

“What can a company do to retain and motivate its staff and what impact on the company’s health and safety performance might this have?”

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Background:

The inability to attract, motivate and retain key staff appears on the corporate risk register maintained by the author’s employer. External factors are also reported (Guthridge, M, Komm. A B and Lawson, E, 2008 page 59) to be “adding pressure to the requirement for organisations to address talent management issues and develop strategies to attract, motivate and retain talented staff”.

Consultancies such as the one the author works for are reliant on the employment and retention of quality staff. The inability to attract, motivate and retain such staff is an ongoing issue in the company’s corporate risk register.

Work tasks are not conducted well or safely by individuals who are poorly motivated. If the motivation is not there, detailed instructions and careful supervision are likely to make little difference.

The motivation for conducting this research lies in the belief that it is addressing a real and significant corporate risk, which is shared by many other companies and will therefore prove a useful piece of research that may benefit such companies and their employees.

Professionally, the author believes that successfully addressing this corporate risk will demonstrate an understanding of the many issues surrounding the motivation and retention of staff and the benefits that may be gained by addressing the issues.

The research is intended to identify potential risk management solutions and therefore have a positive impact on a company’s ability to motivate and retain its staff, **improve health and safety performance** and offer greater stability to the company in the current economic climate. Evidence suggests that the identification and implementation of a successful benefits strategy during the current economic climate should increase motivation, morale and loyalty, which should aid staff retention once the economy starts to recover.

Whilst pay is often seen as the most important staff motivator, perks and incentives (benefits) may be given in addition to salary as a means of increasing satisfaction at work. The objective of the research is to identify possible benefits that can be provided by employers in order to motivate and retain its staff.

The research also identifies external factors that may impact upon the recruitment and retention of staff and the **positive impacts on the organisation’s health and safety performance** that can be gained by motivating and retaining the right talent.

“...those with current employment tenure less than 1 month are almost 400% more likely to have a workplace injury than those with 20 years or more experience in their current job” (IOSH, 2007)

Study Aims:

The aim of this research was to gain a better understanding of:

- The factors influencing the retention and motivation of key personnel;
- External factors affecting staff recruitment and retention;
- **The effect of staff motivation on company health and safety performance.**

Method:

The purpose of the author’s research was exploratory in nature. It set out to provide an understanding of the issues surrounding the retention and motivation of staff and the potential effects on a company’s health and safety performance.

A series of questions were developed in order to assist in meeting the objectives of the research programme.

Data was collected through a number of means including:

- The conduct of a literature search in order to determine what other work has been undertaken in the area of research. This provided the basis for the author’s research;
- Distribution of questionnaires to seek the thoughts and beliefs of individuals;
- Interviews were conducted where possible to gain perspective of the corporate risk from the viewpoint of those responsible for corporate risk management, HR and health and safety.

Data was sought from a relatively small sample of employees as there was no need for a large number of samples in order to gain confidence in qualitative information being reported.

Due to the large size of the potential research population (i.e. all potential and existing employees from all industries, companies etc.) and limited research time available convenience sampling has been conducted primarily from within the group of companies in which the author works. Although convenience sampling may be considered ‘haphazard’ or ‘accidental’, the group consists of a 1,300 employees, working in 60 offices across 24 countries, thus representing a wide cross-section of individuals and cultures.

Communication of the results of the research are at least as important as the research itself. The research results were presented such that they could be reviewed (and potentially validated) by the target audience and/or the reader convinced of the conclusions made.

Data arising from the research was decomposed and studied in an attempt to identify the underlying issues behind the research topic. The qualitative nature of the research required the transformation of information gathered into data in the form of words (rather than facts and figures).

The analysis of data consisted the following five stages:

- Preparation of data – transcription of text, cataloguing and preparation of data;
- Initial exploration of the data – identification of patterns/themes/issues, capture of ideas;
- Analysis of the data – group data into categories or themes;
- Representation and display of the data – interpretation of data in written form, illustration of points by text, figures and tables;
- Validation of the data – validation and comparison with alternative theories.

The dissertation report was used to communicate the research conclusions together with the evidence which support those conclusions.

Where data was sought through the use of a questionnaire or interview, results were presented in tabular or graphical (i.e. bar charts, histograms, pie charts etc.) formats within the written report to make sure that the results can be clearly understood by the reader.

Results:

A total of 106 questionnaires were returned as a result of the mail-shot, which is considered an adequate number from which to obtain a representative sample.

