Human Resource Management: Motivation among Employees in Multinational Cooperation

Krupa K. Mehta

krupamba21@yahoo.in

Abstract

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Author – Krupa K. Mehta

Problem: Motivation is the number one problem facing businesses today. It is essential for employers to recognize what motivates employees in order to improve productivity and ensure the success of the company. Even though employee motivation is a well researched topic, most studies have particularly focused on small domestic companies. Opportunities within MNCs and small companies are significantly different.

Purpose: The purpose of this dissertation is to explore what motivates employees to work. Focus will be on employees working in multinational corporations in Sweden. In order to do so, we aim to identify key factors which have an impact on motivation at work. This study will contribute with a framework of motivational factors in a organization. It will also give an insight in employees' attitudes towards motivation and what motivation means to them.

Methodology: This paper will use a qualitative method. The study is based on an interpretivistic philosophy with an abductive research approach. In order to answer our research question, primary data is collected through interviews with a number of employees from multinational companies in Gujarat. This research strategy enables us to make investigations about work motivation.

Conclusions: After analyzing the motivational factors in our study, we can make the conclusion that motivation is highly personal and differs from individual to individual. Work motivation is also not consistent over time, meaning, the factor which motivates an individual today will most likely not be the same motivational factor a year from now. It is clear that personal circumstances will have an impact on employee motivation. Results reveal that employees who are in the same profession are similarly motivated and satisfied in their work.

I. INTRODUCTION

The initial chapter presents the background of the study and explains why the topic was chosen for this paper. The problem of the chosen subject will be described, followed by the purpose, research question and the theoretical limitations of the paper. The final part consists of the disposition of the study.

Managers needs to have a good understanding of what motivates different people, which factors influence their level of motivation and what steps can be taken to enhance motivation or keep it at a satisfying level. Distinguishes motivation as a core competency of leadership and gives examples of companies where the term motivation plays an important role; leaders at

Microsoft are considered to create an environment where the best employees can perform their very best work.

II. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

III. LITERATURE CITED

Motivation is a complex concept and can, therefore, be defined in several ways. Here are two definitions presented: Latham (2007) writes that "The term motivation is a derivation of the Latin word for movement, movere"(p.3). Björklund (2001) on the other hand points out that " Motivation can be described as the need or drive that incites a person to some action or behavior. The verb motivate means to provide reasons for action"

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section will provide a review of the literature used to analyze the study. The goal is to give a substantial framework for understanding motivation and why it is vital in the working environment. A definition of the word "motivation" will be presented and theoretical models such as Need theories of Motivation, and concepts will also be illustrated.

A. Work Motivation

Motivation is a complex concept and can, therefore, be defined in several ways. Here are two definitions presented: Latham (2007) writes that *"The term motivation is a derivation of the Latin word for movement, movere"* (p.3). Björklund (2001) on the other hand points out that*" Motivation can be described as the need or drive that incites a person to some action or behavior. The verb motivate means to provide reasons for action"* (p.4).

Motivation is important in everything we do, especially at the work place. If we do not feel driven to do our job then the work will not be successfully accomplished. We need to be able to wake up in the morning feeling happy about going to work, yet every individual does not experience

this feeling. Humans are motivated to work by different things; it can be everything from money to a flexible schedule; our life situation and external circumstances are the main decisive factors. This indicates that motivation is extremely personal; even if two individuals are exposed to the same situation they would still react in various ways and be motivated by totally different factors. Lundberg, Gudmundson and Andersson (2009) study of work motivation on seasonal workers supports the theory that motivation varies between employees. Let us picture a business situation where the goal is to increase the sales profit with five percent. Employees would react differently to this goal; one might think that the goal is too high; another person might pass it as too low, even though they are both competent in delivering the goal. Both employees are motivated on a different scale; the first person may think that the goal is unrealistic and wants to lower it, whereas the other person thinks that the difficulty is low compared to what is achievable and it is not enough 18 challenging (Kessler, 2003). The beliefs and opinions of an individual change during time as well as the motivation. For an employee to experience motivation there have to be certain rewards, meaning that the employee must feel that his/or her work is meaningful and leads to reaching the goals of the company. The combination of motivation and needs will influence action (Kessler, 2003).

