Effective Management and its Connection to Employee Stress

Name

Institution

Introduction

The success or failure of an organization largely depends on the mood, motivation, and commitment of employees. More than often, an under-motivated workforce results in poor performance leading to unforgiving losses or even a complete organizational crisis. Inappropriate man-management approaches used by organizational superiors are nothing, but a recipe for employee stress and eventual exodus. Employees might abandon organization A for B not because they got greener pastures, but because they feel the need for mental stimulation and relief – motivation.

It is indeed a sad truth that most bosses do not understand what stress is, how it impacts people, or how to identify and manage it. The manager is primarily responsible for maintaining a positive employee mood, work morale and loyalty. If stress is not properly managed, employee health and absence problems and consequent reduction of individual and organizational productivity would be the only casualty.

Research Question: Does having effective management help combat employee stress at the work place? To understand the concept better, I booked an interview with Pauline Edwards. The goal of the interview was to understand every management theory and how each is related to work-related employees stress.

The Interview

The answers from Mrs. Pauline Edwards – the CEO of Megaton Cosmetics Ltd – confirmed that stress is indeed caused by poor management methods. Whether the organizational structure is centralized or decentralized, every management theory (contingency theory, systems

theory, chaos theory, Theory X and Theory Y) impacts organizational behavior and has significant influence of employee stress or morale.

The interview questions have not been listed here, but generally they were about the types of management theories and the suitability of each in managing employee stress. Due to limited time, Mrs. Pauline quickly took me through the four types of management theories and insisted that she has used all of them in the past, but she now sticks to the systems theory as she finds it the most effective.

Contingency Theory

Mrs. Pauline stated that this theory helps managers make decisions based on the situation at present only. The past and future situations are disregarded. She said she once used the system for six months in a certain cosmetics distribution company. This theory did not work well with her as employee motivation was low. She said an employee survey conducted in the organization reported that workers feel marginalized and not cared about by managers who utilize this theory (Nelson, 2014; "Managing the Causes of Work-Related Stress: A Step-by-Step Approach Using Management Standards").

Systems Theory

This is her favorite theory. It enables her to recognize how different systems impact an employee and how an employee impacts the systems around them. The theory enables managers like Mrs. Pauline to investigate patterns and events in the workplace. The manager then coordinates programs to work as a unit for the greater good of the organization rather than for individual departments. For example remuneration is executed in accordance with external and internal equities, decisions are made to benefit everybody, and workers are encouraged to help

one another; thus, stress minimization becomes possible (Nelson, 2014; "Managing the Causes of Work-Related Stress: A Step-by-Step Approach Using Management Standards").

Chaos Theory

The theory assumes change is constant. It assumes that not all events and circumstances in an organization can be put under control. Mrs. Pauline, in that exclusive interview asserts that while organizations grown and expand, change continues to be ever-occurring and certain adjustments have to be made to catch up. Employees who resist change often find this management theory unsuitable. Disliking the management theory and having the prospect of still working under it can generate stress and negative energy. The chaos theory is the most unsuitable, as Mrs. Pauline claimed (Nelson, 2014).

Theory X and Theory Y

These theories are based on beliefs about employee attitudes. Theory X managers prefer pushing and pressuring employees since they believe free-will motivation never comes around and that employees hate their job and would be something else doing something else should an opportunity present itself. To the contrary, Theory Y believes that workers are self-motivated and work with loyalty regardless of the amount of monetary reward and salaries. Theory X stress employees while Y makes them comfortable and feel welcome. Interestingly, Mrs. Pauline combines Theory X and Systems Theory to manage employees. The 40-munite interview was highly educative and I would go back to her in the near future to know more about stress management at workplace (Nelson, 2014; "Managing the Causes of Work-Related Stress: A Step-by-Step Approach Using Management Standards").