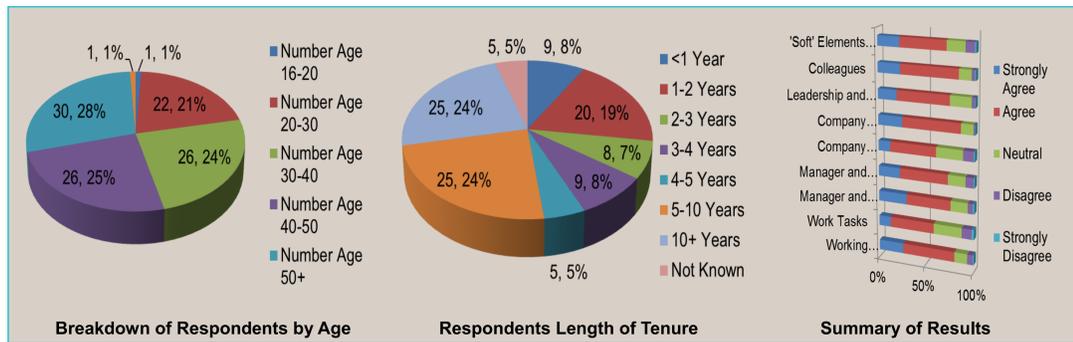
In order to minimise the amount of personal data requested from individuals completing the questionnaire and therefore minimise data protection requirements, only the age of the individual completing the questionnaire and the length of tenure with their current employer was sought. This information was obtained in order to determine whether the respondent’s age had a bearing on their responses regarding workplace motivation and to obtain an idea of the period of time over which their responses have been formed.

Respondents were asked to answer questions on nine topics, which (if answered positively) should piece together to provide all the elements required to form a great place to work and therefore positively motivate employees. The nine topics were:

- Working Environment;
- Work Tasks;
- Manager and Pastoral Care;
- Manager and Career Development;
- Organisation, Structure, Systems and Processes;
- Company Purpose;
- Leadership and Communications;
- Colleagues;
- ‘Soft’ Elements of Employment Package.

The results obtained from respondents were generally positive. The topics attracting the least positive responses were those regarding work task and company organisation.

The number of different issues raised by respondents demonstrate that the requirements and personal preferences of individuals are quite different. Organisation should not hope to find one motivation strategy that will be effective on the entire workforce and the key to getting incentives right is finding out what your employees actually want (Bannatyne, D. 2010). Employee engagement is therefore key when looking to establish a benefits package aimed at motivating employees.



Discussion and Conclusions:

This dissertation addresses the inability to attract, motivate and retain key staff, a corporate risk identified by the author’s employer and shared by many other companies.

The study set out to identify the factors influencing the retention and motivation of key personnel, external factors affecting staff recruitment and retention and **the effect of staff motivation on company health and safety performance.**

The research is intended to identify potential risk management solutions and therefore have a positive impact on a company’s ability to motivate and retain its staff and offer greater stability to the company in the current economic climate.

The report identifies that employers are not likely to identify one motivation strategy that will be effective on the entire workforce. The study demonstrates that the key to establishing a benefits package aimed at motivating employees is employee engagement.

Other significant findings to emerge from this study are:

- **Statistical evidence has been identified from a number of sources including the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), which suggest that the safety performance of an organisation improves as the tenure of its employees increases;**
- Opportunities for development are an important factor in the motivation of employees. Barriers to development will de-motivate individuals resulting in the potential for poor quality, output and **safety performance**;
- The provision of flexible working patterns was the major benefit recommended by individuals contributing to the author’s research through completion of the workplace motivation questionnaire. This result aligns with the conclusions of major research conducted by HR organisations;
- Flexible benefits packages should allow individuals to change their benefits as their circumstances or preferences change during their working life;
- A mixture of financial and social/psychological incentives are more likely to positively motivate individuals in the workplace than either of the elements in isolation;
- There are a number of issues which are common to the list of attributes creating a good place to work and those which should be managed as potential sources of workplace stress. This suggests to the author that the **successful management of workplace stress may be an effective means of retaining key staff**;
- The importance of good pay in the motivation of employees is higher than expected for white collar-type employees, suggesting that external factors are increasing the requirement for higher salaries.

The evidence from this study suggest that by positively motivating its staff, organisations can increase staff retention resulting in a number of business benefits including **improved health and safety performance.**

This study draws on previous research conducted in the field of employee motivation and retention conducted by HR organisations traditionally aimed at increasing organisational performance. **By identifying links between employee tenure and increased health and safety performance, the author’s research provides ideas that organisations may use to address the major corporate risk associated with the motivation and retention of talented staff, whilst improving the health and safety performance of their organisation.**

The results of the study will add to the growing body of literature on workplace motivation and assist in the understanding of the effect of motivation on the health and safety performance of an organisation.

The research may serve as a basis for future studies into the management of corporate risk and improvements in health and safety and studies into the subject of employee motivation and safety.

A limitation of this study needs to be acknowledged. Whilst the author was pleased with the number of responses received to the workplace motivation questionnaire, the large majority of respondents worked for the same group of companies, who generally share the same working practices and benefits packages. Although this may lead to generally favourable or consistent results, many parallels with other published research have been identified as a result of this study.