

Staff Motivation: Functions, Principles and Sources

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Abstract

Motivation is the reason to do something, it represents the totality of all the reasons that lead employees to take a specific action, to strive for a particular goal or objective. Also, it represents all the internal factors that lead employees to behave in different ways. The financial rewards (the fixed salary and the variable income or various advantages that form, together, the total remuneration) should provide its employees with a decent living, but in order to achieve performance, they must be motivated according to their expectations. But to motivate just for motivation's sake is an idea with negative implications on the efficiency with which workforce is used. The fundamental element that helps to define motivation is the interest, as it causes the basis of the employee activity and reflects an objective social requirement, immediate or future, ergo appearing the ideal and the aspiration.

Key words: functions, principles and sources of staff motivation.

J.E.L. Classification: O15

1. Introduction

Speaking of *motivation* assumes that work is a value for most of people (Vagu and Stegăroiu, 2007, p.11). The term „*motivation*” is rooted from the latin word „*movere*” which translates in „*to move*”, „*to act*” and „*to be in progress*” and represents „*those psychological processes that determine inciting, directing, persistence of voluntary actions toward goals to be achieved*” (Mitchell, 1981, p.81). Staff *motivation* was the subject of study for numerous specialists in the theory and practice of management. Some of them believe that „*motivation means, narrowly, to correlate the needs, aspirations and interests of the staff within the organization*” (Nicolescu and Verboncu, 1999, p.491) while others consider *motivation* as „*a behavioral force that energizes, directs and maintains a certain behavior*” (Candea and Candea, 2005, p.181). According to various areas in which *motivation* is addressed, this concept has three different meanings (Montserrat, 2004, p.14), namely: in *economy* (it represents all the factors that determine the behavior of an organization), in *consumption area* (it refers to psychological factors that explain the act of sale-buy of the offered product or service, the prescription or their refusal) and in *psychology* (it corresponds to the psychological and physiological processes responsible for starting, maintaining and terminating a behavior).

2. The functions of personnel motivation

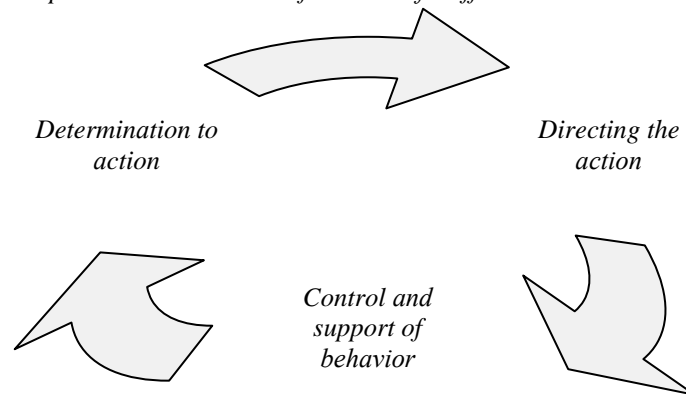
*The main functions of staff motivation are (*** 2006, pp.459-460):*

- *Determination to action* – the reasons causing an individual to act or stimulating him to act. In this respect, the individual acting consciously in order to achieve an objective that will allow him to satisfy a particular need will be considered as *motivated* and the one who is indifferent - passive or inactive - as *unmotivated* or having a *low level of motivation* (Vagu and Stegăroiu, 2007, p.39).
- *Directing the action* – the individual always takes decisions on the way to achieve his objectives. For example, the employees who feel incompetence, uselessness and loneliness can choose to communicate with employees from different teams. Also, those who tend to make a good impression on the manager can choose different ways of performing the assigned tasks. All these actions have something in common - they are choices which direct the individual

efforts to achieving a particular objective that allows his to satisfy a specific need (Vagu and Stegăroiu, 2007, p.39).

- *Control and support of behavior* – oriented in order to achieve a goal, they express certain persistence in achieving it. *Motivation* is the instinctive and rational process that makes the employee more interested. Thus, the individual whose behavior is determined by monetary *motivation*, who tends to earn money in any situation and under any circumstances, will act in accordance with this dominant (Vagu and Stegăroiu, 2007, p.39). Both the assigned tasks and responsibilities and the offered opportunities will be seen mainly in terms of material gains.

Figure no. 1. The interdependences between the functions of staff motivation



Source: Research initiatives, n. d.