B. Motivational theories

There are several theories explaining motivation. This thesis will focus on three classical need theories; Maslow's Hierarchy of needs, Herzberg's two-factor theory and Lawrence's Four-Factor theory. The theories were already familiar in the beginning of our research and we are aware that they are quite old but still very popular in the field of work motivation. The theories are best suitable to our empirical material and research question. All of the three theories are connected to each other in some way and can be applied in real life situations. According to Molander (1996) need theories describe that it is possible to identify human needs, and through this identification of needs we can find out what motivates individuals and also how their needs can be fulfilled. Although the theories are commonly used in theoretical examinations there are of course some limitations and exceptions within each theory. The need theories do not describe techniques on how to motivate employees, which is not the purpose of this dissertation, rather they provide an understanding of the concept motivation. The following part will describe the chosen theories which have been tested by some of the earliest thinkers (Kessler, 2003).

1) Abraham Harold Maslow

The hierarchy of needs is one of the first theories about work motivation by Abraham Maslow. However, Maslow was not the first person who tried to address the issue of motivation, other thinkers such as Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung also did a lot of research on the topic (Kessler, 2003). According to Maslow there are five human needs: physiological, safety, belongingness and love, self-esteem, and self actualization needs. After introducing his classical theory about the five different human needs he

created his well known model 19 which he called the hierarchy of needs. At the bottom of the pyramid Maslow placed the physiological needs and at the very top of the pyramid he placed the self actualization needs (Molander, 1989). In order for a human to reach the summit of the pyramid all of the five needs have to be fulfilled starting with the physiological needs at the bottom. Once the "lower needs" have been satisfied they do not longer motivate and the human does no longer strive to satisfy these needs. After satisfying the "lower needs" the human will then work his way up the "ladder" to face new needs that have emerged and that have to be fulfilled. The new needs further up the pyramid are self-esteem and self-actualization where Maslow argues that there is no end once you reach this level (Molander, 1989). The five human needs will be shortly explained below, and the starting point in the hierarchy is the basic needs, also called physiological needs.

The physiological needs represent the most important needs for human survival, and that is food and water (Maslow, 1970). What should be kept in mind is that these needs have to be fulfilled first, before other needs can emerge and be satisfied. The following part describes an example; if a person is hungry and does not have enough food or water, other needs will not be important, he will only want to eat and drink. When the basic needs are fulfilled, the person will then try to satisfy other needs (Maslow, 1970). Figure 3.1 illustrates the hierarchy of needs.

Figure 3.1: Maslow's Hierarchy of needs

(Source: tutor2u, 2010) 20 After the basic needs have been satisfied new needs will emerge. These new needs are called safety needs which refer to security, stability and protection (Maslow, 1970). As in the previous example with the physiological needs, new needs have now taken over since the former needs have already been fulfilled (Maslow, 1970). A person might now have the desire to have a good job with good working conditions, salary and retirement plan rather than an urge for food and water (Adair, 2006). Once the safety needs have been gratified there is no longer something to fulfill and just like with the physiological needs, new needs are being developed after the fulfillment of the safety needs and the process repeats itself (Maslow, 1970). The third type of need is the belongingness and love needs. After fulfilling the basic needs and safety needs, humans start to feel lonely and our greatest desire will be to seek for love and affection from others. This could for example be that we want to be part of a group of friends, colleagues and family (Maslow, 1970). A person that once was hungry and looking for safety will no longer be motivated to fulfill those needs since they have already been accomplished. The new motivation that will dominate the once hungry person will be love and affection from others (Maslow, 1970).

When you have satisfied your physiological, safety and belongingness and love needs a fourth need arises. Maslow called this fourth need, esteem need, or self-esteem (Maslow, 1970). According to Maslow the self-esteem needs can be divided into two groups. In the first group we find factors such as desire for strength, achievement, confidence and independence. In the second

group of esteem needs we find desire for reputation, respect, dominance and to be more important to other people (Maslow, 1970). Finally, Maslow named the top of the pyramid self-actualization need. The self-actualization need "*refers to a man's desire for self-fulfillment, namely, to the tendency for him to become actualized in what he is potentially* (Maslow, 1970 p. 46). By this Maslow meant that humans perform things they are capable of doing, for example an artist paints pictures and becomes self- fulfilled since he does what he knows best (Maslow, 1970).

One of the problems with Maslow's hierarchy of needs is that the theory is often misunderstood. The theory specifies that once a human need has been satisfied other needs will emerge. This situation can be misinterpreted as if the previous needs will disappear and new needs will take its place. However, this is not the case, instead Maslow means that a 21 human can have several needs but some needs will dominate and be more important. For example, when a human experience hunger or thirst this need will dominate over other needs, but once that need has been satisfied it will not disappear (Pinder, 1984). Maslow also points out that every individual is different and can experience needs in other order than the pyramid suggests, hence, the theory was not meant to be universal. Another concern about the theory is that not every individual is aware of his or her needs. Maslow says that if the needs are identified then there are ways to take action and motivate people, yet if individuals are not conscious about their needs it is difficult to take action and try to motivate. With this said, Maslow's hierarchy of needs is not as simple and uncomplicated as we may think. Finally, the theory has been very popular in understanding organizational behavior, still the theory do not have much scientific evidence (Pinder, 1984).

