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NONFINANCIAL REWARD SYSTEM IN NIGERIAN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ORGANISATIONS

DR. A. M. ABU-ABDISSAMAD
READER
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY
ZARIA

ABSTRACT

Budgetary constraints and government policy led organisations to introduce nonfinancial rewards in order to boost productivity and retain employees. This paper surveys nonfinancial rewards from related literature and identified those nonfinancial rewards in common use in Nigerian organisations. The organisations surveyed included banks, educational and health institutions as well as local government secretariats around Zaria. The paper found that flexitime, life assurance, and Friday drinks were not in use in the organisations surveyed. The study observed that monetisation exercise in public sector had adversely affected the morale of public servants who felt that they were buying and maintaining official vehicles for their organisations. The paper recommends regular review of nonfinancial rewards to avoid the current situation where employees consider them as their rights rather than incentives to boost productivity.

KEYWORDS

nonfinancial rewards, incentives, motivation, organisations.

1. INTRODUCTION

Organisations consist of different people with different socio-economic backgrounds. The more their backgrounds differ, the greater the complexity of their innate desires and what influences their behaviours and performance in organisations. For instance, there are some individuals who are self-motivated in organisations because of the personal interest they have in the work they do. Such people derive pride in being able to do their work well and in the minimum amount of time. Unfortunately, a typical organisation rarely finds such individuals constituting any significant proportion of its workforce. This means that the bulk of the employees need some push to perform the task assigned to them. That is, they need incentives to make them work hard and be efficient. They also need rewards not only to sustain the level of performance they have attained but also to improve on it. It follows therefore that the bulk of the organisations' employees must be induced before they can minimize avoidable delays, adhere to prescribed methods of work, and maintain a satisfactory level of performance. This set of circumstances creates a certain kind of environment in most organisations. The environment is such that unless the managements motivate the employees the labour productivity will fall below expected level even when concerted efforts are made to recruit personnel with requisite skills for the jobs.

1.1. METHODOLOGY

This paper compiled various nonfinancial rewards from related literature and carried out surveys on existing nonfinancial rewards in public and private sector organisations in Zaria. The survey covered banks, educational and health institutions as well as Local Government Secretariats around Zaria. The survey was carried out to enable the investigator to obtain some data on the different types of nonfinancial rewards in vogue in the various organisations.

1.2 OBJECTIVE

The main objective of the paper is to ascertain the degree of use of nonfinancial incentives in selected public and private sector organisations in Zaria. Other objectives include attempts to establish the efficacy or otherwise of nonfinancial reward system in boosting and sustaining productivity in sampled organisations.

2. EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION

The desire for recognition and the improved status it brings appears universal regardless of age, position, education, tribe, and race. Recognition must be sincere and based on above-average performance, or it will not be appreciated by the recipient and will be resented by others. The degree to which recognition serves as a motivational stimulant varies considerably among individuals. A verbal praise of subordinates after successful completion of a task can motivate him for continuous successful completion of tasks. This positive reinforcement is a straightforward way of increasing desired behaviour and is widely used by managers. Therefore, unlike monetary rewards which are limited to salary increases, profit sharing, and paid time-off, nonfinancial rewards are numerous and evolving according to changes in societal values. Also monetary benefits are generally tied to productivity whereas non-monetary incentives may only involve change in working tools, such as replacing typewriter with computer, which could make the worker perform better and generate more revenue and profit for the organisation without direct benefit to the employee.

Mayo (1933) and Roethlisberger (1939) asserted that workers' dissatisfaction with financial incentive schemes reached its peak in the 1930s. It was therefore suggested that workers, rather than managers, should take responsibility for quality, take control over the speed of work, interact and cooperate while tasks are varied to avoid monotony.

