

## IMPROVING EMPLOYEES' MOTIVATION THROUGH EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK

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**Abstract.** *Any organization wishes to satisfy customer needs by offering competitive products and services. To do that, the organizations must sustain efficient work processes. To obtain competitive advantage and achieve their goals, organizations may use work groups as a management tool. This article describes the role of motivation in organizations in order to retain talented staff in the long run and to obtain performance by using work groups. The paper also shows the classification of work teams and describes its role in developing and sharing new knowledge, skills, and experiences, improving communication and relationships and increasing employees' motivation.*

**Keywords:** motivation, teamwork, team building, quality circles, performance

### 1. Introduction

Performance represents an important goal for teamwork, because most people work in research teams, development teams, production teams, sales teams, marketing teams or top management teams. Teamwork has gathered momentum, due to the appearance of complex products, requiring diverse skills and technologies. One person is not capable of all the activities, such as developing, selling or trading complex products, which means that a team can provide the necessary knowledge and an efficient coordination of the activity [1].

Regardless of their type, structure or size, organizations, groups or communities can attain their goals only if they work as a team [2]. Working in team can be fun, rewarding but also productive [3]. If the employee gets efficiently integrated in the team, then his productiveness and motivation will increase and the probability of leaving the organization will decrease [4]. Patience is one of the qualities one needs to use in team work because in time there will appear results but also learning and the obtaining of new knowledge [5]. If there are no objectives and no clear motivation, the team-building activity will not benefit of the desired success, because money, time and effort consumption is already involved. Team-building represents a desideratum for an efficient activity.

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## 2. The role of motivation in organizations

The term “motivation” comes from the Latin word “movere” meaning movement, move, progress. The efficient management of human resources relies on understanding their motivation. The success of an organization depends very much on the availability and the intensity of the individuals’ desire to work, to get involved in an activity. They will accomplish their tasks with the best results if the management understands correctly what determines them to undertake actions and what they tend to by doing a certain job.

The definition of motivation in the Romanian Encyclopedic Dictionary is: “The totality of the motives or modes (aware or not) determining a person to accomplish a certain action or to tend towards certain goals”[6]. Motivation is “the source of the internal and external energies initiating and guiding one’s behavior towards a goal that, once reached, will determine the meeting of a need” [7]. According to Mitchell T.R., motivation represents “those psychological processes determining stimulation, drive, persistence of voluntary actions towards goals to be attained”[8].

Another definition of motivation according to Koontz H. and O’Donnell C. is: “Motivation is the general term used to designate the set of stimulants, desires, needs, preferences and other similar concepts. When we say that a manager motivates his subordinates, this means he is doing things that they perceive as able to meet their needs and desires and able to stimulate them to act in the desired direction”[9].

“Motivation can be defined in a double sense:

- state of psychical tension created by the non-satisfaction in time of certain needs;
- activity by which “the top management creates, maintains and intensifies the employee’s interest and desire for the accomplishment, in the best conditions, of the tasks entrusted”.

“Motivation is an engine allowing and producing movement. Motivation lies on the emotional level in the threefold unit “*physical – emotional – intellectual*”. It refers to the desire lying in between the intellectual and the physical level. Motivation is an impetus generating action; it is the movement that mobilizes the heart. It initiates and orients one’s behavioral evolution. A tension is created, orienting the behavior towards a certain objective, a tension maintained until this goal is reached.”[10].

Therefore, motivation supposes the existence of an intense need (activating the human behavior), dynamism (the internal drive determining behavior) and objectives (rewards, stimulants) leading to the satisfaction of the persons, which

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further consolidates motivation. We can say that motivation expresses the intensity of a person's desire to get involved in an activity and it can be intrinsic (what animates the person in the absence of a tangible reward) or extrinsic (the motivation that animates the person to accomplish a task to obtain a tangible retribution).

The role of motivating the human resource in an organization is particularly important. In general, the problems of motivation are approached in relation to the individual, yet the studies carried out on motivation in different groups show that if the principles of individual motivation are applied to work teams, they become more efficient and more competitive.

The factors influencing the performances of a team [11] are:

- *the structure of the group*: the performances of the group are influenced by the leadership style – autocratic or democratic – the latter being more motivating;
- *the homogeneity of the group*: an important role goes to the compatibility among group members;
- *group cohesion*: a high performance is obtained if there is a feeling of belonging to the group among its members;
- *the size of the group*: if a lot of information needs to be processed, performance increases with the increase of the group dimension, yet a large group may also lead to decreased performance because the interaction of the group members becomes complex;
- *activity features*: well-defined, precise activities are managed more efficiently by homogeneous groups, and complex activities, which may involve more creativity, are better managed by heterogeneous groups;
- *the organizational and environmental context in which the group undertakes its activity*. For routine tasks, performances increase if a high degree of formalization is imposed in the organization, whereas for changing environmental conditions, less formalism permits a better adaptation to conditions. The performance of the group also depends on other factors such as: the nature of the intergroup relations or the reward system.
- *result evaluation*: individual results may be hard to track for large groups. Simple activities may be easier to evaluate and the use of a result-evaluation system may lead to increased performance, yet for complex activities this evaluation can have negative effects.
- *feedback*: it is particularly important for the group to have information on its performances.

