Research Article

ANALYSIS OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES IN ORGANIZATIONS

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Employee empowerment deals with equipping employees with the necessary abilities to undertake their work effectively and efficiently. Empowerment incorporates development and growth opportunities, which empower employees while stimulating their motivation. This paper indicates that empowerment involves ; Delegating authority from positions with authority to lower positions; increasing accountability at lower levels; Developing problem- solving capabilities at lower levels; Assisting employees to take charge of their careers and destinies; and Helping people to realise their full potential. The paper argues that employees are able to improve their performance because empowerment has a motivating effect. Organisations therefore have come to realize that employee empowerment has a direct effect on the employee motivation. This study will discuss two methods of empowering employees namely: Training and development; employee career development and providing financial credit for material empowerment. The study will also explore the relationship between empowerment and motivation. The paper observes that training and development and career development programmes impact positively on the motivation of employees. A motivated workforce is a great asset to the organisation because motivated employees work better, loyal, committed and dedicated to the organisation. Besides motivation, training employees enables them to bridge the gap between the current performance and their full potential. It concludes by stating that empowering employees is indeed a sound investment because the returns to the organisation are remarkable.

INTRODUCTION

Employee empowerment deals with equipping employees with the necessary abilities to undertake their work effectively and efficiently. Empowerment incorporates development and growth opportunities, which empower employees while stimulating their motivation. According to Schultz (2003, p. 147) empowerment of employees involves the following:

- Delegating authority from positions with authority to lower positions;
- Increasing accountability at lower levels;
- Developing problem- solving capabilities at lower levels;
- Assisting employees to take charge of their careers and destinies; and
- Helping people to realise their full potential.

Munroe-Faure and Munroe-Faure (1996 p. 165) state that empowerment of employees involves providing the following:

- Knowledge and training to employees to ensure that they understand the organisation and their role in it so that they have ability and confidence to know how to improve performance;
- Information to enable them to make rational decisions and understand the impact of those decisions on others and the company performance;
- Authority and responsibility to make decisions which affect the performance of activities under their control; and
- Share of rewards from improved performance. If the employees do not benefit from the improved performance, they may not be motivated to put extra effort to sustain the improved status.

Schultz (2003, p. 148) indicates that empowerment is usually viewed as a form of employee involvement, which is designed and intended to generate employee commitment and enhance employee contribution to the organisation. The employees are able to improve their performance because empowerment has a

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motivating effect. Organisations therefore have come to realize that employee empowerment has a direct effect on the employee motivation. This study will discuss two methods of empowering employees namely: Training and development; employee career development and providing financial credit for material empowerment. The study will also explore the relationship between empowerment and motivation.

Training and Development

Buckley and Cample (1990, p. 13) define training as: "a planned and systematic effort to modify or develop knowledge/skills/ attitudes through a learning experience, to achieve effective performance in an activity or range of activities. Its purpose in the work place situation is to enable an individual to acquire abilities in order that he or she can adequately perform a given job".

Buckey and Cample further state that part of the benefits of training is that it motivates employees because they are able to effectively undertake their work. They also describe employee development as the general enhancement and growth of an individual's skills and abilities through conscious and unconscious learning. Staff development therefore ensures that employees in the organisation have the knowledge, skills and competency required to carry out work effectively. If the employees can effectively perform their designated roles it follows that the organization will be able to achieve its set objectives.

Beardwell and Holden (1994, p. 337) indicate that the emphasis on training in recent years has led to many organisations investing substantial resources in employee training and development. The need for training has been precipitated by technological developments and organisational change and the realisation that success relies on the skills and abilities of the employees. This has also been underscored by the rise in human resource management with its emphasis on the importance of people and the skills they possess in enhancing organisational efficiency. Beardwell and Holden add that such human resource concepts as "commitment to the company" and the growth in "quality movements" have led senior management teams to realise the increased importance of training employees and developing a system of lifelong learning. Bagraim (2003, p. 81) notes that training needs are identified through gaps in skills and knowledge between current and desired performance. Development needs are based on gaps between the current performance and the performance required in future positions.