Job enrichment, job enlargement, team work and employee empowerment by allowing workers to control their time and decide the priority task that need to be done are a few examples of non-monetary rewards. Mossbarger and Eddington (2003) consider nonfinancial rewards to be those rewards that motivate employees for their creative and intellectual ability. They then opine that "goal setting, communication, autonomy, responsibility, and flexibility" which are basic ingredients for productivity improvement are nonfinancial rewards. Riley (2010) considers attachment of staff to other organisations as nonfinancial incentives. Other researchers (Worman 2010, Throckmorton n.d, GNE 2011, Woods 1997, Muir n.d, and Hewlett 2012) have identified several nonfinancial incentives at the disposal of managers. Worman (2010) lists 20 nonfinancial ways available to managers for motivating their subordinates and they include training, one-on-one coaching, applause, career path, job titles, good work environment, leadership roles, on-the-spot praise, team spirit and social gatherings. Others are executive recognition, casual dressing, time-off, outside seminars, additional responsibility, stress management and literary contest, pizza, and gimmicks. Similarly, Throckmorton (n.d) lists 18 different ways of recognition and rewards while GNE (2011) lists 51 different nonfinancial rewards available to managers for motivating their employees. They include a reserved parking spot, use of President's office for a day, a vacation day, buying them ticket to a concert, allow them to be flexible with their hours, give them a new/improved job title, allow them to dress casually on Fridays, a public thank you, etc. Silverman (2004) suggests that employees may be given a chance to enjoy a "present" away from office such as travel vouchers, meals for the employees and partners, theatre tickets, etc. McAdams (1995) posits that honorary and informal recognition can be powerful tools for promoting organisational and team goals and objects. Many workers consider company car, free private medical care, free pension entitlement, bigger budget to control and choice of where to be posted in an organisation as nonfinancial rewards that are very cost-effective.

In the employment cycle, nonfinancial benefits are rewards to a worker other than extra pay. Worman (2010) asserts that it is a costly mistake to get lost in the false theory that more money equals happy employees. Collaborating with Worman, Mossbarger and Eddington (2003) opine that although financial rewards are varied according to the situation and money available to an organization, money is not the best motivator because the motivational effect of most financial

rewards does not last. They conclude that effective motivation is only achieved by using both financial and nonfinancial motivational tools. In this wise, Riley (2010) cites free shares offered to staff and attending fair trade coffee plantation by managers at Starbucks of UK as two examples of nonfinancial incentives. Other available benefits according to Charnock (2011) include tax equalisation, and private expenses.

3. ADVANTAGES OF NONFINANCIAL REWARDS

NGFL (2008) compares monetary and nonfinancial rewards in terms of their impact upon employees by observing that monetary rewards directly involve financial benefits to the workers while nonfinancial rewards provide the workers with psychological benefits. These psychological benefits may be in a form of memorable experiences as asserted by Vecchi (2011). According to Vecchi, "a travel reward brings new memories that can last a lifetime and bring about good feelings connected with the company for years to come." Dewhurst, Guthridge and Mohr (2009) note that nonfinancial ways to motivate employees may require a great deal of time and commitment from senior managers in organisations in order to have meaningful impact. Since their importance cannot be overstressed, it is imperative that non-monetary rewards should form one important part of a complete employee recognition programme along with monetary rewards because each employee may be motivated by different factor or a combination of factors. It follows that non-monetary rewards can be used for either individual or team rewards for obvious advantages.

Akyeampong (1993) explains that in Canada, there is flexible work arrangement which varies within certain limits from the beginning to the end of the workday. He observes that such work arrangements are easier to implement in personal services than in manufacturing although the flexibility hours is outside core working hours that the employee must be present. He also distinguishes between formal and informal flexitime arrangement such that the latter involves detailed formal documentation while the former only requires supervisor's endorsement and in either way they could accumulate extra work hours and use them as their leave later. It can be seen that the main objective of flexitime is to give people choice about their actual working hours outside certain agreed core times regarding their starting time, break periods and closing hours so as to reduce absenteeism.

Sammer (2011) observes that nonfinancial rewards become more visible during difficult times and they are sustained after economic conditions have improved. This implies that although nonfinancial rewards are privileges, they tend to be part of what employees see as their rights. It may therefore be necessary for organisations to make nonfinancial scheme a very dynamic programme by replacing some existing incentives with new ones from time-to-time. This will create a more fair impression to employees and continuously challenge them to work towards enjoying current nonfinancial rewards.