In „*Motivation Theory and Industrial and Organizational Psychology*”, Ruth Kanfer considers *determination to action*, *directing the action* and *control and support of behavior* as defining elements of *motivation* (Kanfer, 1990, pp.78-79). Getting the best performance from employees is possible not only when they are interested in the final result, but also when they have a positive and free attitude to the task to achieve. This is possible only if the work process and the final results allow the individual to satisfy his most important needs, i.e. when he has a high level of *motivation* (Vagu and Stegăroiu, 2007, p.40).

2. Principles of staff motivation

The following *principles* stand at the base of *staff motivation* (***) 2006, pp.469-470, 516-518):

- *the employee wants to establish equitable relations with the organization and with other people and to change the work relationships that he/she deems to be unfair* – any infringement of balance - both for the organization and for the employee - will generate tensions that can be expressed in actions from his part and will result in *demotivation* at work;
- *the reasons are hierarchically organized* – whether at the employment in an organization, for the individual the priority *reasons* are related to guidance and integration at the new job, after establishing relationships with peers and learning requirements of that place, in the foreground there can be the *reasons* related to the need for personal and professional development, career promotion;
- *multimotivating of behavior at work* – understanding this principle can help the managers, on the one hand, to organize the work process for subordinates to work more efficiently and with desire and, on the other hand, to avoid conflict of reasons, when various reasons require from the individual different lines of behavior, different decisions, different actions (Vagu and Stegăroiu, 2007, p.41);
- *the managers' behavior to subordinates should be the same as to personalities* – when the manager listens to their opinions, most employees appreciate the opportunity to express their ideas, which increases the feelings of their own importance, of their involvement in achieving objectives and of self-esteem;

- *the praise for employees must comply with the actual facts* – all employees appreciate sincere praise and the recognition of well done job, making them a powerful means of increasing the level of *motivation*;
- *attracting employees to participate actively in solving the organization's issues* – the employees, who participate at setting goals or developing programs to improve the organization of production and labor, work more intensive trying to achieve the expected success;
- *tasks should be designed to be interesting* – loss of interest caused by uniform and boring work can generate different problems (Vagu and Stegăroiu, 2007, p.42);
- *fostering the cooperation and teamwork* – participation in a *team* causes the individual to do his very best, both at personal and professional level (Vagu and Stegăroiu, 2007, p.42);
- *creating opportunities for development, for professional advance of employees* – whether an employee advances professionally, usually he/she is more *motivated* and satisfied with his work;
- *setting of goals which are realistic, interesting, quite complex, but not excessively difficult, i.e. achievable* – if the individual thinks that the objective is excessively complex or even impossible, his *motivation* will greatly diminish or even disappear;
- *providing reverse connections to employees on the way how they achieve their objectives, the gained progress and the problems that arise* – reverse connection results in increasing the level of *motivation* of employees to improve their work (Vagu and Stegăroiu, 2007, p.42);
- *more frequent communication with employees* – open communication strengthens mutual trust and understanding between managers and employees;
- *supporting the employees when necessary* – thereby increasing both the level of collaboration between managers and employees, and the *motivation* to achieve the objectives set by the organization;
- *belief that employees understand how their work correlates with satisfaction of their needs, with achievement of their personal objectives* – *motivation* of subordinates increases if they see that the achievement of objectives of the organizational subdivision and the organization helps them in achieving their own objectives (Vagu and Stegăroiu, 2007, p.43);
- *establishment of rewards with value for each employee* – if the managers know what the rewards are more attractive to employees, it will be easier for them to act on their *motivation* at work;
- *ensuring an appropriate match between rewards and results in work* – *motivation* of an employee in achieving planned objectives is greater if previously he/she had been informed of what to do to get some reward, coordinated with the results;
- *organizations usually obtained, what they stimulate* – the stimulation system must be designed so as to initiate, to generate the types of desired behaviors (Vagu and Stegăroiu, 2007, p.43);
- *all employees must not be stimulated in the same way* – equal *stimulation* of employees will *motivate* the mediocre and/or weak ones and will *demotivate* the effective ones;
- *lack of reactions can influence employees' motivation* – e.g., the lack of manager's praise to an employee who obtained outstanding results in his work leads to the possibility that the next time to show an interest limited to the performed work and its importance.