It is important to note that availability of training and development opportunities is in itself a motivating factor for employees in the organisation. Graham and Bennett (1998, p. 283) maintain that the benefits of training and development include greater job satisfaction on the part of employees which enhances motivation. The acquisition of new skills and knowledge and attitude through training enables the employee to perform more effectively. The positive feedback on good performance as a result of training, motivates employees to work even better. According to Carrel, Elbert, Hatfield, Grobler, Marx and Van der Schyf (1998, p. 311), training and development satisfies personal growth needs and gives employees a sense of achivement and motivation to face new challenges on the jobs. Meyer (2003, p. 49) argues that there is

a direct corelation between ability and motivation. He adds that empirical research has revealed that the higher the level of skills, the greater the level of motivation, and vice versa. According to Naina's (2002, p. 101) empirical research study undertaken to investigate the effects of leadership training on junior management's morale in three organisations within Buffalo City in South Africa, training contribute to the personal growth and self-esteem of the employees. According to the study, the knowledge gained during training increases employee self-confidence, interpersonal communication and their motivation to work. The study established that there was a direct correlation between training and motivation and recommends that organisations should consider the benefits of providing training as it enhances employee satisfaction, thereby increasing performance and success in the organisation.

Why do we require motivated employees?. The answer is for the survival of the organisation. In the increasingly competitive, rapidly changing world of business, a motivated workforce is a great asset. Motivated employees are more productive, committed and loyal to the organization. The modern business approach which focuses on customer care, has made the concept of motivation even more appealing to organisations. Business success today rests on quick action, quality service to the customer and practical innovations which can only be achieved through motivated and committed employees. In an emprical survey study by Chepkilot (2005, p. 239) which sort to determine to what extent the public service managers in Kenya agreed or disagreed that providing training and development opportunities to employee's would be an effective motivation strategy, ranked among the highest endorsed strategy at 98.9 per cent in the study. The results indicated the managers in the public service in Kenya consider training and development as an important factor in the organisation life.

Weightman (1999, pp. 129-136) gives a number of training and development approaches for developing employee's competencies and self-development. These include:

- *Acting up:* This involves doing a more senior job temporarily to cover for absence or vacancy following maternity leave, promotion, study leave, or turnover. Individuals in this case broaden their experience and skills in positions of greater responsibility;
- *Action learning:* This is an organised learning system, which involves linking a real structured task and action within the learning process using action-learning tests. Action-learning sets up groups of people who discuss the problems associated with the task using an identified facilitator;
- *Audio- visual presentations:* This learning method is similar to lectures in terms of what they can achieve. However, video has an advantage over lectures in that it can be stopped and started as required and can be taken home for study at ones leisure. Audio-visual presentation includes: slides, films, video and power point;
- *Case studies:* This involves the presentation of a case study for analysis and suggestions of possible solutions. The method provides for critical analysis of the problem and the exchange of ideas;

- ***Coaching:*** This approach seeks to improve the performance of an employee who is already competent. It is a one-on-one encounter set in an everyday working situation and is a continuous activity. It involves gently nudging employees to improve their performance, develop their skills and improve their self-confidence so that they can take more responsibility of their own work and development of their career. Coaching helps employees grow and improve their competencies. The coach sets challenging goals, informs the employee of the expectation and evaluates progress towards the goals. Performance is improved through feedback;

- ***Delegation:*** Delegation is not just giving people jobs to do, but involves giving people the scope, responsibility, and authority to do the jobs in their own way. It enables employees to test their ideas and develop understanding and confidence. This is often referred to as empowerment;

- ***Discussion:*** This method allows for exchange of ideas and opinions between the trainers and the trainer. This is particularly suitable for changing attitudes and finding out how knowledge is applicable;

- ***Distance learning:*** This is a learning method which is based on self-learning and utilises printed material and audio-visual which requires a lot of self-discipline. The Open University in the UK and UNISA in South Africa are the best-known examples of institution of distance learning;

- ***Job rotation:*** This involves employees doing different jobs within the organisation. Rotating jobs enables employees to broaden their experience and skills;

- ***Lectures:*** This is a talk suitable for large audience and requires careful preparation. There is however little feedback and ideally should not exceed more than 40 minutes;

- ***On the job training:*** The trainees work in a real environment with assistance from experienced workers. This enables the trainees to practice while doing the real work. Important characteristics of this method include: briefing, feedback, and support that help the trainees achieve their objectives in a structured way;

- ***Secondments:*** Involves deploying an employee to an alternative department or another organisation for a particular purpose. It is often used for professional and management development; and

- ***Mentoring:*** Perhaps the most effective form of training employees in the organisation is by mentoring.