2) Frederick Herzberg

After Maslow introduced his Five-factor model of human needs, many other similar models have been created; one of those models is Herzberg's Two- factor theory. Herzberg decided to test his theory through interviews with engineers and accountants in different organizations (Pinder, 1984). The employees were asked to think about a situation where they felt extra good or extra bad about their work, and they were also asked to describe the surrounding when the situation occurred and finally the consequences of this incident. The total sample was 203 employees, and once the sample was collected Herzberg analyzed the data. Herzberg could observe specific patterns and the analysis resulted in a classification of two groups of human factors; the motivators and the hygiene factors (Pinder, 1984). This model is more related to the motivation to work. The characteristics of hygiene needs are; supervision, interpersonal relations, physical working conditions and salary and among the motivational needs we find factors such as responsibility, achievement, recognition and self- actualization (Herzberg *et al*, 1959). Herzberg called the motivators satisfiers. Trough interviews, Herzberg discovered that achievement was a great satisfier among the employees, meaning when employees were able to successfully complete a task. Another factor which proved to be important for the

respondents was to have an interesting and varied work (Pinder, 1984). Finally, these satisfiers were important to the respondents because they were related to individual growth and development. The other category, hygiene factors, was 22 identified as dissatisfiers. Here, Herzberg found that poor working conditions and a miserable relationship with the supervisor were the main dissatisfiers among the employees. Herzberg concluded that the motivators were mainly related to the work itself, and hygiene factors were associated with the working environment (Pinder, 1984).

Herzberg differentiated between two types of individuals which he called *hygiene seekers* and *motivator seekers* (Pugh, 1997). The people whom Herzberg referred to as hygiene seekers, were the ones who only stayed satisfied and motivated if they were rewarded with something such as salary for performed work (Pugh, 1997). Herzberg said that satisfying the hygiene needs will not result in higher job performance it will only help to prevent job dissatisfaction (Herzberg *et al,* 1959). The motivator seekers are people that actually find satisfaction and motivation in the performance of their work. When the motivational needs (responsibility, achievement, recognition and self- actualization) are well satisfied this will result in higher work performance and job satisfaction (Landy *et al,* 2004). To briefly summarize Herzberg's theory, humans have two sets of needs, compared to Maslow who introduced us to five levels of human needs. Herzberg's motivators are connected to self-actualization and hygiene needs are linked to the job surrounding. The Motivator-Hygiene theory has similarities to Maslow's hierarchy, where Maslow also identified recognition and self-actualization needs along with safety needs such as working conditions and salary. Figure 3.2 shows how Maslow's five human needs and Herzberg's satisfiers and dissatisfiers are connected to each other.

Figure 3.2: Maslow
& Herzberg 23 After Herzberg introduced his two factor theory, several researchers attempted to test and understand the theory. The results appeared to be very mixed, where some studies criticized the theory and other supported it (Pinder, 1984). Critics argued that the interviewees in Herzberg's study did not want to look bad so they linked satisfaction to their own successful actions, and blamed negative feelings, hygiene factors, on situations which did not lie within their control such as working conditions. These arguments questioned the validity of the theory. Behavior research is problematic to evaluate since, as stated above, the interviewees can describe situations to make them look better. Supporters claim that the theory was not tested in the right way with appropriate instruments and that the critics did not bring adequate evidence of the theory's validity (Pinder, 1984).

3) Paul Lawrence

Our third choice of theory is Lawrence's four factor theory of human nature which is a following theory to Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Herzberg's two factor theory. According to Lawrence there are four factors that influence human choices also known as drives; the drive

to acquire, the drive to bond, the drive to learn and the drive to defend. The four human drives will be further explained below. The basic question in this theory is: *"what drives an individual?"* (Berggren, Gustavsson, & Johnsson, 2009, p.24). Lawrence also points out that every human have several drives but that all drives cannot be satisfied every time.

