

MOTIVATION:

Cultivating a positive attitude in employees

By Mwangi Wanjumbi

Observations from a continuing informal research have indicated that work performance in most organizations is fear driven. Most employees actually perform only to avoid reprisals or job loss through the ever present threat of retrenchment. This situation is not sustainable in any growth-oriented organization.

Perhaps, it arises because a huge proportion of managers or supervisors subscribe to Douglas McGregor's theory X, sometimes even unknowingly. This theory advocates that people do not like work. Performance must therefore be forced on them. It is the same theory that is always depicted by a donkey seemingly being made to work through employment of a carrot and stick.

This is apparently in total conflict with theory Y by the same person which indicates that people actually like work. All that is required is to create an enabling environment that encourages them to perform at their best. This should certainly be the ideal situation. According to Zig Ziglar, a motivation trainer and author, people who perform out of fear utilize only 10% of their performance potential. He further states that there are three types of performances which need to be clearly understood.

They include foundation, successful, and value performance. Foundation performance refers to the level at which

one must achieve to justify continued employment in an organization. It is determined mutually by the manager and the employee.

This performance must of essence be owned by the employee because failure to achieve it means severance of links with the employer. It is also important in that it forms a building block for future performance successes.

Successful performance on the other hand refers to the level of achievement which may be realistically expected by both employee and manager under normal circumstances. Again, it needs to be mutually agreed between the employee and the manager.

Value performance is finally the level of achievement which could be ideally expected if everything works according to plan and the employee excels in all spheres.

It is again determined through mutual sharing but is best achieved when there is unhindered support of the employee by the manager or supervisor.

It follows therefore that any employee who does not meet foundation performance is not suitable to continue in employment. It is for this reason that most employees will strive to achieve foundation

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performance which is actually the bear minimum.

Why then dwell on spreading fear as a tool of getting results from employees?

Much as it is commonly practised in many organizations, it is retrogressive and therefore not desirable.

In this kind of situation people may only achieve the foundation performance, leaving the rest of their potential untapped. In order to maximize performance therefore, there is need to employ methods of enabling staff to get motivated to the extent of not only successful performance but ultimately value performance. It is important here to note that motivation is internal to the employee. It is the inner strength, will or power that enables them to perform desired activities on their own without use of coercion. Consequently, it is apparent that an employer cannot motivate staff. Instead, the employer creates a conducive environment which enables the staff to continually perform as expected or improve on the same. Without due attention, staff will only achieve the bear minimum performance.

How can employers avoid fear as a tool of performance?

This is both a difficult and easy process. Why? It requires change of organizational approach which essentially needs to be holistic.

It derives its effectiveness from the organizational mission and vision. Values, goals and objectives of an organization need to be given serious consideration in this approach.

It is best if all of them are aligned to work towards the unity of purpose and direction of the entire organization. It is only then that the staff will likewise follow.

But then, the employees need to be not only empowered but also involved in the process of formulating organizational goals, objectives and other attributes. Empowerment entails giving allowance for them to risk and make mistakes as long as they are not repeated.

Inevitably, any employee that is unable to fit in a renewed organizational approach will fall by wayside.



Dr. Alexander Kariavu (right), a member of National Industrial Training Council (NITC) presents a present to Amos Murage, a DIT staff for exemplary performance. There is need for institutions to establish methods of staff motivation.