

NEW NORMAL MODUS OPERANDI TO ELEVATE EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION IN COVID ERA

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ABSTRACT

The Fear of COVID 19 has had vast impact on all businesses across the globe. With the continuous spike in number of cases and death toll every day, there has been an environment of stress and anxiety all over the world. Employees are paranoid and their motivation is spiralling down which affects their productivity. To deal with this situation and ease the difficulties and challenges in response to Covid 19, this paper consolidates several strategies that can be used to upscale the motivation of employees in this era. The researcher has undergone through various articles, blogs, and research papers and has explored a list of strategies that can be useful to any organisation if implemented. The findings of the study suggest that providing financial assistance to the employees, prioritising the wellbeing of employees, developing sense of belongingness among the employees, reorienting activities, investing in employee development, encouraging teamwork and collaboration, giving employees the freedom and authority to make decisions, recognising and rewarding employees are some of the strategies that help in boosting up the motivation of employees.

KEYWORDS: *Environment of Stress and Anxiety, Investing in Employee Development, Motivation of Employees*

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INTRODUCTION

The unprecedented situation of pandemic has left everyone in the formidable situation of crisis where every single man no matter hailing from which corner of the world is struggling with impact that Covid 19 has imprinted on their lives. There would hardly be any business that has not been impacted by the grim hit of the pandemic. The current situation fosters several challenges for the business of all kinds ranging from small business to big Multi-National companies across the world. With the spiking cases and rapid spread of Covid 19, every business is under high pressure on how to secure the roots and sustainability of the business, how to manage the operations and how to manage the workforce successfully.

Managing workforce successfully in this uncertain time has been one of the biggest challenges that every business is facing. Getting things done while taking care of safety of lives of its people has been an area of concern throughout this period. As per the need of time, the world is moving towards the digitisation more rapidly and practices of work from home are becoming more prevalent keeping in mind the safety of its employees. This scenario has completely transformed the way we deal with the things, with employees and with clients.

In this changed scenario where sudden changes in the lifestyle, work practices along with escalating tension has given rise to stress, anxiety and discomfort among employees. This certainly calls for several healing factors to neutralise or balance the discomfort and stress among the employees and motivate them to carry their work efficiently. This Research paper focuses on the several strategies used by the organisations to keep their employees motivated.

The Researcher went through several articles, blogs and the secondary data available and it Prominently highlighted the strategies used by the several companies in the interest of employees. The companies like Amazon, Wal-Mart, Paytm who stood with their employees in this difficult time and extended their hand of support in various forms.

- The CEO of **Marriot** Mr. Arne Sorenson announced that he would not take remuneration for the year 2020, instead dividing the sum among his employees.
- In this chain, the founder of **Paytm** Mr Vijay Shekhar Sharma also announced that he would not be taking salary for two months and that the money would be distributed to employees in the form of financial support.
- The **PepsiCo** promised to pay full remuneration to the employees who are in quarantine and also additional benefits to those who sell the company's products during the pandemic.
- **Wal-Mart** even hired around 150,000 new employees to work in different departments and also extended bonuses to the employees.
- In the period of uncertainty, **Amazon's** founder announced approximately 100,000 new jobs and gave a chance to employees laid off from clubs and restaurants until they are able to return to work. He also promised to pay higher wages to workers who work on a timely basis, particularly for completing orders and delivering services.
- Mr. Mukesh Ambani, CEO of **Reliance Industries**, announced that employees earning less than Rs.30,000 per month will receive a double payment of salary in a month to help them retain their cash balances. Facebook also offered a payout of \$1000 to staff as a benefit, which they can use how they see suitable during this difficult time.
- Other organisations from the Banking sector, FMCG etc. also extended their support to employees within their capacity.

Besides providing financial assistance to their employees, companies are also taking efforts to check the wellness of the employees. The Organisations like ITC hotels, Amway have been assuring the wellbeing of their employees in different ways.

- The **Amway** constituted committees with the objective of chalking out strategies with respect to the health of the employees and extending them help through conducting webinars on creating awareness about how to cope up with the spiralling tension in this unprecedented time of crisis and also announced mediclaim benefit for those affected by the virus.