Motivation is the inner force leading the human resources towards the realization of their personal and organizational objectives. It is particularly important in attracting and preserving the people in an organization in the long run. Motivation

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tools act as a binder between the individuals and the organizational objectives, leading to creativity and increased work performances. This happens because a motivated employee is a more productive employee and a more productive employee is a more profitable employee, thanks to whom a company can obtain competitive advantages on the market.

### **3. Motivation through teamwork**

Self-managed work teams are groups of individuals to which the management has given the authority to manage themselves and their work [12]. Working in teams means motivating individuals, empowering them, and achieving five motivational goals:

1. Foster mutual respect for the expertise of all members – teams tend to be most motivated when they trust the expertise of other members,
2. Help weaker team members believe that their effort is vital to team success – teams, to be motivated, have to trust that weaker members will invest maximum effort to build their expertise,
3. Support a shared belief in the cooperative capabilities of the team – teams, to be motivated, have to trust that other team members will fully collaborate,
4. Hold individual team members accountable for their contributions to the team effort as team members.

All kind of different values, skills and competencies of team members are crucial for the success of team work [13]. Team work performance can be negatively affected where one or more team members do not value teamwork. The negative effects were found to occur through interpersonal processes, decision-making processes, and effort applied to the work.

Characteristics of team excellence [14]:

1. A clear goal that involves and motivates, and allows the team to know whether the performance objective has been achieved,
  2. A results-driven structure that enables clear roles for members, good communication,
  3. Competent team members who have the core competencies to do the job and solve problems, and interpersonal skills to cooperate and engage in teamwork,
  4. Unified commitment that enables members to have a sense of unity or identification with the team,
  5. Collaborative climate to listen, understand, interact and build open, honest and respectful relationships,
  6. Standards of excellence that are clear and concrete, and facilitated by group norms that enable members to perform at their highest levels and receive feedback that acknowledges, sustains and rewards results,
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7. External support and recognition such as clear direction, information, resources, training and rewards for accomplishing goals,
8. Principled leadership is the central driver, effectiveness influencing four sets of processes - cognitive, motivational, affective and coordination - to match members' skills to roles, provide clear performance strategies, monitor feedback and adapt to environmental change

#### **4. Propositions: increasing employees' motivation using effective work team**

##### **4.1. Virtual team**

A virtual team is a physically dispersed group working across distance, time, organizational and national boundaries, using information technology to interact [15]. Global organizations and strategic alliances with widely dispersed activities increasingly rely on virtual teams of geographically dispersed team members to take shared responsibility for producing goods and services. Virtual team leaders and members collaborate and communicate remotely through communication technologies. Members seldom or never meet face-to-face. Members can be home or office-based employees, contractors or consultants, from different domains or different locations, national or international. This physical dispersion presents additional communication challenges for the team leader and members as they build a sense of organizational and team identity, commitment and loyalty. Members of virtual teams need to be skilled communicators and have access to organizational and team information and knowledge. They also need to belong to the organization's formal and informal networks. A culture of familiarity, relationships and trust within a virtual team depends on quality team communication.

##### **4.2. Cross-functional teams**

Its members are experts in several specialties who work together on various tasks, and have complementary skills, knowledge and experience to accomplish the team purpose and task. They have at least three types of members: core (are accountable for the results), extended and ancillary (who add know-how and take responsibility for knowledge management and administrative activities) [15]. Specialists say that these teams seem to be the most effective in companies with fast-changing markets and responding to fast-changing needs.

##### **4.3. Team-building**

An ingredient necessary for a team-building program is represented by the "ice-breaker" exercises whose role is to fluidize the behavior interaction area and to extend their boundaries in the work-group. Team-building starts to be seen,

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increasingly more, rather like a philosophy developed within the human resource management and a dynamic and flexible methodological set, at whose basis remains the relation between group cohesion and assuring performance. Cohesion influences performance, and gathering performance influences cohesion. For these considerations, team-building remains a precious tool for organizational development as well [16].

Steps to be followed in the realization of an efficient team-building programme [17]:

- clear setting of objectives, which need to be easy to understand, relevant, applicable and sustainable,
- planning the activities for each person involved,
- establishing a relaxed work atmosphere,
- efficient communication,
- explaining to each team member what he needs to do,
- explaining the steps to be taken,
- explaining the rules to be followed, the time and the budget allocated,
- checking if the team members understood what was explained,
- explaining the criteria leading to the designation of a winner,
- carrying out the activity itself,
- encouraging and supporting the team members,
- availability of the leader for the problems appeared,
- peaceful monitoring and control.

