

Essay 1
Motivation and Reward System Analysis

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Introduction

The recognition and reward system in the author's organization is good, but there are many areas for improvement. As the author has only been with the company for six months, his knowledge and exposure to the full system is limited, thus this discussion is based purely on his perception of the system. The recognition and reward system that will be discussed is that which pertains to the call center aspect of the company. Other departments of the company have their own systems, but due to limited knowledge and exposure to those systems, a discussion of those is beyond the scope of this discussion

Current System Overview

Reaching across the company is a recognition and reward program known as Applause. The program's intent is to offer a means of recognition for those employees who demonstrate the company's core values: (a) passion, (b) results-oriented, (c) integrity, (d) develop individually and as a team, and (e) excellence. Four levels of recognition exist and are aligned with how one might react at the end of a theatrical performance. First, there are Cheers for a splendid performance. Then, if the performance is just a bit better, those in the audience may be inclined to exclaim Bravo. Following Bravo, comes Encore, when the audience wants a repeat performance. Finally, this program ends with a Standing Ovation.

Any employee can give another employee a Cheer. This level of recognition has been made available as an online recognition that is delivered through e-mail. The presenter is asked to also send the Cheer to the employee's supervisor so that he or she is aware of the performance. The other three levels require a nomination process. Again, anyone can nominate another employee; however, based on the level of recognition, the leader or team of leaders who make the final decision varies from department vice president to the corporate office executive

leadership team. Bravos may be awarded at any time, Encores are awarded to five nominees twice each year, and the Standing Ovation is awarded to a single nominee once each year. The reward appears to be purely recognition with no other tokens or gifts.

A second recognition and reward program that exists within the call center department is known as Spotlight on Success. This is a program that recognizes top performers who impact the business in ways such as booking the most reservations, solving the most customer problems, or by being a positive role model within the department. The awards are given out on a monthly basis and may include monetary allotments, typically in the form of gift cards, and a special parking space.

Finally, there is a third form of recognition that exists within the department. Often when a supervisor is reviewing employee phone calls for performance purposes, he or she will find one in which the customer had an exceptional experience. After the supervisor completes the review, he or she typically sends out an e-mail to the entire department, including all vice presidents and the senior vice president that explains the exemplary performance that occurred. The senior vice president (SVP) devotes herself to responding back to the entire company with a few words of gratitude and support. All of this communication is completed over e-mail.

System Challenges

On initial review of this motivation and reward system, the perspective is often that all the pieces are in place for happy employees. This is not the case. Each of the three programs that make up the system has challenges. This section discusses these challenges.

Challenges with Applause

Although the Applause program has been deployed across the company, the implementation did not include all levels of the company. Therefore, the use of the program is

inconsistent. Additionally, the Cheer level of recognition seems to border on a one-size-fits-all approach to recognition. Garvey (2004) cautions that systems which are designed to encompass everyone and everything with one type of recognition often lack the individualistic nature recognition needs.

Challenges with Spotlight on Success

The main challenge with Spotlight on Success is that it is only administered at one of the three call center locations. This is due to the fact that the program was inherited from a company merger at that location and not at the other locations. Therefore, when the communication is received by employees at the other call centers, they wonder why there is no such program for them. This has caused somewhat of a broken sense of community within the call center department as types of recognition and reward are not equal. Additionally, Garvey provides another caution that applies to this program. Not every employee wants to be publicly recognized with that great parking space. Materialistic rewards should be customized to the employee and a supervisor's input can be a valuable means of identifying the appropriate reward (Bossé-Smith, 2005; Garvey, 2004).

Challenges with SVP Recognition

Similar to the challenges with Applause and Spotlight on Success are the challenges facing the SVP act of recognition. First, not all supervisors forward on a message of recognition to the entire department in a consistent manner. It is noticeable that the supervisors at one location are more devoted to this than the supervisors at the other locations. Secondly, the author has noticed that the responses coming back from the SVP are starting to read the same as past responses, thus they are lacking the individualistic nature that is needed.

