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AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE IMPACT OF MANAGEMENT STYLE ON EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION AT A SOUTH AFRICAN CONSULTING FIRM

Immaculate Tambudzai Esther Katsande & Lucy Chisoro

Research Scholar, Mancosa Graduate School of Business, Durban, South Africa

ABSTRACT

Employee motivation is considered the key driver of employee turnover and business success. Employee turnover, particularly voluntary employee turnover, has always been a challenge that organisations do not wish to face, because of the adverse effects it has on an organisation's growth and performance. The purpose of this research was to evaluate management styles and their impact on employee motivation and ultimately employee turnover at, a consulting firm in South Africa. The research used a qualitative research methodology approach. The total population of 60 employees was narrowed down to a sample size of 10 participants. The study revealed that the major reasons for employee demonization were lack of respect, non-flexible working hours, lack of communication between management and employees, lack of training programmes, no fringe benefits and flawed human resources policies. These factors ultimately led to the high employee turnover rate at the company. The study recommended that the management needs to reassess their management style and look at the causes of the employee demonization and consider employee needs such as fringe benefits, training programmes and assistance with study loans. The human resources policies need to be re-examined and managers should receive training on how to implement current motivation theories relevant in today's world. It was therefore apparent that management style had a huge influence on employee motivation at the company.

KEYWORDS: *Employee Motivation, Management Styles, Human Resource Policies, Staff Turnover*

INTRODUCTION

One of the biggest challenges that any organisation may face is that of getting people to perform effectively and produce the standards required by the consulting firm. It remains the responsibility of management to ensure that employees are well equipped and well-motivated in order to carry out tasks at hand. The company is facing a high staff turnover rate and according to the management, in the last six months at least one employee has left the organisation in each and every month. A total of nine employees have left the organisation during the period September 2016 to March 2017. The study intends to determine if indeed there is a direct link between employee performance and employee motivation, and whether this can be attributed to management's execution of their duties.

Background to the Problem

The consulting firm provides forensic accounting, fraud prevention and litigation support services. According to staff recruitment documentation acquired from the Human Resources Department, the number of staff has increased in the last two years. However, the number of those resigning has also increased, particularly between 2015 and 2017. This has become a major concern to management as it seems there is an underlying factor. Some exit interview documents provided by the Human Resources Department list the management style and inequalities as the reasons for leaving the organisation. According to the Human Resources Manager, the majority of employees receive market-related salaries as per the Auditor General tariffs that the company uses as a guideline.

According to Evans (2014), holding on to key staff need not be a problem and the reason for people leaving is rarely because of better jobs or bigger salaries. The management is therefore of the view that salaries cannot be the reason for the high turnover rate. Management has suggested that the size of the organisation is the reason why their employees are leaving and moving over to bigger corporate in the same industry. There are a number of variables both internal and external that demotivate employees, but this research is going to focus on employee motivation and retention and management. Maamari and Majdalani (2017) assert that management style has a bearing on employees' feelings. Therefore, the size of the firm should not be an issue. The management at the company commits to remunerating employees at market-related salaries and provides tools of work such as laptops and company cars to carry out investigations. Yet despite all this, employee motivation seems to be a major concern.

Problem Statement

During the past three years of organisational transformation at the company, there has been a high staff turnover and staff morale has been described by the employees as having reached "an all-time low". Most of the employees are blaming the situation on the management style that is executed by the company. Management style has an effect on employees' feelings as well as their perception of the organisational climate. According to the management, groups and factions are also starting to emerge, indicating cracks within the company. Employees do at times fake sickness and this is something that employers should be aware of.

Research Questions

Based upon the research objectives the study considered the following questions:

- How is management responsible for employee motivation?

- What is the management style at the company?

- What are the perceptions of employees on the influence of management style on staff turnover?

- What recommendations can be made for the organisation to implement an effective staff retention and system for business survival?

