of motivation is a reward-oriented method. Positive motivation includes the following aspects:

- praise and credit for work done
- sincere concern for the employees
- competition
- participation pride
- delegation of authority
- appreciation
- salaries and bonuses

2.Negative Motivation:

This type of motivation is intended to create fear, mainly backed by force. There are two kinds of negative motivation– financial (making a reduction the employee's salary),and non-financial (denial of privileges). Negative motivation has limitations because punishment may lead to ‘hostile attitude’ among the employees and there is every possibility of outburst of strikes Modern HRM s avoids the negative motivation and integrate workers for a long-lasting relationship with the management.

Strategies for team motivation in times of crisis

In times of crisis, team motivation needs to be at the top of every managers list..When everything seems to be going wrong, with the right words and attitude, the manager will be able to guide and encourage his or her team to persevere and deliver superior business results. According to the accepted motivation theories and the experience in doing business, it is suggestec that, during challenging times, every manager should use the folowing strategies, in order to become a leader that all the employees will folow:

1. Prioritizing the team's safety over anything else.

The employees should be informed that their safety comes before any other consideration. In this way, the manager will reduce their fears of having to choose between their safety and work, reinforce that they are an important part of the team, and use team motivation to communicate why their safety comes first.

2. Open communication about the crisis.

Being silent about a crisis as a leader is a wrong solution. The leader must talk about the crisis with the employees and acknowledge that the situation is difficult and that a lot of things can go wrong, but also to share his/her thoughts on potential solutions and opportunities. This is a way to give the team motivation to keep going and set the environment for a high work performance despite the crisis.

3. Becoming the person the employees can bring all their concerns to

The best leaders show care about their teams, especially during crisis. It can be done in various ways: setting up an anonymous email that they can send their questions to, placing a suggestions box in the office, and encourage the team to ask you any questions they might have. By making himself or herself accessible to his or her team, the leader is showing them that he or she is on their side and gains their trust and devotion.

4. Employee engagement for team motivation

Engaged employees are more enthusiastic and positive about their work, and they try to contribute by sharing ideas, and solutions, so it will be much easier to go through the crisis together.

5. Becoming a leader of leaders

The leaders have to make a lot of decisions each day, and in uncertain times, the pressure is much greater. A useful strategy in order to share the burden, is training the team to make decisions on the go, by equipping the employees with the adequate tools and resources, training them on ethical decision making, and trusting they can come up with the right solutions.

6. Dealing in hope rather than despair

During crisis, every organization is like a ship at the edge of a whirlpool. It is essential not to allow the fear to take over. By being encouraging, the leader can build hope and help the employees trust him or her.

7. Often checking on the team

As more people work from home due to COVID-19 pandemics, many businesses are still experiencing communication challenges. Checking-in with the employees often and making resources available to those who are struggling mentally, physically, or emotionally is very important. This contributes to building relationships with the team members, which when the crisis is over, will benefit the company even more.

8. Leading by example

There is no greater team motivation than having a leader they are inspired to follow. The leader can accomplish this by being someone who shows up, who shares, who cares, and who positively contributes no matter the situation. This strategy works particularly well in combination with the previous ones, because when people feel safe, taken care of, and valued, they will understand that their leader hasn't given up on them or the business.

9. Remembering that every crisis ends

No matter how difficult it may seem, every crisis ends eventually, so every leader should set up systems and procedures that will see get the team through the difficult times and into better times.

10. Learning from other leaders

One of the most effective problem-solving techniques is to learn and implement best practices from other business owners and entrepreneurs, because many of them have gone through challenges and crises before.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The force of motivation lies within the mind and the skill of motivating the people is the life blood of an organization. Motivation contributes to high levels of employees' satisfaction and loyalty, and leads to increased productivity. Inspiring other people is a challenging process in normal times, but during times of crisis, motivation is even more difficult. However, in times of crisis, no matter what challenges and issues the leaders are facing, team motivation needs to be the top priority of their list. With a positive approach and attitude, and by using the right strategies, the leader will be able to guide and encourage the team, which ensures the company's further development.

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