Role of Quality Management Practices in Employee Engagement and its impact on Organizational Performance

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Abstract

Employee engagement has emerged as a critical driver of business success in today’s competitive marketplace. Further, employee engagement can be a deciding factor in organizational success. Not only does engagement have the potential to significantly affect employee retention, productivity and loyalty, it is also a key link to quality management practices in functional process quality, which results in performance, customer satisfaction, company reputation and overall stakeholder value. Thus, to gain a competitive edge, organizations are tuning their HR practices to set the outline for employee engagement and commitment which comes through best quality management practices. The challenge today is not just retaining talented people, but fully engaging them, capturing their minds and hearts at each stage of their work lives. This article focuses each and every process of employee engagement by quality management practices through HR activities for sustaining organizational performance and productivity.

Keywords: Quality Management practices, Employee engagement, Organizational performance

Introduction

In global level, quality has developed as a most competitive weapon for organization to survive in the competition and succeed in their respective industries they must seek ways in improving their system and maximizing their resources. The importance of employee engagement and quality performance are the long term success factor for any type of firms in a competitive environment. Recently, important changes in organizational competitive edge have been putting strong pressures on continuous improvement needs, accelerating breakthroughs in quality management issues. As a result, many organizations have embraced total quality management (TQM) as the management philosophy for executing their strategic planning. These quality management practices clearly defines the role and responsibility of entire organizational system which support the employees to understand the purpose of their contribution and benefits achieved from it. Effectiveness of QM practices enables the commitment and engagement of every employee to work effectively and efficiently for their career and organizational performance.

Employee engagement is an individual's sense of purpose, evident to others in the display of personal initiative, effort, and persistence directed towards organizational goals. Today, employee engagement has become a critical element for business performance and success. For past several years, 'Employee Engagement' has been a hot topic in the corporate circles. It is a buzz word that employers think they understand, but face difficulties and challenges while practicing. 'Employee Engagement' cannot be a cosmetic intervention in enhancing commitment towards job, motivation or productivity. Employee engagement has a direct impact on the employee's productivity. Understandably, the most productive employees are those that are not only committed and loyal? But also those whose outputs are healthy and gratifying both for themselves as well as for the organization they work for.

Quality Management Practices

The contributions from quality leaders had an influence upon later studies about TQM, in such a way that the literature on TQM has gradually developed, identifying various practices for effective quality management. Quality leaders believe that management and the system are the cause of poor quality rather than the workers (Juran & Gryna, 1993). However, a brief overview of their contribution to the quality journey is given, supported by several references.

Deming is well-known for his 14 points of management and the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) Cycle that is still used today. Deming believed management is responsible for 94% of quality problems, and quality must be built into the product to achieve a high level of excellence (Deming, 1986). Deming philosophy begins with top management but maintains that a company must adopt the fourteen points of this system at all levels. According to Deming (1986, p. 23) "Are a signal that management intend to stay in business and aim to protect investors and jobs".

Juran developed the quality trilogy - quality planning, quality control and quality improvement - , and ten steps to quality improvement (Juran, 1988). Crosby is well-known for his "Quality is free" concept and his zero defects concepts. Crosby’s philosophy can be described best by his four absolutes of quality improvement process (Crosby, 1989).
Feigenbaum (1991) is known as the originator of total quality control, a concept he introduced in the 1950s. Feigenbaum saw it as a business method and proposed three steps to quality as Quality leadership; Modern quality technology; and Organizational commitment. TQM requires a high degree of effective functional integration among people, machines, and information, stressing a systematic approach to quality. Clearly defined total quality system is a powerful foundation for TQM, and Quality is the responsibility of everybody in the company (Feigenbaum, 1991).

Ishikawa developed the Japanese style of Total Quality control (TQC), Company Wide Quality Control (CWQC) means that “Quality control consists of developing, designing, producing, marketing and servicing products and services with optimum cost-effectiveness and usefulness, which customers will purchase with satisfaction. To achieve these aims, all the separate parts of a company must work together” (Ishikawa, 1989). Ishikawa made many contributions to quality, the Ishikawa diagram and the assembly and use of the “seven basic tools of quality” such as Pareto analysis, Cause and effect diagrams, Histograms etc. (Ishikawa, 1985).

Employee Engagement
Perrin’s Global Workforce Study (2003) uses the definition “employees’ willingness and ability to help their company succeed, largely by providing discretionary effort on a sustainable basis.” According to the study, engagement is affected by many factors which involve both emotional and rational factors relating to work and the overall work experience.