The first factor, the drive to acquire, specifies that humans drive to improve status by acquiring experiences. This is a very common feature of human nature. An example of this is that humans compete with each other in various ways. In the working place employees may compete about different positions within the company which will lead to higher status and salary. Employees will also try to acquire rewards for their accomplished work in order to gain recognition (Berggren *et al.,* 2009). Next, the drive to bond is the desire to create relationship with others, and is completed when the bond is mutual and shared. Employees who are working together in groups have the advantage of better managing environmental threats in the organization. Moreover, Lawrence explains the third factor, the drive to learn as: *"Humans have an innate drive to satisfy their curiosity, to know, to comprehend, to 24 believe, to appreciate, to develop understandings or representations of their environment and of themselves through a reflective process: the drive to learn"* (Berggren *et al.*, 2009, p. 25). This means that humans have a willingness to learn and to understand our environment so that they know how things work. Employees who have a job where there is an opportunity to develop knowledge within their field experiences it as a satisfying work. Finally, the fourth factor is the drive to defend which means that humans try to protect themselves against any harm that relates to their own beliefs and experiences. Lawrence argues that humans have prepared skills, such as caution and rationalization, to tackle any threat that may appear. Conflicts and other rivalry among co-workers can occur as threats in an organization and employees will then drive to defend themselves (Berggren *et al.,* 2009). Unlike Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the four factor theory is universal and independent and each factor is connected with each other.

C. Motivation concepts

In order to understand the results from our research question, "What motivates individuals to work", two concepts will be presented; intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The purpose of this part is to interpret the behavior of employees, why are they motivated by certain factors? An employee can be motivated by personal factors such as a sense of progress and the feeling of having a meaningful work. On the other hand, employees can also be motivated extrinsically based on self- interest, which means that they perform mainly because they receive a salary for the work.

1) Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation occurs when the human performs for his or her own sake, instead for social rewards (Pinder, 1984). Christina Björklund (2001) writes in her book *Work Motivation- studies of its Determinants and*

Outcomes that intrinsic motivation is about *"engaging in a task for its enjoyment value"* (p.28). Intrinsic motivation is also about creative thinking, and increased performance meaning that if a person is intrinsically motivated he or she can, not only increase the performance but also the job satisfaction. Kenneth W. Thomas (2002) talks about four different types of intrinsic rewards: sense of meaningfulness, sense of choice, sense of competence and sense of progress. A sense of 25 meaningfulness is when you put all of your emotions and feelings into a certain task that makes you excited and gives you the feeling that the task is worth your time and energy (Thomas, 2002). A sense of choice is about having the opportunity to make your own decisions and to choose task activities that you find useful to perform. Moreover, a sense of competence involves the feeling that you are performing your chosen task in a way that it is making progress and that the work with the chosen task is going well (Thomas, 2002). The fourth intrinsic reward, a sense of progress, involves the excitement and feeling that you are on the right track. When you feel that the work with the chosen task is moving forward and you accomplish something on your way, you get the feeling that it was worth all your time and energy (Thomas, 2002).

2) Extrinsic motivation

Extrinsic motivation is based on external factors such as self- interest and the pleasure of making profits (Nelson *et al.*, 2006). Extrinsic and intrinsic motivation is one and another opposite which means that extrinsic motivation is a behavior that is performed just for the money and not for the pleasure of doing it. People that are extrinsically motivated do not actually get motivated from the work itself. They expect to receive some rewards after having performed a certain task or else they will not feel pleased (Gagne et al, 2005). Figure 3.3 illustrates how intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is connected to Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Figure 3.3: Extrinsic and Intrinsic needs 26

CONCLUSION

The final chapter contains a short summary of the entire thesis. A conclusion of our study will be given. Finally we will present practical implications and offer suggestions for further study.

SUMMARY

This dissertation is about people working in multinational corporations and their experience and attitude towards motivation. The purpose of this dissertation is to explore what motivates employees in MNCs to work. In order to do so, we identified key factors which have an impact on motivation at work. This study will contribute with a framework of motivational factors in an organization. Kim Dongho (2006), the author of the article "Employee motivation: Just ask your employees", argues that employee motivation has been a big concern for organizations and managers because motivation is the

deciding factor in work performance and determines the success or failure of an company. More and more firms are moving outside their domestic borders. This means globalization of business has a significant impact on Human Resource Management. Therefore, it is essential for MNCs to have an effective Human Resource Management and a greater degree of involvement in their employees.