Mentoring employees is a valuable method for inducting new employees into the organisation and motivating them as well. Greenberg and Baron (1995, p. 232) state that mentoring occurs when an experienced employee (a mentor) advises, counsels and aids the personal development of a new employee (protege). Greenberg and Baron argue that mentors not only pave the way for their protege's job successs, but also provide a source of emotional support.

Kreitner and Kinicki (1998, pp. 187-190) note that some organisations assign new employees with a buddy who can answer questions and help the newcomer learn the ropes. Mentoring involves providing employees with direction, advice and guidance. It also involves effective listening, furnishing employees with successful role models, showing employees how to complete difficult tasks and helping them maintain high self-efficacy and self-esteem. Mentoring creates positive feelings among employees towards the organisation because they see that people really care for them as individuals and value their contribution to the organisation. Kreitner and Kinicki add that organisations build stronger bonds within by organising social activities such as picnics and sporting events to encourage new workers to get to know their peers (Kreitner and Kinicki, 1998, pp. 187-190).

Prinsloo (2001, p. 31) adds that some of the benefits of mentoring are that it provides employees with higher levels of skill and knowledge and elevates the quality of work life. Berry (2003, p. 288) developed an integrated nine-phase organisational mentoring model to facilitate achievement of the objectives of the Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998) of the Republic of South Africa. The model was developed based an empirical study involving local and international automotive manufacturers and suppliers in the Nelson Mandela Metropole, Buffalo City Metropole and surrounding areas within the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The Berry model (2003, p. 288) identifies the following nine phases for effective mentoring in the organisation:

- Phase 1 defines programme objectives;
- Phase 2 identifies management development needs;
- Phase 3 selects mentors and mentees;
- Phase 4 conducts orientation and training sessions;
- Phase 5 matches mentors with mentees;
- Phase 6 establishes development plans;
- Phase 7 provides feedback and evaluates relationship;
- Phase 8 dissolves the mentoring relationship; and
- Phase 9 evaluates the mentoring programme.

Berry's mentoring model (2003, p. 290) indicates competencies for mentors and mentees. The competencies for a mentor are:

- High credibility;
- Good communication skills;
- Sound leadership skills;
- Ability to create a climate in which mentees feel confident to experiment with different approaches to doing things;
- Good insight into behaviour patterns;
- Strong interest in developing others;
- Ability to assist mentees in setting goals;
- Commitment to their own learning; and
- Willingness to serve as mentors.

The competencies for a mentee are:

- Sound interpersonal skills;
- A track record of success;
- Demonstrated initiative in previous jobs;
- Ambitious;
- Ability to identify and solve problems;
- Willingness to accept greater responsibility;
- Receptive to feedback and coaching;
- Potential to perform at one or more levels above their current positions;
- Realisation of responsibility for their own career advancement and growth; and

- Ambition to channel abilities into career advancement.

An effective mentoring programme will empower and stimulate employee motivation in the organisation.

Weightman (1999, pp. 129-136) suggests that there is a strong need for organisations to encourage employees to consider training and development as a lifelong commitment to enable them to cope with the rising speed of change in the work place and the world in general. In addition training and employees with the right attitudes, knowledge and skills, enabling employees to perform better. Positive feedback on good performance gives employees the motivation to perform even better.

Career Development

The term career development in the organisation involves two important concepts: career planning and career management. Career planning is the process through which employees identify and implement their plans and options to attain career goals, whereas career management is the process through which organisations select, assess, assign, and develop employees to provide a pool of qualified people to meet present and future needs. Career management is about succession management. Career development programmes are systematically designed programmes to assist individuals in managing careers while helping organisations meet their goals.