ITC has been concerned about the health of employees and taking update on the wellbeing of them by connecting through employees over calls and asking about their health and the health of family members of the employees. Almost 10 employees are reached out every day by HR manager and approximately 1200 have been provided with necessary support.

Companies have also been utilising this period for the development and polishing the skills of employees through various online platforms in the form of virtual classes and paving a way for them to acquire and widen their skill set in various forms.

- **MC Donald** India has been offering online learning modules, creative knowledge sharing sessions, quiz sessions, master classes to ensure the continuous and uninterrupted growth of employees.
- **Amway** has been conducting online webinars to impart new learning skills to its employees.
- Hindustan **COCA COLA** has been organising learning programmes for employees and their family members concerned with their physical as well as mental health.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

There has been traditional ways of motivating employees and getting things done from them but the sudden changes in lifestyles, working styles as per the need of time, calls for concentrated attention towards the new plan of action to keep employees motivated. The traditional ways of motivating employees were limited to financial incentives, rewards and recognition, setting smaller goals, goals clarity, employees participation in decision making of their concerned areas etc. but since in this changing time employees are not only feeling insecure financially, but their lives are at stake and this has taken a toll on the motivation level of employees. So organisations have been working hard to perform their responsibilities towards their employees, keeping the safety of employees as priority and finding a way out to stimulate them working with the same uninterrupted motivation. This paper highlights several strategies used by the organisations for the same. The study can be helpful to the organisations in gaining the understanding of new ways of securing trust of employees and motivating them in this time of pandemic.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Exploratory method of Research has been used to know about the several strategies used by the employers of the organisation for motivating their employees and keep them going. The researcher has undergone through various sources of secondary data in the form of articles, blogs, books and research papers to explore as well as consolidate all those motivational strategies being used.

STRATEGIES AMIDST COVID 19

Providing Financial Assistance to Employees

This Pandemic has put people, their families, and their businesses in quandary in the form of unprecedented pressure over them in many ways. Where employees are seeking for help from their employers, employers are looking for the ways to extend their support in this period of crisis. Employers have been giving paid time off and providing additional funds that too tax free assistance and also making easy access of funds. Even a few of the organisations like Reliance have been giving double the salary to its employees to ensure a free flow of funds in this unprecedented time. This direct has an impact on the motivation level of employees.

Paying Attention Towards Safety and Wellbeing of the Employees

One of the best practices that have direct impact on employee's morale is paying attention to the employees concerns. It has a direct reaction on the growth of business. This empathetic behaviour and compassionate behaviour of employer towards their employees instils a sense of strength and motivates them to dive back in the work with a feeling of safety. It's very important

for the employees to feel safe while they are at work. They can't work confidently unless they feel safe. Employers are required to assure that the working practices are in alliance with the state guidelines issued in context to the safety of people. If any organisation is operating on site in this period of pandemic then it becomes imperative for the employers to check the necessary precautions or facilities made available for the employees like presence of sanitizers, masks, gloves etc. Also the organisation should discuss the health related policies and any changes made to it with the employees.

The use of various online platforms to host webinars or online workshops on subjects concerned with spreading awareness on how to bring a shift in lifestyles, awareness regarding taking necessary precautions and care, also on medical benefits, mediclaims available for the affected employees. The company in favour of wellbeing of its employees can organise several workshops via webinar on subjects like dealing with stress and raising their immunities. A team of people can also be delegated the entire task of helping employees like sorting questions related to spread of virus, tracking people who are in contaminated zones or helping them if needed.

Developing a Sense of Belongingness among the Employees

Giving employee's a sense of belongingness, where they are surrounded by insecurity, is a source of biggest strength for the employees. Communicating with employees, seeking ideas from them, providing them guidance reminds them of a support that belongs to them in this period of crisis.