Robinson et al. (2004) define employee engagement as “a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its value. An engaged employee is aware of business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. The organization must work to develop and nurture engagement, which requires a two-way relationship between employer and employee.”

A high level of engagement is a strategic goal for a growing number of organizations in many industries. Engaged employees are committed to their employer, satisfied with their work and willing to give extra effort to achieve the organization’s goals. Evidence suggests that engagement influences other major human resources goals, such as retention, job performance, absenteeism and (indirectly through the employer’s reputation) recruitment (Gibbons and Schutt 2010; Macey and Schneider 2008).

Human resources experts prefer a multi-dimensional approach to measuring engagement. This combines a number of questionnaire items into a scale, yielding a single engagement score. The resulting composite engagement metric can be useful to employers for tracking progress on actions taken to improve employee engagement. Employee engagement scales typically combine job satisfaction, organizational commitment and other performance-related indicators of a motivated employee. The basic method of measuring employee engagement scale is:

a) Emotional: I am proud to tell others I am part of the organization. I find that my values and the organization’s values are similar.

b) Rational: I am satisfied with (my) job overall.

c) Behavioral: I look forward to going to work. This organization really inspires the best in me in the way of job performance.

Employee Engagement: A Historical and Recent Perspective
Employee engagement may seem like a recent concept in HR, though it has been evolving since industrialization. Early management thinkers like Adam Smith spoke about the individual’s sense of purpose and how it led to industry success. Engagement was attempted through the lower order needs in Maslow’s ‘Hierarchy of Needs Model’. Production incentives, piece rate wages etc., were used to drive individual performance and employees were rewarded when their behavior helped achieve the goals of the company. Fredrick Taylor introduced the concepts of specialization and efficiency in industry that helped channelize the collective chain of efforts to achieve organizational goals.

Later on, Japanese work methods like Total Quality Management based on concepts such as process over outcome, group dynamics over individual performance and constant change as part of accepted reality, brought employees closer to organizational issues. Worker participation received importance, as the act of empowering employees to take decisions and feel a part of the process gained prominence. As professional organizations moved from manufacturing and industrial sectors to services, the scale became larger. Organizations became flatter, work situations got more unpredictable, thus making employee behavior management more complex. In such a scenario, employee engagement began to take on a whole new meaning. Meeting the lower order needs of Maslow’s need hierarchy was not enough to retain employees anymore, but addressing the higher order needs is need of the hour. With the entry of the MNCs in the 1990s, work schedules were no longer fixed. Employees were spending more time at work and personal
life suffered drastically. Hence, work life balance started becoming a major issue of concern.

Today, we are working in a scenario where virtual work spaces are a reality. In the past decade, the definition of employee engagement has expanded from meeting tangible needs of employees to strengthening their emotional bonds with the organization. Noteworthy, employee engagement programmes are based on a strong foundation of attributes like respect, trust, fairness and credibility that poses them closer with their management.

Drivers of Employee Engagement for Organizational Performance

Organizations interested in improving employee engagement can intervene through several avenues. Quality management system initiates quality policy through their vision, mission and goals that can instill a sense of confidence and trust in the future of organization. Leadership also holds responsibility for building trust through demonstrating to employees that they are valued and the organization cares about their well-being and personal futures.

Through performance and talent management systems, organization can take advantage of opportunities for recognition and manage employee rewards. They also can plan, foster and accommodate employees’ efforts to develop. They can orient workflow and assignments, giving employees tasks that fit with their skills and abilities, or that could stretch their development by gaining new skills. Quality management practices can play a role in designing work that is interesting and fulfilling and, along with managers, guide employees into engaging tasks, a balanced work/life and appealing careers within the organization.

**Talent Acquisition**: Most of organization does not have clear talent acquisition strategies and employee retention strategies. Effective recruitment, selection and orientation programs are the first building blocks to be laid for initiating the process quality to acquire the necessary talents required for a particular business process. Selection criterion has to determined properly based on job requirement and number of position available as per methodology and technology used. The newly hired employee should be trained well with organizational process quality and job oriented career linkage focusing in their organizational mission, values, and goals. Quality management practice clearly defines every process of talent acquisition in their quality policy to justify how a particular employee is suitable for a specific job roles and responsibility.