Significance of the Study

This research can become a useful point of reference by other consulting firms, with the permission of the organisation under study. Effective employee retention programmes and employee motivation will enable the organisation to have a competitive edge over its competitors. Motivated employees have the capacity to produce better

quality services and/or products, through a system that builds relationships and enhances organisational culture. The research study will also contribute in the future to academic knowledge for students who investigate similar research. This study is significant as it not only impacts the company, but other stakeholders as well. Stakeholders include employees and their families, the management team, clients, competitors, and even the government.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Motivation is any catalyst that controls and guides the way humans behave. Previous literature has shown that employee turnover is linked to employee motivation and the employees' willingness to remain in an organisation. Staff retention and staff turnover therefore became the concern of the organisation under study. Glen (2017) states that many people quickly assume that being a good leader means you're a good manager and vice versa. The two concepts are actually quite distinct and understanding that distinction can help one understand what it means to be good at either. Glen (2017) goes on to distinguish leadership and management by commented that from a broad perspective, management is on a smaller scale and more focused on details than leadership. The leader sets the vision and the broad plan; the manager executes it and does what is needed to achieve that plan. Leadership sets the tone of an organisation, the broad objectives, and long-term goals, and then managers execute the plan to attain them. Leadership is not necessarily getting caught up in all the details but rather setting the plan and inspiring people to follow them. This study will use the concepts of management and leadership interchangeably as in the case the management comprises the leaders of the organisation. Good leaders are not necessarily good managers. Few people excel at both. Those who do are overwhelmingly successful in achieving their goals.

Leadership Styles

Leadership styles can also be summarily distinguished as democratic, *laissez-faire* and autocratic:

Autocratic Leadership

Autocratic leadership is characterised by individual control over all decisions and little input from group members. Autocratic leaders typically make choices based on their ideas and judgements and rarely accept advice from followers.

Democratic Leadership

Democratic leadership is a type of leadership style in which members of the group take a more participative role in the decision-making process (Cherry, 2016).

Laissez-Faire Leadership

Laissez-faire style involves managers setting objectives and employees being given the freedom to achieve those objectives by using methods of their choice (Rehman, Chisoro & Karodia, 2014:6).

Transformational Leadership

Girma (2016:37) says that despite the various styles of leadership that have been described, the most extensively studied are the transactional and transformational ones. Transformational leadership is associated with a lot of variables such as the effect of leadership on organisational culture, the role of leadership skills on the people motivation and personality traits.

Types of Management

Level One: Top management. It assumes overall responsibility for the organisation (Rehman et al., 2014:8). This level consists of strategic decision makers such as the board of directors, chairman, chief executive officer or managing director, chief financial officer and chief operations officer. The top management devotes time to planning and coordinating functions and is the ultimate source of authority. Overall goals and strategy are determined by them

Level Two: Middle management. It assumes responsibility for a particular division or department of the organisation, and is responsible for the efficient utilisation of resources within a particular department (Rehman et al., 2014:8).

Level Three: This level consists of supervisors, superintendent, foreman, sub-department executives, and clerks. Managers of this group actually carry on the work or perform the activities according to the plans of top and middle-level management. They are also responsible for maintaining discipline among the workers (Chand, 2013).

Relationship between Leadership and Training

Training extends back to the beginning of the 20th century; (Kozlowski, Kraiger, Salas & Teachout, 2014). Continuous learning and skills development are today's trend of development in modern organisations (Salas, Tannenbaum, Kraiger, & Smith-Jentsch, 2012:52). It is, therefore important to have a well-designated training program that will have an impact. Training is important for organisations to ensure their employees learn and develop continuously. Seong (2015:32) cited that training and development programmes allow a company to be adaptive, competitive, excellent, innovative, productive, secure, improving service and achieving goals. The author further on goes on to say an organisation believes investment in training creates a skilled workforce which represents a competitive advantage. Training not only benefits the organisation but the employee as well.

Leadership as a Supervisory Role

Hough (2006:289) believes that the extent of the success of an organisation is dependent on the leadership ability reflected in the organisation. He mentions the four components of leadership as personal, interpersonal, managerial and organisational. Research shows that employee turnover is greatly affected by supervisors. It would seem that the relationship between subordinate and manager could significantly determine the length of time that employees choose to stay and work in an organisation. Ethics and conduct of supervisors / managers have a bearing on the perceptions of the employee and their desire to stay employed in the organisation.

Employee Turnover Intention

Hussain and Asif (2012:11) cite turnover intention as a mental decision prevailing between an individual's approach with reference to a job to continue or leave the job. He further cites that turnover intentions are the instant connection to turnover behaviour. Indirect costs of turnover include diminution in morale among remaining staff, work overload, and loss of social capital. Employee turnover can be both voluntary and involuntary (Hussain & Asif, 2012:15).

Employee turnover does not only have an impact on the organisation. Employee turnover may also have a variety of effects on employees themselves and society (Srinivas & Arokiasamy, 2013). An employee requires stability and job hopping is not ideal for one's career progression. The other reasons for staff turnover include: organisational culture, peer pressure, attraction to competitors, incongruence of their goals and employers' goals, and seeking higher pay.