Staying Connected With Employees

Staying in touch via maintaining good communication is one of the most important things that employer should look into as far as motivation of the employees is concerned. Maintaining a strong communication is the trait of a good employer. Many organisations have been giving a set of task of messaging employees to a group in the organisations. It is made sure via communication if they are doing well or not. This way of confirming about their health reflects their value and leaves a mark of empathy by making them believe that organisation cares for them. The efforts are made for making sure that more of the information is shared which help employees to cope up better. Many a time's just two positive word of the employer spoken to employee's works as wonders in relieving their half of the stress and whose direct impact is seen in the form of output or productivity of employees. In the time of maintain social distancing, taking care of the employees by maintaining social interactions via online platforms available and seeking details on the wellbeing of the employees also impacts their motivation level.

Soliciting Ideas

Employees are asked to give their valuable suggestions on how to cope up with situation. It is suggested not to pretend about clarity of all answers. Taking suggestions from the employees would reinforce their commitment and also a pool of helpful suggestions generated can be really helpful.

Providing Full Support and Guidance

Organisations, as per the need of time, are making their employees to work from home. The organisations are putting tutorials and providing assistance to employees in understanding the usage of online platforms, on making effective use of conferencing platforms, time management while maintaining poise with several responsibilities and also dealing with stress and isolation. This practice installs a sense of motivation by ensuring empathy from the employer's side.

Reorient Activities

This period of uncertainty and risk has led to many organisations to allow its employees working from home and employees have been experiencing difficulties in working from the desk away from their defined work environment at offices with all the resources available at their disposals. Now working at home desks is not as smooth and easy as they used to work and turns to be demoralising for the employees. So it is suggested to reorient the activities in the organisation and allowing employees to shift their works like cleaning their emails, desktops or go through the files. This will let the employees feel productive in this challenging time.

Invest in Development

Investment in the professional development of the employees in this time reminds of a good future with them and company. Open discussions with the staff regarding changes that can improve company's overall working, dealings and management. The use of various online platforms to host webinars or online workshops on subjects concerned with escalating the knowledge and skills of the employees related to working areas which will not only upscale the skills of the employees but also would work in favour of the organisation in future.

ENCOURAGING TEAMWORK AND COLLABORATION

Connect Through Collaboration

Involving employees in the task that requires building teams and working in the team. Hosting such activities online and seeking the collaboration of team members keeps the members bound and this is how the virtual working team created helps in keeping the employees working remotely from home competitive and ongoing as compared to an employee.

Welcome Feedback

Not everything works perfectly unless validated from employees and employers side. It is important to invite feedbacks from the employees so that they have a medium to address if anything doesn't functions smoothly. This tactic of seeking feedbacks from the employees would give employees a sense of assurance that they are being heard and their feeling would stimulate them to work with more of interest. Also it is suggested that the actions taken by the employers in response to the feedback received from the employees, should be well communicated to employees to assure them that their suggestions are taken seriously and worked upon.

Give Employees the Freedom and Authority to Make Decisions

Employees if bestowed trust, work with more motivation. In this period where people are working from home, everything cannot be monitored or controlled. They must be given liberty to do their jobs according to themselves and take their own decisions. They should be given a feeling that they are being trusted.

Recognise and Reward Good Employees

While people are working from home and juggling with responsibilities of work and home. They are taking extra efforts to work from home with minimum of resources at their disposal. This tendency of employees going extra miles and taking extra efforts in the good health of the organisation by helping colleagues and serving clients, should be given due recognition. Employees if made feel that their contribution is meaningful and it matters to the company via sharing success stories of the employees and their fruitful outcomes, then this directly boosts up the confidence of the employees and motivates them to keep up the meaningful work by pouring their contribution in it.

CONCLUSIONS

Employee motivation is one of the most important factors affecting the productivity of the organisation. The current situation of pandemic has widely affected the morale, motivation of employees and hence productivity of employees. The practise of strategies like providing financial assistance to the employees, prioritising the wellbeing of employees, developing sense of belongingness among the employees, reorienting activities, investing in employee development, encouraging teamwork and collaboration, giving employees the freedom and authority to make decisions, recognising and rewarding employees can improve the motivation of employees.

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