One important challenge facing many managers is the inability to appreciate that nonfinancial rewards have the capacity to motivate employee as much as monetary incentives. Managers tend to skew towards the traditional managerial wisdom that money is what really counts in motivating employees including them. In addition, many managers believe that nonfinancial rewards require more time and commitment from senior managers.

Pointing out some advantages associated with nonfinancial rewards, Ryan (2009) asserts that nonfinancial rewards can be very cost-effective for companies because, in contrast with a pay increase, little or no income tax or national insurance contributions are paid. She however observes that there is no any strong empirical evidence comparing the relative benefits of monetary versus non-monetary rewards. Thus, she only considers non-monetary rewards as part of comprehensive performance improvement strategy rather than a better alternative for motivating employees. Despite the dearth of empirical evidence indicated by Ryan, Scott (2013) asserts that nonfinancial rewards can have more substantial impact on employee satisfaction and motivation than traditional financial rewards. His claim is based on the outcome of a study carried out by the Hay Group. Some findings of the study were that many employees left their jobs because of "work climate, career development, recognition and other nonfinancial issues." However, Comeskey (2010) argues that nonfinancial rewards bring back tangible link by making employees "feeling involved" because financial rewards usually get eroded by mortgage, rent, utilities and other direct and automatic payments from their bank accounts. But he points out that nonfinancial reward may create jealousy and disharmony.

Emphasising the relevance of nonfinancial rewards in organisations, Scarpati (2008) asserts that nonfinancial rewards serve as better indicators of future financial performance of organisations even though there is no common denominator, time, quantities, percentage for measuring what is purported to represent. This means that nonfinancial rewards are arbitrary ways without statistical means of measuring their impact in organisational growth and development.

4. NONFINANCIAL REWARDS IN NIGERIA

Nonfinancial rewards may differ according to organisation, country or even region. It may also differ according to employee cadre and position whereby what motivates an employee in an executive cadre may differ from another employee of the officer cadre even when they are both on the same grade level. This study established that parking space, office size, training, job titles, leadership roles, social gathering, casual dressing day, outside seminars, free-gifts, official vehicle and free medical care are commonly used as motivational factors in both public and private organisations in Nigeria.

Among the nonfinancial rewards used in Nigeria, parking space appears to be the most common nonfinancial motivator. For instance, in higher institutions of learning like the Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria, professors have designated parking spaces at the Faculty of Education in the same manner that the university principal officers have parking sheds at the Senate Building. Virtually all directors and heads of units in the ministries and parastatals also have reserved parking spaces. There is no doubt that lecturers aspire to become professors and workers look forward to the days they will become at least heads of units in order to enjoy reserved parking spaces. In private organizations like banks, the staff have secluded and fully secured parking sheds that no customers can access let alone park their vehicles.

It is also observed that official staff quarters and cars are used as nonfinancial benefits by both public and private organizations in Nigeria. For example, the size and location of staff quarters are used as status symbols; and they can motivate employees to put in their best for the organizational growth. Organisations that provide housing to their staff go further to designate them as senior and junior staff quarters. Junior employees work harder to earn promotion which will qualify them for senior staff quarters. Similarly, many organisations provide official cars to certain categories of their staff in order to motivate them to perform at their best. The cars are distinguished by brand and/or model to represent seniority with the latest model allocated to top management staff.

Staff training also serves as nonfinancial reward in Nigerian organisations. Most organizations reserve overseas training and seminars for management staff but a few others extend it to all senior staff. Because junior staff and middle level management in some organisations go for local training and seminars, they work hard to get regular promotion in order to rise to management level so that they can qualify to attend overseas training and seminars. Similar privileges are also available in form of Sabbatical leave in the universities where lecturers below the rank of Senior Lecturer in many universities do not qualify to enjoy Sabbatical leave.

Retreat has become very popular in the recent past. Both public and private organizations now include retreats in their annual programmes. Because most retreats take place outside the station of workers, they serve not only as opportunities to review past performance and plan for future activities but also they serve as stress management strategy. Workers feel motivated when they are nominated to attend retreats. In most public sector organisations, junior staff are not entitled to go for retreat. Many of them are disgruntled because they feel neglected. Retreats are differentiated for different categories of management staff by location, contents and organisers. While top management may have their retreats locally or overseas, middle-level management only attend retreats locally.

