

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

Interviews on the eight construction site were conducted for duration of four days.

Despite the theories and studies of the relationship between satisfaction and performance of the skilled workforce, doubts still exist as how to manage organizations so that the workforces have both high job satisfaction and increase in productivity.

4.2 Discussions of findings

The role of the site managers/agents is to plan, organize, lead and to control the workforce. Planning involves choosing specific goals and working toward the means of achieving these goals. Organizing creates structures and work systems and putting together resources to achieve goals and objectives. Leading enhance the managers to motivate the workforce to work hard and controlling ensures that things are on track by monitoring performance and ensuring a positive result.

From the findings, the managers use authoritarian/autocratic style of management in which they have dominant control, avoid discussion and unwilling to accept suggestion from subordinates. This type of managerial system needs to be modified into something democratic where both managers and skilled workers engage in work related discussion, allow consultation where necessary and to some extend involve the skilled workers in certain decision making and talk over problems of work. This method of management will encourage joint responsibility on the part of both site managers/agents and the skilled employees.

The one need in the hierarchy of needs that stands out most in all the sites visited is physiological needs; the physical needs of the skilled workforce which are the primary needs such as the need for food, shelter, and clothing can be directly satisfied by compensation; prompt and adequate payment of the workers.

Followed by the physiological needs is the gratification of safety or security needs. The security needs for most of the skilled workforce is job security needs in addition to an increase in salary, benefits and safety on site.

The next level is the social needs. The social relationships within and out of the company. The peer group acceptance is very important to most of the workforce.

When the social needs are satisfied, the self – esteem needs take precedence. The highest need in the hierarchy of needs is the need for self – actualization, this enhance the employees to seek a fulfilling, challenging and creative jobs to achieve self – actualization.

The first three needs; physiological needs, safety or security needs and social needs are top most in the needs of the skilled workforce. This is in agreement with Backer's (1973) study done in the evaluation of the state of development of work motivation in terms of this concept in relation to black work motivation in South Africa and the study of Limerick (1974) in which he stated that Maslow's hierarchies of needs can be use to adequately explain the behaviour of workers in South Africa.

Herzberg's hygiene factor in the findings reveals that the factors, which lead to satisfaction, are quite different from those that cause dissatisfaction among the skilled workforce. Dissatisfaction arises from environmental factors such as working conditions remuneration, work supervision and the relationship between members of the workforce.

Expectancy theory relates workers/employees to motivation and the expectation of the desired outcomes in satisfying their individual goals, such as money, recognition, promotion, and security.

This theory can be used to show professionals, site managers or supervisors how to enhance employee motivation. The ways of doing this is to increase the workforce perception that: they can succeed and they will be rewarded for success in a way that has value to them. Managers in the construction industry believe that they “do not have the time” to employ the theory consistently.

Explanation in terms of expectancy versus performance and making the interrelationships clear, trainers can emphasize their importance to managers. In the construction industry the following factors can be use in increasing and maintaining employee motivation.

In defining expectations, it is unrealistic to assume that employees know what managers expect. Managers need to give a clear goals and performance standards individually with employees. Both short and long-term goals should be discussed with employees, and results of which should be measurable; and the whole process should be tied into the performance – appraisal system.

Increase the perceived value of work: Employees work hard in order to attain or achieve personal goals such as money, security, challenge, accomplishment, self – esteem, professional development or social needs.

The commitment level of the employees will increase if they believe that working toward goals will help them to achieve personal goals.

Assignment structured realistically: The skilled workforce should be match with the given task or challenges. These challenges will stimulate growth and creativity if these goals are ultimately achievable.

Coach the skilled workers for success: If the skilled worker doubts his own ability to carry out an assigned task, they rarely confide such doubts to the managers. The fear of not meeting the manager’s expectations can be demotivating and debilitating. Managers therefore should be checking for skilled workers concern about assignments and coaching them can help to establish an expectation for success.

Provide support: The skilled workers should know that work issues can be discussed with managers or supervisor if the need arise. They also have to be open to suggestions that can improve the work. They can help the skilled workforce to structure their time, tasks, and resources to best achieve goals. Provide the resources or the support to get the job done.