Effects of Employee Turnover

The prospect of obtaining higher pay elsewhere is one of the most obvious contributors to turnover (Johnson, 2013:2). Johnson (2013) further states that management practices are one of the most cited environmental contributors to turnover. There tends to be higher turnover in environments in which employees have a feeling of being taken advantage of, being ignored or undervalued, or where they have a feeling of helplessness. Where managers are demanding, arbitrary, and impersonal, the risk of alienation and turnover is greater. Nzimande (2012:67) cites that employees do not leave their jobs due to company performance; they leave because of their bosses. It would seem that employees of today are more aware of how they wish to be treated and that if they are not happy with the treatment they are receiving they can simply resign. Employees are also willing to take on more responsibilities and are able to work mostly unsupervised.

Organisational Culture and Employee Turnover

Girma (2016:36) states that an organisation's specific culture and leadership style are key factors that affect its overall function. The relation between those two factors has been an object of several pieces of research during the last decades. Watkins (2013) mentions that there is a universal agreement that culture exists and that it plays a crucial role in shaping behaviour in organisations. He further on says that there is little consensus on what organisational culture actually is and whether it influences leaders or whether the leaders influence culture. It is, however, undeniable that you cannot separate culture and leadership. Culture is the organisation's immune system (Watkins: 2013).

Communication and Employee Turnover

The Six Sigma (2017) describes communication as a two-way process aimed at reaching a mutual understanding. Participants in the process do not only exchange information, news, ideas, and feelings, but also create and share meaning (Colgate, 2017*).* Good business communication is essential for building a team that will make a business a success. Communication is especially important if members of a company are to work as a team towards the same goal. Nzimande (2012:15) says that the absence of communication and consultative structures result in increased manager-subordinate conflicts, depression, anxiety, and psychological stress.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design refers to the plan and procedures of enquiry that involve several decisions that need to be taken in order to carry out the study (Creswell, 2014:3). The three types of research design are descriptive, explanatory and exploratory designs. This study used the exploratory design since it works in conjunction with the qualitative methodology selected for this study. Exploratory research was chosen since it is considered the best approach to examine and acquire an in-depth understanding of the impact of management style on employee motivation. Creswell (2011:233) states that in phenomenology, the researcher tries to build the essence of experience from the participants. This study employed the phenomenological philosophy using interviews and observations. For the purposes of this study, the strategies used were case study and ethnography. These methods were used because they gave the researcher an opportunity to obtain information directly from the people that are affected with the situation at the company.

Target Population

According to Shuttleworth (2014) a target population refers to the entire group of individuals to which researchers are interested in generalising the conclusions. The target population for this study was sixty employees from the company.

Nzimande (2012:43) explains that sampling is a process of selecting a representative part of a population for the purpose of determining the parameters or characteristics of the whole population. Non-probability sampling, specifically convenience sampling, was used in this study as it was less expensive and more efficient and gave more accurate answers. Six employees from various departments namely the Forensic Investigations department (Forensics), Accounts department and Administration department (Admin) were used as a sample of the population. Of the six employees, two had recently resigned. Four managers were also used in the data collection process. In total, the sample comprised of ten people.

Pilot Study

A pilot study is a smaller version of a full-scale study done in preparation for the complete research. Nzimande (2012:46) says that a pilot study must be carried out to validate the statements in the questionnaire for use in a population screening study for employee turnover. For the purposes of this study, two participants were used in the pilot study. These two participants were independent of the participants of the main study.

Limitations of the Study

There were certain limitations of the study, that should they have been eliminated, the data collection process would have been much faster. Firstly, the researcher needed to interview at least two participants from the Forensics department. However, participants were working on projects outside the offices and difficult to get hold of them in order to conduct the interviews. Despite reassurances that their names and responses would remain anonymous and that the research was strictly for academic purposes, some of the respondents were reluctant to participate. The researcher got the sense that some of the respondent's comments, particularly from that management side, were a bit guarded indicating that the management might have been afraid of victimisation. The policy documents obtained as part of the case study were not signed off by management making it difficult to consider it as a binding document. These limitations, however, did not undermine the scope of the study.