In the past 40 years, a number of surveys have studied the challenge of employee motivation. A survey conducted today would most probably show a different result in motivational factors among employees (Wiley, 1997). There have been a number of studies about the subject, most of them questionnaire based surveys. Qualitative methods in the field of management is very limited, which the article by Cassell, Symon, Buehring and Johnson (2006) supports. Even though, there have been various studies about motivation in national and public sector companies, research within multinational companies have not been carried out. This brings up the question: *Is work motivation in MNCs any different from national organizations?* MNCs offer training, chance for advancement and promotion within the company in larger extent than small companies. Studies have showed that multinational 61 corporations are the first choice of working place for business graduates, because they view MNC as a better candidate for career development (Moy and Lee, 2002). There are several theories explaining motivation. This thesis focuses on three classical need theories; Maslow's Hierarchy of needs, Herzberg's two-factor theory and Lawrence's Four-Factor theory. The theories were best suitable to our empirical material and research question. All of the three theories are connected to each other in some way and can be applied in real life situations. Qualitative method based on an interpretivistic philosophy with an abductive research approach was used in this study. To address the issue of motivated workers, interviews were carried out with nine employees working at Alfa Laval Lund AB and Sweco Environment AB.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to explore what motivates employees in MNCs to work. In order to do so, we aimed to identify motivational factors in an organization. After analyzing the motivational factors in our study, we can draw the conclusion that motivation is highly personal and differs from individual to individual. Work motivation is also not consistent over time, meaning, the factor which motivates an individual today will most likely not be the same motivational factor a year from now. It is clear that personal circumstances will have an impact on employee motivation. The findings of this study did not indicate any pattern or differences between male and female views. Our study supports the theory that motivation is different depending on the age of the employee, younger and older workers do not have the same career choice. Results reveal that employees who are in the same profession are similarly motivated and satisfied in their work. Moreover, many quantitative studies have come to the conclusion that money is a great motivator at work and is often put on

first place among motivational factors, however, the results from our study showed a different outcome. Employee motivation differs from MNCs and SMEs. People choose to work in a company depending on what that organization has to offer to the individual, which the study by Moy and Lee (2002) supports. The majority of the interviewees decided to work in an MNC because of the size, international contacts and the opportunity for advancement/ career development. 62 Furthermore, the findings of our study uncover that employees from the two case companies are more intrinsically motivated, rather than extrinsically. A common denominator between the companies is that the respondents prefer to work with projects where they are able to contribute and develop a solution to a problem. The propositions in this study were the following: (1) What motivates employees depends on personal circumstances, where experience and family situation plays a significant role, and (2) Employees are mostly intrinsically motivated, rather than extrinsically. The results showed that the propositions appeared to be correct. To conclude the analysis of the theoretical framework, the theories are somewhat applicable to the empirical findings, although there are restrictions. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is complicated and difficult to interpret. It is easy to jump to the conclusion that once a need has been satisfied it will disappear and new needs will take its place. The theory does not have a lot of scientific evidence. With consideration to Lawrence's four factor theory, the findings of this study can only be connected to two of the four factors; the drive to bond and the drive to learn. Another aspect is that the theories do not consider individual differences such as: type of work, age, and experience. A recapture of the previous studies on employee motivation suggest that it is important to continue to explore what motivates individuals to work.

CRITICAL REVIEW

The sample included two multinational corporations, and since a qualitative methodology was applied, the purpose was not to generalize the results. First of all, motivation is a very complex subject to investigate because it is a temporary state of the individual. Motivation is not consistent over time, which makes the reliability of the study very low. Second, the results from the ranking question in this study can be rather misleading since some factors can be equal important to the individual. Third, with consideration to the interviews, the presence of the researchers might have affected the ranking choices of the respondents. 63

CONTRIBUTION

It is essential for companies to understand what motivates individuals. Through this understanding companies have the ability of adopting motivational techniques which can lead to competitive advantage and ensuring the success of the company. Managers can gain insight on employee motivation by reading various surveys about the topic and evaluate the results. This thesis contributes to realizing what motivates individuals to work, which can then help managers to effectively motivate their staff.

FUTURE STUDIES

During the last fifteen weeks of work with our dissertation we have gathered a lot of information and knowledge about what motivates employees in MNCs. Since we had a limited time with this dissertation we feel that a further study on this topic would be of interest and we will therefore, give some recommendations on further studies that we wished to have carried out ourselves. First of all it would be interesting to see if our result will differ if we repeat the interviews at the two companies in one year. As we described in chapter four the interviews were performed using few employees due to company resources and our limited time. It would have been more interesting to increase the number of interviewees. Finally, we do not see a need to conduct a further study on motivation in small companies, since there already exist a large amount of empirical studies within these organizations. 64

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