Scientific Research on Employee Stress

According to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), stress is "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed upon them". Although a reasonable amount of pressure in a business environment motivates employees and boosts their energy and quality and quantity of output, it must be clearly stated that not everybody holds well with being kept on their toes all time. Putting too much pressure on the workforce; however, would become overwhelming, generating a negative rather than a positive energy – stress ("Managing the Causes of Work-Related Stress: A Step-by-Step Approach Using Management Standards")

In a biological approach, stress does create physical changes connected closely to our flight or fight reflex. Adrenaline, noradrenaline and cortisol are among 40 hormones produced by the body when stressed. While stress is not considered as a medical condition, studies hold that prolonged exposure to stress is connected to psychological conditions like anxiety and depression and also physical effects such as heart disease, back pain and headache (Nelson, 2014).

As the manager, take the responsibility to protect the workforce from stress. Equally worrying is that a 2007 study by the Institute of Psychiatry revealed that persons with high-stress jobs have twice the risk of developing serious depression or anxiety compared with others in less stressful work environments.

Apparently, stress does make individuals more likely to drink too much alcohol or smoke excessively and interferes with sleep. Understandably, adrenaline and cortisol interfere with the capacity of the body to "switch off" and relax, denying people sleep. It is associated with other doctors that sleeping less than six hours a day is not healthy and we can only imagine what

would happen to an employee handling machines with rotating parts or working on heights under unbearable stress. Fatal accidents are inevitable in such scenarios. Even less physical jobs cannot be done well when under anxiety or depression. Now that the meaning and causes of stress are known, how can stress be managed? (Nelson, 2014; "Managing the Causes of Work-Related Stress: A Step-by-Step Approach Using Management Standards")

Stress Management

Job demands, control, support, roles, relationships, and change contribute to stress at workplace. However, CIPD study suggests workload and management style are the top causes of work-associated stress. CIPD regrettably reveal that only 40% of stress is work-related. 60% of stress-related absence is for non-work causes. This makes stress management even more complicated.

The relationship between the different causes of work and non-work stress is complex. For instance, Elizabeth is unable to pay off her debt and is experiencing intimacy problems. The woman may view the job demands, which are manageable in normal circumstances, extremely heavy. Managing non-work problems is rather difficult because employers have a wrong thinking that anything outside work is none of their business. Debt and personal relationship problems are literally linked to individual's behavior, attendance or job performance; therefore, the manager should try to express concern and help employees out.

Statistics about stress are making people uncomfortable. A CIPD survey of 1,000 workers in 2006 indicated that 220 respondents reported that their jobs were extremely stressful, while 150 admitted being under excessive pressure at work on daily basis. Stress has been identified as the biggest cause of absenteeism in employees. In addition, study by CIPD (2008 Absence

Management survey report) found that stress is the top cause of long-term absence for non-manual workers and the fourth largest cause for manual employees. Moreover, stress-associated absences are generally long, averaging 21 days per spell of absence. The United Kingdom economy is in danger due to stress-related absence. The HSE *Self-reported Work-related Illness Survey* held that 12.28 million days were lost to stress, anxiety and depression in 2004-05. This cost the United Kingdom economy an astonishing £3.7 billion per year ("Building the Business Case for Managing Stress in the Workplace").

Conclusion

The success or failure of an organization largely depends on the mood, motivation, and commitment of employees. More than often, an under-motivated workforce results in poor performance leading to unforgiving losses or even a complete organizational shutdown. The four management theories could all be effective depending on the manager's attitude. Usually, organizational behavior and management is an incredible thing to learn, but how effective a manager is depends on their personality, soft skills, and many other non-academic accolades.

With that in mind, does having effective management help combat employee stress at the work place? The answer is yes. Employee stress as stipulated by Nelson (2014), the Health and Safety Executive and Mrs. Pauline Edwards, can be contained through effective management. Here effective management means everything done to make employees feel safe, comfortable, and at home. Good remuneration, respect, recognition, embracement of teamwork spirit, and the permission of employees to do their work without stringent supervision can actually work miracles.

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