Casual dress day is another emerging nonfinancial benefit employees hardly miss. In the private sector especially in banks, Fridays are casual dress days. Bankers are happy wearing their traditional dress to come to work. In fact, even those bankers who put on English dresses appear casual with no tie, wearing jeans and without tucking-in their shirts. Visitors to banks could see how natural bankers look when they do not observe corporate dress code.

Although not officially declared, Fridays are regarded as "half-day" in public service of Nigeria. It is the day that many public servants go to work later than the official reporting time without receiving queries from their superiors. Workers may also close earlier than the official closing time.

The official cars which used to serve as motivational tools for senior (middle management) staff before the introduction of monetisation policy are now the exclusive preserve of the management staff. Similarly, the free medical care which was very popular before the introduction of the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) has also ceased.

Free medical care was generally offered to staff in both public and private sector organisations. Workers with their spouses and a maximum of four children or other dependents were entitled to free medical care throughout their working life. Free medical facility had been a source of motivation for workers in many respects. Apart from guaranteed quality medical service, free medical care enables workers to save money they would otherwise spend on medication. The organisations were also deriving some benefit from the scheme since the employees were never spending hours in the queues before getting medical attention. Size of office furniture can also be used as nonfinancial incentives. Many workers can be motivated by the sizes of their offices and the types of furniture put in the offices. This study observed that top management staff of government parastatals are motivated by large offices furnished with glass top tables and leather seats. On the other hand, bankers are motivated by glass offices, cute tables and fancy chairs. Other workers associate sizes of tables with the status of the employees.

A number of organizations use free gifts and social gathering to motivate their staff for superior performance. Many organisations present birthday gifts like sets of tea cups/glasses, branded toiletries, and customized diaries to their staff. Some organisations give meal tickets of standard restaurants to their staff while others set up full-fledged restaurants exclusively for their staff. In both public and private sectors, long-service awards are common for employees that have served for 10 or more years in the organisations. Workers who receive the awards are usually happy to note that their loyalty has been recognised. Other workers feel a great sense of belonging during end of year party, send forth party, staff wedding and similar gatherings where every worker is free to attend.

It is a fact of organizational life that most workers aspire for leadership positions. In order to motivate workers through leadership positions, many organizations create different leadership positions in addition to those existing in the formal structure. This provides opportunities for organizations to assign leadership positions to hard working employees for the purpose of motivating them to work harder. In order to meet the yearning of members with strong disposition towards leadership position, some organisations create ad hoc committees and assigned some non-management staff to chair them. These chairmen may be leaders of project teams, or policy implementation group. Most workers put in their best as leaders in order not to fail. Typical example is a lecturer appointed to lead his colleagues to develop new course programme for consideration by the university senate.

There are other status symbols in common use in both private and public sector organisations. For example, plaques and certificates of honour are usually displayed by their recipients in offices and sitting rooms (parlours) in their houses.

5. CONCLUSIONS

From the interactions with staff and management of some of the organisations visited, it was discovered that some of the popular nonfinancial rewards are not used in any of the organisations studied. For example, "time-off" and "flexitime" do not exist in the organisations that the researcher visited. The study observed that monetisation exercise in public sector has adversely affected the morale of public servants. This is because monetisation of free medical care, official cars and staff quarters makes employees to feel as if they are using their personal income to buy and maintain official cars for the organisations. They also perceive monetisation as a renege on the part of organisations to provide medical care and official quarters for them. It is therefore proving difficult for senior civil servants to sustain their living standards before monetisation. This shows that nonfinancial rewards play a great role in motivating employees in Nigerian organisations.

The paper recommends regular review of nonfinancial rewards to avoid the current situation where employees consider them as their rights rather than incentives to boost productivity. The paper also recommends that the Government should reconsider its monetisation policy on housing which is not favourable to the new entrants into the civil service. The Government should make annual budgetary provisions for the building of new houses to be sold to the young graduates who will be replacing the retiring/outgoing civil servants since the available staff quarters have already been sold to the occupants.

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