Knowing the employees and understanding their needs means to know how they all can be *motivated* to performance and how everyone can be satisfied gradually and equally. From this perspective, *motivation* opposes to inertia (Vagu and Stegăroiu, 2007, p.45). In each of the employees there is an internal force, an inner tension that leads them to seek to satisfy the felt needs. Alan Downs considers *manifestation, reciprocity, honesty, forgiveness, passion, respect* and *overcoming the past* being the coordinates of this the internal force that determine the *motivation* and the appropriate behaviors in "*Seven Miracles of Management*" calling them "*Miracles of Management*".

Table no. 1. *Miracles of Management*

Manifestation coordinates	
Miracle I: Manifestation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ I have everything I need for having success tomorrow. I will not encounter any problem that I can not solve. My ideas give rise to right solutions. ✓ I will provide necessary space and freedom for ideas. I will provide employees the space and freedom to think and create. Together, we imagine the future, our most valuable asset. ✓ I will feed and cultivate what I know is right. In mannered and respectful way, I will support the best ideas of the employees until they become reality.
Miracle II: Reciprocity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ All I give will come back to me. I will endeavor to get what is best for me. ✓ It matters how I treat the others. I will say only words of encouragement.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ I will offer help as I can. I will work for the success of others. ✓ I refuse to participate in handling and retaliation. On the contrary, I will not support these actions by refusing to react. I will interrupt the negative chain. ✓ My situation is simply a mirror of my own actions. By choosing my own behavior, I will gain the best job I ever had.
Miracle III: Honesty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ I will be very honest. I will refuse to change the truth in favor of my personal interests, making everything honestly. I will take care to create confidence in my abilities and my quality as manager, and the group members will be convinced of the authenticity and will base on it. ✓ My words will be simple and direct. I will not hide the truth saying much talk and playing theater. Instead, I will speak as simply as I can. ✓ I have the necessary courage to say, in a mannered way, truths that would otherwise remain untold. I will not allow partial truths. On the contrary, I will be honest and direct.
Miracle IV: Forgiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ From today, I begin to forgive. I will forgive the weak achievements of the organization and I will allow me to see the best aspects of the work from here. ✓ I will relieve myself of rancor toward those who have hurt me. ✓ I will forgive the boss and I will treat him like a human being in development. ✓ I will try to reconcile with a disrespectful employee. Instead of punishing him, I will support and train him. I will see all employees as at present and I will get over shortcomings from the past. I will give a helping hand to each employee instead to condemn or to judge him severely.
Miracle V: Passion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Today I will focus on things that I love in my job. I will spend time doing things I like. Passing over my frustrations, I will rekindle the passion for my work. ✓ Employees are gifts to me. I will help them to provide what is best for them and for the organization. ✓ Love is my strength. I aim to use my power to its full potential.
Miracle VI: Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ I grant respect and honor to each of the employees. Each one has something unique to give. I will see the best in everyone. ✓ Punishment does not exist for me; it has no place in me. I will carefully train and direct the employees who error. ✓ My relations with employees are made in the most important part of my business. I will respect and encourage each (business) relationship.
Miracle VII: Overcoming the past	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ I will appreciate the past. I will not ignore it and I will use it to honor the present. ✓ I will accept the past as a link in a long chain that extends from the present into the future. ✓ I will celebrate the past victories. I will honor those who have won. I will find the way that leads from past victories at the bigger present ones.

Source: Downs, 1990, pp.31, 46, 70, 84

3. Sources of staff motivation

The results obtained from scientific research in psychology management have permitted to identify three areas for sources of *motivation* which are able to influence individual behavior at work (Vagu and Stegăroiu, 2007, pp.48-49), namely: *external forces* (they provide the greatest opportunities to influence the *motivation*), *internal forces* (they can not be manipulated so easily) and *early forces* (they are identified in the early years of life and are solidly fixed in the systems of values and beliefs). From these, the *work environment* (the nature and characteristics of professional activity encompassing the complexity, variety and responsibility of work tasks, the degree of autonomy of the executant and the performance of those tasks) and the *situational factors* (working conditions, organizational culture, level of professional training and stimulation system) play a particularly important role.

