Motivating employees in the global context and managing groups across cultures

Meaning of Motivation

Motivation is the activation or energization of goal-oriented behavior. Motivation may be intrinsic or extrinsic. The term is generally used for humans but, theoretically, it can also be used to describe the causes for animal behavior as well. This article refers to human motivation. According to various theories, motivation may be rooted in the basic need to minimize physical pain and maximize pleasure, or it may include specific needs such as eating and resting, or a desired object, hobby, goal, state of being, ideal, or it may be attributed to less-apparent reasons such as altruism, morality, or avoiding mortality.

Factors Influencing Motivation

Keeping employees motivated is the biggest challenge for companies for ensuring that they give a high productive output at work and help in achieving company goals. A positive motivation amongst employees helps drive the business positively & enhances creativity. On the other hand, a demotivated employee will not contribute efficiently and slowdown progress at workplace. The

key elements & top factors which influence motivation amongst employees in business or people in general are as follows:

1. Salary: Monetary compensation & benefits like gross salary, perks, performance bonuses etc are the biggest motivation factors. The better the salary and monetary benefits, the higher is the motivation level & passion of a person towards a job.

2. Recognition: Rewards, recognition, accolades etc are important for ensuring high motivation levels for an employee. If the hard work of an individual is appreciated, it keeps them motivated to perform better.

3. Work Ethics: Ethical working environment, honesty etc are important factors for the motivation levels for any individual. Good work ethics in a company helps keep employees motivated at work place.

4. Transparency with Leadership: The leadership in an organization helps in employee motivation if there are transparent discussion and flatter hierarchies. The senior management has to ensure that all subordinates are happy, focused & motivated.

5. Culture at Work: A good, vibrant, positive culture at workplace is always an important factor of motivation. People from different backgrounds, religions, countries etc working together helps create a social bond at workplace.

6. Learning and Development: Another factor influencing motivation is the training and development opportunities that a person gets. L&D helps individuals develop more skills and have better opportunities in their professional career.

7. Work Life Balance: Having a good quality of work life (QWL) helps in the motivation of people. A good work life balance ensures that a person can give quality time to both office work as well as family.

8. Career Growth Opportunities: Career development opportunities have a positive influence on the motivation of any person. If a person knows their future & career path is secure, they tend to work with more passion.

9. Health Benefits: Health benefits, insurance & other incentives act as a source of motivation for people. If the medical bills, hospitalization charges etc are taken care of by the company, it helps build a strong trust.

10. Communication: A positive & transparent communication between managers and subordinates gives a sense of belonging and adds to the employee's motivation. Discussion related to work as well as personal life help make a friendly bond at workplace.

There are not finite factors influencing motivation. These keep on changing depending upon the type of environment, job responsibility, experience in life etc. Hygiene Factors of motivation are also given by the Hygiene Theory.

Ways to energize employees with varying cultural attitudes and business practices

The most important things managers can do to develop and maintain motivated, energized employees regardless of their culture are basically good management practices. According to my research, employees around the world value:

1. **Support and Involvement—** well you provide information employees need to do their jobs, how well you support your employees when they make mistakes, how well you involve employees when making decisions, and if you ask your employees for their opinions and ideas create the foundation for this item. Employees want more than ever to know how they are doing in their jobs and how the company is doing in its business. Involving employees is both respectful and practical: you increase their commitment and ease in completing the work and implementing changes and new ideas.

2. **Autonomy and Authority—** employee's value being given room to do their work as they best see fit. Do you allow employees to decide how best to do their work, give them increased job autonomy and authority, allow them to pursue their ideas or give them a choice of assignments, when possible? These elements all allow autonomy and authority to flourish— provide a powerful motivation to employees.

3. **Flexible Working Hours—** is the new currency for today's employees, who expect work to be an integrated part of their lives— their entire lives. Given that 83% of employees report wanting more time with their families (according to Monster.com), one way to help accommodate this desire is through greater flexibility of the hours employees work. With technology today, work is increasingly becoming a state of mind rather than a place to be. Consider allowing top performers to leave work early when necessary, have flexible working hours, earn time off from work and grant them "comp time" for extra hours worked.

4. **Learning and Development—** employee development is self-development, learned on-the-job from new opportunities and chances to gain new skills and experience. Do you support and encourage employees to learn new skills, discuss career options and career paths in the organization with them, allow them to participate in learning activities, and discuss what they've learned after completed projects and assignments?

5. **Manager Availability and Time—** you available to address employees questions and concerns, take time to get to know them and listen to their non-job issues? Being accessable to employees— getting back to them promptly at times when you are not— critical for building lasting relationships with your employees. Remember, you can't have an open door policy with a closed mind.

In addition to being relatively simple to do, they each have the benefit of having little or no cost, but rather are a function of how employees are treated on a daily basis.

Job Enrichment Model

In the US, the job enrichment approach advocated by Hack man and Oldham focused on enhancing the intrinsic motivation of jobs by including the following five characteristics in job design:

- **Skill variety**—a variety of different activities and skills required to successfully complete a task or perform a role relieves boredom and enhances self-competence.

- **Task identity**–performing a task from start to finish enables workers to identify a tangible product or service, which supports a sense of personal achievement.

- **Task significance**–jobs that have a positive impact on the lives of others, either internal or external to the organization, enhance the meaningfulness of one's work.

- **Autonomy**–control or discretion over work, such as what methods or tools to use and scheduling of work, fosters a sense of personal responsibility for outcomes.

- **Feedback**—the receipt of timely and clear information about their performance enables employees to monitor, evaluates and regulates their efforts towards improvement.

Hack man and Oldham's model was robustly supported by empirical research in the US, where job enrichment provided employees with an opportunity to achieve individual success and distinctiveness while exercising personal control, congruent with cultural values of high individualism and low power distance.

Socio-technical Model

In Northern Europe, the socio-technical model approached job design differently to job enrichment programs in the US, integrating the technical and social aspects of the workplace. Central to the socio- techno approach was the autonomous work group. Work groups were responsible for the planning, scheduling and task allocation for completion of whole sub-systems of a car like the brakes, electronics, etc.

A group-level focus is congruent with Northern European collectivist values. When work is organized in groups, workers with an interdependent self-concept have greater opportunity for meeting their needs for close interpersonal relationships and group belonging. The best-known examples of the socio-technical approach were at Volvo plants in Sweden. Sweden ranks highest for societal level collectivism in Western Europe.

Work-group autonomy is also congruent with the low power distance orientation of Northern Europe. Low power distance cultures exhibit a preference for employee empowerment and participation in decision-making, whereas high power distance cultures have an emotional need for tight supervision of worker activities by management.