Ethical Considerations

Nzimande (2012:46) cites that when human beings are used as the subject of a research investigation, great care must be exercised in ensuring that neither the rights of the individuals nor the worth of the research is compromised. The study ensured that ethical considerations were in place. This was done by following these steps:

Ensuring Participants Have Given Informed Consent

Written consent was obtained from the participants before the data collection process ensued and they were informed that the study is only for academic purposes.

Ensuring no Harm Comes to Participants

The interviews were conducted in a neutral environment where the participants felt comfortable and with no one else's scrutiny. The reason for this was to ensure that they would not be victimised for participating in the interviews.

Ensuring Confidentiality and Anonymity

Confidentiality and anonymity were exercised in order to safeguard the privacy and interests of the participants. Real names of participants were not disclosed. Pseudonyms were used. The real identity of the company was withheld in order to protect the interests of the organisation, its employees and other relevant stakeholders.

Ensuring that Permission is Obtained

Written permission was obtained from the company as well as the participants. The HR manager authorised the release of the company policies to the researcher.

RESULTS

The respondents in the Forensics department had degrees and those in administration a matriculation certificate. One senior black female in the Accounting department has a diploma. 50% of the participants were in possession of Matric as the highest qualification which was followed by those holding diploma/degree with a 40% representation. The remaining 10% were holders of postgraduate qualifications. Holders of a matriculation certificate had the highest representation in this study. The sample was distributed as far as age is concerned. It is evident from the study that the majority of the participants were within the age range of 41 to 50 years with a 40% representation. 70% of the participants were males and the remaining 30% females so therefore the contributions are male dominated. The study managed to incorporate the views from both genders thus making the study gender balanced. 100% of the participants belong in the black category. Thus, the company is highly dominated by blacks. 30% of the participants are juniors in their respective departments and 40 within middle management in the organisational hierarchy. The remaining 30% of the sample selected chose senior management as the level of employment and none of the top management were represented in the study. Middle management had the highest representation as it was represented by 40% in comparison with the other employment levels identified in the study. 30% of the participants were from the administration department, 30% from accounts, and the remaining 40% from the forensic investigations department. Most of the important departments were incorporated into the study thus making the study complete. The majority of the participants were from the Forensic Investigations department and they had a 40% representation out of the sample selected.

Management on Employee Motivation

The first objective of the study was meant to determine whether employee motivation is influenced by management. As such, two questions were posed and they included: What motivates you at work aside salaries and benefits? Does top management communicate the organisation's goals and objectives?

Employee Motivates Besides Salaries and Benefits

Most participants were able to indicate a link between top management attitudes to them and their motivation at the workplace. They stressed the need for management to recognise their human worth. It was clear the employees had a clear grasp of the issue at stake and expressed considered responses that, put together, reflect a positive appreciation of an appropriate management, employee relationship versus motivation, albeit with precautions.

Top Management's Communication of Goals and Objectives

It was apparent that the nature of the 'communication' asked was not fully appreciated. It appeared from the responses that management's form of communication was that of a "commander". This clearly emerged from the three participants who responded negatively.In spite of posters of mission statements, the firm's vision, and so forth, respondents say they have never sat with management to discuss these posters and their relevance.Two participants indicated that "sometimes" management communicated its vision, goals, and objectives to employees. The participants have observed that at shutdown for the year top management take turns to address staff at the annual party on the achievements and

shortcomings experienced during the year ending, while also encouraging them to work harder in the coming year ahead so that the firm excels in their endeavours.

Management Style at the Company

In the effort to identify and assess the management style at the company, the following responses and indications were received.

Employees Belief in Current Management Style

Five of the participants reported that often management consult them about their work and its results and have been called in to explain their position on clients' situations. Frequently views are not consideredas management is purported to have longer experiences in the job. The rest of the employees were unanimous concerning the organisation's style of management being not pleasing as it is too inclined towards employment of directives and dictations as against consultation and inclusiveness, which they (employees) seemed to desire.

The Basis for the Leadership Style

Middle management seemed to find a positive explanation justifying the style of management, while employees found an explanation from the dark historical phases of South Africa's race relations. On this note, four of the participants depicted that, it is necessary for top management to practise the style they do because employee behaviour needs to be focused and directed towards the task at hand. It was apparent the top management's attitude was mostly attributable to their apartheid era perception of the workforce.

Influence of Management Style on Staff Turnover

This third objective of this study was aimed at determining perceptions of the participants concerning the influence of management style on staff turnover.