Table no. 2. Sources of motivation and their possible level of influence

Sources of motivation	Possible level of influence
External forces – management style; – organizational culture; – objectives and structure of the organization; – type of work; – recognition of merit; – environment.	High
Internal forces – will; – desire; – values; – personal goals; – ambitions.	Medium
Early forces – genetic influence; – family size; – experience of childhood; – prophecies; – parents.	Low

Source: Massie and Douglas, 1985, pp.31, 46, 70, 84

To *motivate* just for *motivation's* sake is an idea with negative implications on the efficiency with which workforce is used. *Motivation* is not optimal in all situations. Because above a certain level of *motivation* the productivity gain does not justify the effort required, *demotivation* appears and to reduce it a manager must know very well its sources. These are (Vagu and Stegăroiu, 2007, pp.49-51):

- *The very nature of work to do* – there are situations when the work does not meet the expectations of those who provide it, becoming uninteresting, ingrate and useless. It results the need for an adequacy between these expectations and the characteristics of work to do (Jaques, 1970, pp.156-158). To achieve adequacy is necessary to intervene on two parts: *restructuring work tasks* and *assigning tasks*. *Motivation* begins with the work organization and the staff selection.
- *Lack of objectives or of precise and clear objectives* – the objectives should be as clear, precisely formulated (Locke, 1968, p.157-189), in accordance with the company's strategy and in relation with the skills of individuals who carry them out (Dessler, 1980, pp.202-231). Ambiguous and vague objectives may create a sense of ease to achieve them, which may conflict with the expectations of the individual in case of completion (Rizzo *et al*, 1970, pp.150-163). The too low and non-stimulating objectives do not *motivate* the executant, being easily performed; the excessively high objectives *demotivate* him, meaning that he could not perform them. To avoid such situations, it is recommended the participation of executant in goal setting (Latham and Yukl, 1975, pp.299-302).
- *Lack of supervision of work* – when employees have too much independence, they are likely to lose enthusiasm; that is why systematic meetings are recommended with the staff of the

organization (Vagu and Stegăroiu, 2007, p.50). The *feedback* should exist not only after a great effort, but also when it comes to common tasks (Nadler, 1979, pp.309-338). This *feedback* must be precise because vague assessments, in good or bad terms, only produce little *motivation* at work (Beer and Ruth, 1976, pp.59-66). Also, this *feedback* must be positive (Pavett, 1983, pp.641-645) in the sense of renouncing the idea of systematically find what goes wrong (Vagu and Stegăroiu, 2007, p.50). On the contrary, what is well done must be revealed and recognized, which is not an easy thing to achieve (Farson, 1963, pp.111-116). Since there is the irreducible conflict between the role of performance assessor and of support in attracting this performance (Meyer *et al*, 1965, pp.123-129), the manager should not make assessments that could undermine the executant's confidence in him, *motivation* depending to a large extent also on that (Atkinson and Feather, 1966, pp.327-370).

- *Feeling of working in vain* – is the *feeling of injustice* on *motivation*. Even if an employee loves his work and gets some intrinsic rewards, he/she loses enthusiasm if he observes that another individual does not make the same efforts, but benefits of the same treatment (recognition, salary, promotion etc.). Therefore every employee should be rewarded by the efforts he makes, any gratification and advantage should depend on the results.
- *Insufficient means necessary to accomplish assigned tasks* – if not given enough time, information, training, support and assistance, material authority resources necessary to do serious work, the absence of one or other of these factors will be assessed with low indicators (notes) on the scale for evaluating a job well done (Vagu and Stegăroiu, 2007, p.51).
- *Annoying and unnecessary constraints and irritations* – these make even harder the work and the relationship between employee and manager.
- *The general climate, where security, trust, natural respect, cooperation and enthusiasm are missing* – an unfavorable professional climate has repercussions on productivity by not respecting rules, by inadequate quality and quantity (Pitariu, 2000, p.27).

4. Conclusions

The approach of the complex issue of *motivation* domain by managers focuses on two aspects, namely: *competence of employees to perform specific tasks and motivating them to work effectively*. These goals can be achieved by both a strong and reliable selection, recruitment and promotion system and through personal and professional development programs for employees, considering their results reflected in the final performance of organizations.

The success of substantiation, development and implementation of the strategy depends on adequate *motivation* of the involved factors. Thereby, the decisive conditioning of the strategy of human dimension of the *company* or the *autonomous administration* (Nicolescu and Verboncu, 1999, p.188) is considered.

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