Make specific and timely feedback: Knowing how the skilled workforces are doing is a key ingredient of motivation and productivity. Both encouragement and correction are valuable if given to the skilled workforce at the right time. They can be less effective if given too late.

Rewards should be provided for success: Meeting a challenge can provide internal rewards, but the skilled workforce needs external rewards as well. These rewards includes public recognition within the work unit, increase autonomy on the job, training for professional development, a desired new task or responsibility, a promotion, a raise in salary and so on. Rewards of a monetary nature should be accompanied by recognition or praise. Because rewards for achievement of goals are in the nature of feedback, they also should be timely and specific.

Basic managerial skills, which are consistently employed by site managers/agents, are often described as; clarifying expectations; setting of realistic and measurable goals; providing timely and specific feedback; conducting regular, periodic evaluations; and coaching.

The principal potential motivators to high performance concern, financial incentives and job security, only raise productivity if operative motivation is the principal determinant of output. Unfortunately there are some basic flaws in the application of this theory to the construction industry because, expectancy theory being holistic, it is not possible to single out financial incentives.

Equity deals with the perception of fairness. The crux of equity theory is that workers compare their performance and salaries with those of workers in comparable jobs. The key is whether the workers perceived equity or inequity in the construction industry with regards to remuneration.

The skilled workforce will generally attempt to work harder to obtain equity, which will also earn them more reward. On the contrary they will work less effectively if they believe that they are under compensated for work done. The theory also holds that employees will change their behaviour in order to make more money for services rendered.

Workers want to be treated fairly, they observe what happen to other workers and if they receive either “too much” or “too little “in comparison to others, it makes them very uncomfortable.

The major motivating force in the construction industry is a sharing for perceived fairness or equity among the skilled workforce. It tries to understand exchanges among individuals and teams or group and the effects of the perceived imbalance on these exchanges.

In the fairness equation of equity, inputs includes training in the form of education, intelligence, experience, skills acquisition, seniority, age, effort, and risk taking. The outputs of this are the rewards received by services rendered by the workforce in the construction industry. These rewards includes, pay, nature of the work, quality of supervision, benefits, status, power, and respect. The skilled workers are motivated towards equity. Equity in turn satisfies the skilled workforce, while inequity does not satisfy.

In the fair work environment, equality of input should result in equality of outcomes with regards to monetary reward, which is binding between the skilled workforces and site managers/agents representing the employer (construction companies) on site.

Perceived inequity among the workforce results in a sense of dissatisfaction. If inequity is one of under – reward, then dissatisfaction usually takes the form of anger. If it is that of over – reward it will result in emotional guilt.

Rewards in this context refer to monetary reward which in actual sense is not done fairly because there is no pre – bargain with the skilled workers, the site managers/agents and employer decides how much monetary reward to give at every stage of reward system.

When workers have a feeling of inequity, it creates a state of tension proportional to the amount of the perceived inequity. This tension according to the theory becomes the motivating force directed toward removing the inequity.

The equity theory predicts that workers who perceive themselves as being under paid will reduce the quality of their work output. Workers who feel over paid will raise the quality of their output while leaving quantity unchanged or lowering it. This gives the clear impact on productivity.

Perception of the workforce being under paid or under – rewarded will lead to increased absenteeism and reduce turnover. Workers steal time to compensate for low wages.

Productivity in terms of both qualities is influenced by the workers perceptions of whether they are being treated fairly.

Equity is an important part of the construction industry's life; site managers or site supervisors should learn how to practically apply this theory in order to improve productivity.

Goal setting: The routine on all the construction sites is the allocation of work task to every worker and individuals or team are given measurable goals rather than vague performance standards. Feedbacks on work progress are periodically given by site managers/agents enhancing the workers to make the necessary correction where necessary. Most of the sites visited linked performance to rewards.

The emphasis is on; if you accomplish this task within this time frame then you will be rewarded accordingly, if not then no reward.

The construction industry's skilled workforce work in teams or groups. On a typical construction site you have skilled workers like the carpenter's and team/group members or the bricklayers and team/group members. The South African construction industry practices group oriented system where satisfaction and performance are derived from group work or participation.