The Means to an Improved System

Generally, the current system supports an acceptable level of recognition and reward, but does this system encourage self-motivation in the employees? The system is clearly disjointed which is basis for improvement. Just recently the company changed names in concert with a major corporate organizational structure change. The company's brand messages are also undergoing change to align with the corporate changes. It appears timely that the company's recognition and reward system also undergoes a change.

As with any change process, the initiative needs to start with a clear vision or purpose that is accepted and supported by the leaders of the company or department. A good question to begin with is why is recognition and reward important? A common answer is motivation. When employees are recognized and rewarded, their self-motivation to succeed and perform often improves (Adkins, 2006; Bossé-Smith, 2005; Rauch, 2005). Rauch continues with a review of survey results that suggest an employee's desire to stay with a company long-term is often affected by the type of recognition and reward the company offers. With the intent of encouraging motivation set as the underlying purpose of the system, the next step should be an analysis of the type of recognition and rewards that will encourage the employees the most.

The recognition and rewards deemed most motivating by employees may not be what leaders perceive. When Kwik-Fit Insurance surveyed their employees on what would motivate them, the top three responses were nothing that was expected. The items were not monetary gifts, rather, incidentals or services that allowed each of them more independence at the workplace (Adkins, 2006). A survey instrument that gathers feedback from the employees on what they like about the current system, what they dislike about the current system, and what their top three choices for forms of recognition and reward that would motivate them the most could provide

valuable direction as the company looks to change the system. Once the list of recognition and rewards is developed, the means of determining how each is earned should be developed.

In the call center, each employee is randomly scored on the calls they handle. The score cards is one means to determining earned recognition (Cichelli, 2006). Exceptional performance should be recognized. Additionally, casual observation, such as currently done with the Applause program, should also be used for determining earned recognition and reward. With a clear vision, a list of appropriate recognition and rewards, and the means to determine earned recognition and rewards, the current system can be reviewed to determine if the system can stay in place with adjustments or if the system should be revised entirely and deployed new.

Intrinsically, the Applause program appears to have one minor challenge, that of the one-size-fits-all nature of the Cheer level. A solution that would add an aspect of individualization to the Cheer level would fix this challenge. The other challenge discussed in relation to the Applause program was inconsistent use of the program. A re-deployment of the program that reaches all levels of the department and periodic reminders to use the program will help overcome this challenge. Overall, the Applause program appears sound and effective.

The Spotlight on Success program needs a much more extensive review since it is only deployed at one site and the recognition and rewards may not be appropriate for everyone. Should this program continue, it will need to be deployed across all call centers. This should help lessen the feeling of dividedness that this single-site program has caused. A more intrinsic change also needs to occur to the type or recognition and rewards offered. Because the employees were asked what type would motivate them the most, the options should be clear. The next step is to identify which of the most preferred is most appropriate for each employee. Bossé-Smith (2005) discusses that employees often fall into one of four categories of behavior:

(a) decisive, (b) influential, (c) steady, and (d) compliant. Each of these categories relates to how they like to be recognized and rewarded. When choosing an appropriate reward, the supervisor should be consulted to make sure the reward is appropriate for the employee.

The third program, SVP recognition, also is overall good. Knowing that a leader at the level of SVP is aware of your actions is comforting. However, receiving the recognition through e-mail appears to be lacking the personal touch. This program can be improved by changing the return recognition from e-mail to a concise, handwritten and signed card. This is certainly more labor and time demanding than an e-mail, but the intent received will be that much more meaningful (Garvey, 2004).

Finally, a new program is suggested for implementation that recognizes the best of the best (Acculturated, educate and motivate, 2004). The company's sales department, in coordination with the president, has a most valuable contributor program that recognizes the best sales people each year. These employees get to travel across the country to various company locations to share their secrets of success. A similar program could be motivational for the call centers. Each year the best call center employees can be recognized by the company president, asked to travel to the other call centers to share their secrets to success, and enjoy a feeling that the company truly values their skills. It could also be beneficial if the sales group and call center group could come together with the senior leadership team for a week-long summit to discuss ways that the two departments can synergize. After all, there is an endless cycle between these two departments. The customers who buy from the sales people then call the call center for help with reservations and account servicing. With excellent customer service, the customers want to buy more, so the customers then go back to the sales team. With top performing employees, this cycle should never end.

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