**The 4 Cs used to obtain teamwork performances** For a team to be effective, the researchers have come to the conclusion that the 4 Cs need to be managed so as to attain the objectives proposed [18]:

1. context – the need of existence of a team, the type of team, the structure, the culture, the systems supporting teamwork
2. content – skills, experience, motivation and team size
3. competences – the ability of the team to solve problems, to communicate, to make decisions, to manage conflicts efficiently
4. coordination and change - abilities of monitoring team performance and of making the necessary changes.

Features necessary to a team leader [19]: technical skills, knowledge, experience, high motivation degree, efficient interpersonal and communication skills, conflict management skills, skills of adaptation to new situations, initiative and help given to the team to attain the objectives.

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#### 4.4. Quality circles

This method is used mainly to increase organizational efficiency, implicitly attracting a development of it; another aspect that should be noticed is that by their way of developing their activity, quality circles also have positive effects on the work climate. The quality circles comprise those people who, by volunteering, come together to solve the problems occurred [20]. The method was developed by Ishikawa, in 1960 and demonstrated that problems can be solved more easily by people with execution functions, as they are in direct contact with these problems.

Problems can be further divided into the following categories:

- problems of category A – supposing a minimal involvement from other departments,
- problems of category B – requiring the involvement of other departments,
- problems of category C - support, sanctions and involvement from the management are needed to implement the solution.

**Advantages** offered by the quality circles:

- opportunities of development and training, employees' involvement, changes made by the employees, people closer to the problem, synergy [21],
- increased productivity, spirit of democracy, free discussions with the top management, increased self-esteem and satisfaction level among the employees [22],
- improved work style, problem solving, team work and increased trust in personal and team forces, lower consumptions, lower number of errors, better productive flow, identification of underused or unused resources [23].

**Disadvantages** of the quality circles [24]: lack of self-support, lack of focus, training costs, lack of experience in the technical domain and different problems occurred in the work domain. Even though they were brought and implemented also in Europe, South America, Australia, Asia, India or Africa, they did not have the performance of those implemented in Japan.

Quality circles should meet the following conditions to attain the desired performance [25]:

1. be made only of volunteers,
  2. the members should belong to the different domains concerned,
  3. recording of those participating in the program and their coordination,
  4. programmes to create awareness of the method with all the employees of the organization,
  5. the problems occurred should be chosen by the team members, not imposed by the management,
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6. the management should support the quality circles, even though the problems may seem simple or costly; the efficiency of the quality circles also supposes support and involvement from the top management.
7. the team should be developed by training,
8. the leader of the quality circle and its internal structure should be set by the team,
9. the top management should offer a middle manager as a member to support quality circles,
10. the analysis of the present state should take place based on a questionnaire.

Baron R. [26] develops the following succession of stages regarding the use of the method: the discussion groups identify the key-problems influencing efficiency or quality; they are analyzed attentively, trying to discover specific solutions; the recommendations are transmitted to the managerial team for analysis; once accepted, solutions are implemented; if not, the objections according to which the solutions cannot be implemented are transmitted to the group; if the solutions have been implemented, the success of the implemented solutions is analyzed.

**Quality circles control** [27]: it is an approach that uses the employees' skills, knowledge and potential to solve problems; it is the activity of a small group, in which volunteers come together regularly to share ideas and to solve problems.

After these meetings, people become more interested in their positions and more loyal to the organization.

## Conclusions

When people work in teams they encounter two issues that can either help or hinder team spirit and motivation: first, it is their belief about whether other team members have the variety of skills and knowledge necessary to achieve team goals; and, second, it is their expectation about whether the team will collaborate effectively to get the job done.

They also must believe that everyone on the team will invest their best effort and not rely on others to do their work. When teams are composed of people with different but compatible skills, member concerns about the expertise of their team colleagues is critical to team motivation. When people have doubt about the competence or the capabilities of some members, motivation will suffer. That is why trust, the power of collaboration, and commitment will be the solution for a strong and effective work team.

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Increasingly motivated employees will be more attached to the organization, will identify with it, and will stay more hired in this firm. Using work team as a motivating tool the organization will improve learning, relationships, cooperation and performance.

Low-performing teams, on the other hand, are likely to have highly knowledgeable team members and are less likely to allow the knowledge that is available to highly influence team decisions. Team work and team performance are primarily determined by management support by offering a supportive environment, in which members can learn from one another, create work relationships, improve skills, show commitment and achieve goals.

Team effectiveness is obtained when designing a team is perceived as a key element in obtaining performance.

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