Management's Attitude to Training

It emerged that management at the organisation did not recognise continuous nor any form of training related to employee advancement, at their workplaces. In fact, when the researcher requested the training policy document, it was not only unsigned but had also been misfiled. Most of the policy documents were not signed off by management. On this note, four of the participants concurred on the notion that despite employees' suggestions to management, the organisation does not bother to ensure their employees learn and develop continuously. There is no appreciation by top management of the benefits that accrue to both employee and organisation as a result of training through the workplace. The responses also showed that it was almost certain that the leadership style exercised at the company is an autocratic leadership style.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings obtained from face-to-face interactions with the ten selected participants of this study were accessed through the use of interviews. The findings are presented following identified themes.

Influence of Management on Employee Motivation

It was established that management has a huge influence on employee motivation. Employees' morale was mostly

dampened by what was perceived as a negative attitude from management. The participants almost unanimously concurred that for them to be motivated they needed respect from management first and foremost. Their unwillingness to work at the company was largely caused by the way management treated the employees. It is therefore certain that management influence employee motivation.

The Management Style

The study found that the management style at the company is autocratic. This was based on the participants' responses as well as remarks passed by some of the managers. The management believed that in order for results to be achieved, they needed to be firm on the employees. This stance, however, seems to be working against the organisation as it has seen more and more people leaving the employ.

The Influence of Management Style on Staff Turnover

The employees were convinced that the way management ruled the organisation caused employees to voluntarily resign. The responses from the employees that had left the organisation confirmed this point. The former employees were not happy with the management style, which caused them to be demotivated to the point of deciding to leave the organisation. This shows that management style has a bearing on staff turnover and retention.

Recommendations

The study further recommends that:

- The company must re-evaluate their policies and procedures.

- Fringe benefits such as transport allowance, bonuses, and medical aid should be introduced.

- The company should introduce flexible working hours in order to promote a work life and family life balance. An employee who is not under stress performs better. The most important thing is not to clock 8 hours at work, but rather to be productive whilst one is working.

- The organisation needs to be clear about the relationship between performance appraisals and how they tie to the organisation's performance as well as salary packages. Instead of holding annual performance reviews, it would also be ideal if the organisation could have informal reviews every quarter in order for management to be more in touch with their employees' expectations and vice versa. The organisation should run proper training programs. Induction is important as well.

- The organisation needs to hold regular staff meetings in order to get feedback on employee's feelings.

- Proper updated policy documents need to be kept so that there is no ambiguity on what is expected from both the employer and employees. Disciplinary procedures need to be applied fairly across the board.

- A recruitment policy that is aligned with employing younger employees who have relevant qualifications and experience should be implemented. A minimum of at least a degree in accounting, auditing, or the forensics field would be appropriate. An educated workforce provides stiff competition to competitors and improves productivity. It is also recommended that the company recruit more females as this will help solve the gender imbalances still faced by society.

Conclusions

The study concluded that employee turnover yields a serious problem in the Human Resources Management field. It brings destruction and disruption to the flow of business operations. The employees of the company were in agreement that the dictatorship style was the main cause of people leaving the organisation. The research found that if the employees had been satisfied that the organisational processes were fair and concise; they would not have had a reason to leave the organisation or to have intentions of leaving.

It was noted that motivation is a psychological concept which cannot be ignored as it impacts on everyone in an organisation. Motivation plays a significant role as it has a direct effect on the well-being of individuals and the success of an organisation as a whole. The study set out to establish the management style at the company and suggest an effective way of reducing employee turnover within the organisation. The idea was to understand first-hand how employees felt about their management and what they saw as the reasons for the high staff turnover. The findings suggested that there are serious problems at the company that have contributed immensely to the high employee turnover rate. They were not comfortable with the management style and therefore did not see themselves as part of the future of the organisation. Reasons varied from lack of communication, lack of fringe benefits, and lack of training programs, to lack of clear career objectives. The study also revealed that the organisation needs to rethink their management style in order to turnaround the organisation.

From the interviews conducted it was apparent that the leaders believed that an autocratic system was the best way to get things done and to achieve positive results. The participants were not at all happy with this type of leadership. It dampened their morale and they did not have any interest in coming to work. They only came to work to earn their salaries at the end of the month. The employees were unanimous in saying that the organisation's style of management was not pleasing and therefore the research established that leadership had a direct influence on employee motivation and turnover. One of the objectives of the research was to provide recommendations to management on ways of having a sound employee retention system. The research provided recommendations which included relooking at their recruitment policy, the training policy and ultimately their management style.

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