Armstrong (1999, p. 551-552) states that career planning shapes the progression of individuals within an organisation in accordance with assessment of organisational needs and performance, and the potential and preference of the individual employee. He explains that career development programmes are part of the management succession planning to ensure that the organisation has the managers it requires to meet future organisation needs. Armstrong adds that career programmes give individuals the potential guidance and encouragement they need to achieve a successful career within the organisation. Dessler (1994) notes that organisations should be able to assist employees to achieve their full potential and fulfill their dream. He argues that firms that do not cater for the above need, lose their best employees, or drift along with increasingly bitter, unhappy and uncommitted ones. Dessler gives examples of companies such as Delta, Saturn and Federal Express in the United States of America, which provided opportunties for employees to realise their potential and use all their skills and gifts at work. As a result of the above programmes, the companies realised tremendous employee performance levels and subsequent organisational growth and expansion.

Dladla (2001) p. 44) asserts that career management programmes benefit the organisation because they increase the probability that the right people will be available at the right time and place to meet the organisation's staffing requirements. They also ensure that the demands of affirmative action and employment equity can be addressed, which in turn enhances motivation, sense of commitment and loyalty. Beardwell and Holden (1994, p. 338) indicate that British Airways, Reed Employment and W.H. Smith of the United kingdom are some of the companies which have put in place career paths for their secretaries. Minor (1986, pp. 205-206) cited by Milkovich and Boudreau (1997, p. 361) provide models for career planning and career management in Tables 1 and 2 respectively.

Table 1 Integrative career planning table

Career Planning Activities
Employee's responsibilities
- Self-assessment abilities, interest, and values;   - Analyse career options;   - Decide on development objectives and needs;   - Communicate development preferences to manager;   - Map out mutually agreeable action plans with the manager; and   - Pursue agreed-upon action plan.
Manager's responsibilities
- Act as catalysts: sensitise employee on the development planning process;   - Assess realism of employees expressed objectives and perceived development needs;   - Counsel employees and develop a mutually agreeable plan; and   - Follow up and update employee's plans appropriately.
Organisation's responsibilities
- Provide a career-planning model, resources, counselling, and information needed for individual career planning;   - Provide training in career development planning to managers and employees, and career counselling to managers; and   - Provide skills training programmes and on-the-job development experience opportunities.

Source: Minor (1986, pp. 205-206) cited by Milkovich and Boudreau (1997, p. 361)

Table 2 Integrative career management table

Career Management Activities
Employee's responsibilities
Provide accurate information to management as required on skills, work experience, interest and career aspirations;
Manager's responsibilities
- Validate information provided by the employee;   - Provide information about vacant job positions; and   - Use all information provided by the process to: (a) identify all viable candidates for a vacant position and make selection; and (b) identify career development opportunities (job openings, training programmes, rotation assignments) for employees and place them accordingly;
Organisation's responsibilities
- Provide information system and process to accommodate management's decision-making needs;   - Organise and update all information; and   - Ensure effective usage of information by (a) designing convenient methods for collecting, analysing, interpreting, and using the information; and (b) monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the process

Source: Minor (1986, pp. 205-206) cited by Milkovich and Boudreau (1997, p. 361)

Tables 1 and 2 indicate the responsibilities for the individual employee, the manager and the organisation in relation to the employee's career planning (Table 1) and the career management programmes in the organisation (Table 2). Employee career development programmes enhance employee motivation because the career plans provide the basis for a promising, stable and successful future career in the organisation. According to a motivational survey study by Chepkilot (2005, p. 239) providing career development programmes was highly endorsed by respondent at 95.5 per cent. The results indicate that the respondents strongly agreed that providing career development programmes was an effective strategy of motivating employees. Career development programmes is an important management strategy because it enables the organisation to always be in a position to meet its human resources requirements in the present and future. This management approach has a motivating effect on employees because employees can see that they will be able to grow within the organisation and be promoted to positions that they desire to be, in the future. The employees can clearly project their plans and dreams when the organisation adopts

career programmes as part of its strategic plan and therefore, provides employees with a sense of future security in the organisation. This assurance impacts positively on the motivation of employees, their performance, and the success of the organisation.

CONCLUSION

It can be clearly observed that the training and development and career development programmes impact positively on the motivation of employees. A motivated workforce is a great asset to the organisation because motivated employees work better, loyal, committed and dedicated to the organisation. Besides motivation, training employees enables them to bridge the gap between the current performance and their full potential. We can conclude that empowering employees is indeed a sound investment because the returns to the organisation are remarkable.

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