Modern management of employees has discovered that increased cost of absenteeism and turnover together with the decreased in productivity and quality of output may exceed the advantages of highly specialized jobs. There is therefore a need to balance the employees' human needs and the employers' economic goals (Carrell et al, 1998).

Using monetary reward as the only form of motivation is less effective as discussed in the findings. Money motivate to a certain limit and time. Beyond certain limitation it no longer motivates.

Site managers have an impact in either motivating or demotivating the skilled workforce.

Most of the site manager's thinks money is an effective motivator, but in actual fact money can not be an effective motivator because when the optimum pay peak is reached it is no longer seen as a motivator for the skilled workers.

Compensation especially incentive compensation is one of the most powerful of all management techniques for improving productivity. Compensation should be given as incentives to the skilled workforce; this should be fairly intangible, and as related to Maslow's higher needs, particularly the fulfillment of these as define by Herzberg as the 'intrinsic motivators'. When these incentives are offered to the workers they serve as an acknowledgement of the importance of the individual and recognize the need for group participation to provide social satisfaction.

Equitable payments should be made for similar effort; this will help to prevent frustration of the skilled workforce. Salary received by the skilled workforce for the job he or she performs is determined by many factors, there is no one correct salary for any job. Salaries vary for similar jobs in different organizations, based on geographic location, employees' length of time on the job, experiential qualifications, the activities and actions of labour union, and the various labour acts. Motivation theories agree that it is important to reward high performance in order to encourage its continuity to prevent it from diminishing and to set an example for other members of the skilled workforce within the construction industry. Pay is very important to high achievers because it serves as a performance feedback, as a measure of goal attainment and as a reward for accomplishment.

The gap between motivation and an increase in productivity by the skilled workforce as identified in the research could be remedied by addressing the following issues:

1. The review of related literature presented in chapter two gives an indication of the effect of rewards on motivation which is determined by how much the reward is valued by the skilled workers and what action they have to take in order to obtain rewards. Generally the more attractive the reward, the greater the motivational power to make workers behave in a certain ways.

2. Reward system on site should therefore not only be restricted to monetary reward, but site managers/agents and the construction company they work for should start thinking of implementing reward such as award for best performed group or individual and also showing recognition for deserving and best performed workers.

Personal recognition is a very powerful motivator. Recognition such as pat on the back, a personal note from the site managers/agents, and small celebrations can do great wonders for the skilled workforce morale. Failure to recognize the accomplishments of the majority of the workers is one of the greatest reasons why site managers/agents or supervisors fail to create a motivational work environment.

3. The managerial style used by managers can exert a powerful force either positively or negatively on the workforce level of motivation to perform well.

4. The managerial style of the respondents needs to incorporate the decision of the skilled workforce; this will help to improve on the productivity of the workers.

5. Meaningful goals and objectives should be set for the skilled workers. The goals should be clear, quantifiable (time bound) and specific. This will provide a good sense of order and purpose for the construction companies.

6. Goal setting allows respondents and the skilled worker to continually work for improvement.

In addition, whatever goal is set should be clearly communicated to the skilled workers and Site managers/agents should ensure that the skilled workforce understand their goals and agree with them.

The skilled workforce should be treated fairly in terms of equity. Treating the skilled workers fairly is a strong determinant of their behaviour and is also a significant factor in influencing their motivation.

7. Jobs done by the skilled workers should be interesting; this will remove boredom and will enhance the workforce to enjoy doing their job by making it as interesting as possible for employees who seek greater satisfaction from performing their jobs.

8. Safety should be given priorities on every building project site. Safety always comes first. Analytical verification of the level of motivation on a building project site is found in the reduction of accident. Projects with a high motivational atmosphere will have a significant lower level incidence of accidents. When the workforce are consumed with frustration and not spending a lot of time thinking about work flow problems and their own dissatisfaction, they cannot keep their mind focused on the proper safety procedures and they will be less alert to potentially hazardous conditions.

4.3 Research problems

Problems generally encountered in the acquisition of data for research report is the non responsiveness of the construction companies human resource managers to telephone interviews and email questionnaires. This caused a considerable delay in the early completion of research and hence a limitation to the target sample universe study.