**Leadership**: Employee engagement requires leadership commitment through establishing clear mission, vision and values. Top management has to formulate and initiate clear process, policies and HR practices which would be set as an organizational structure and culture. Employee engagement comments with the role of top management to create proper awareness and communicate in the form of documents to all employees. Managers and supervisors should possess the qualities of leadership to guide and support their subordinates in all occasion. There should be a proper method of communication, delegation of authority and empower the employees by understanding their responsibility for achieving organizational goals and career objectives. Clear and consistent communication of what is expected of them paves the way for engaged workforce. Involve your people and always show respect to their innovative thoughts, share power with your employees through participative decision making so that they would feel sense of belongingness thereby increasing their engagement in realizing it.
Training: Quality management practices give continuous opportunities for development and advancement of employees through process improvement in all levels for better productivity. Encourage independent thinking through giving them more job autonomy so that employees will have a chance to make their own freedom of choosing their own best way of doing their job so long as they are producing the expected result. Manage through results rather than trying to manage all the processes by which that result is achieved. Training allows both individual and organization as an entity to attain maximum potential because it gives employees the ability to improve their way of work and quality. When employees are trained in quality-related issues they learn some best practices of top most organization which build their self-efficacy, career and acts as a competitive advantage in changing environment.

Appraisal and Recognition: Organization should develop a performance management system which holds managers and employees accountable for their level of engagement and commitment towards organizational performance. Quality management practice develops a process of analyzing the performance by framing the various set of measurement tools for different level of organization and resulted deviations are attained by a means of preventive and corrective measures. Performance measure of employee has shown in the form of conducting related activity which comments their productivity and involvement on organizational goals. These performances are encouraged and motivate by proper recognition and rewards as mentioned in their organizational policy.

Empowering employees based on their performance is one of the powerful ways to enhance their productivity and engagement level. Employee values should be respectable by crediting their merits with economic oriented compensation and basic amenities. It is important that organizations begin with a concentration on the factors that will make the most difference to the employees and put energy around improving these areas as it may be difficult to address all factors at once.

Organizational Culture: Organizational culture is certainly a comprehensive institutionalized normative system including patterns of behaviors, attitudes, ceremonies and ethical workplace which consider as organizational norms concerning practices and procedures with ethical consequences. Organizations should promote a strong work culture in which the goals and values of employees are aligned across all functional areas. Organization that build a culture of mutual respect by keeping a mantra of “Togetherness” will not only keep their existing employees engaged but also they describe the new incoming employees with contagious spirit of organizational culture. The organization develops its culture over the years and provides an identity to its employees about ‘who we are’ and ‘what we do’; furthermore, it gets reinforced and reshaped in employee’s culture by adapting themselves towards retention and loyalty on organizational engagement and performance.

Quality management practice develops the culture of benchmarking, by setting the standards for every activity that are carried in the organization. To attain those standards, organizational culture should possess some quality characteristics of adaptability, involvement, consistency and sharing of organizational value system. These cultural characteristics are accountable for employee engagement activates such as teamwork, open communication, and participation in decision-making which lead to a desirable collective employee attitude because they create a sense of responsibility, empowerment and ownership. Organizational culture should be associated with positive unit level of employee engagement resulting from encouraged involvement and participation resulting in an overall employee satisfaction.

Career development: According to Goldberg, two-thirds of employees have a contemporary view of career success. In this contemporary view, employees define career success as having a job that is challenging and that they are passionate about. Employees also want a job that makes full use of their skills, gives them opportunities for continuous learning, and enables them to make an impact on the organization they serve. In addition, employees consider the alignment of personal and company goals an important element of career success. Quality management practices are well known as continuous improvement technique which adopts organization to implement career oriented goals for the development of organization and individual performance.

Quality management practice plays a key role in employee career growth by continuous training happening in their workplace and improving their standard of work to withstand them in a competitive environment. Now a day’s every organization allocates a reasonable contribution for the employee development based on their merit of work and skill requirement which in turn benefits both organizational and individual performance. Career development is one of important driving force of employee engagement because employees are consistently matching their advancement with organizational performance and competitors in a respective industry. Today environment provides various opportunities for employees to determine their career development, so organization should concentrate more on all aspects of engagement factors to retain their valuable resources for their survival and performance in a global competition.
Conclusion
Every organization regardless of industry or country seeks to be more effective and achieve superior results. Business strategy is developed to achieve this. Strategy, however, amounts to nothing if it is not executed well. Successful execution occurs when structure, roles, capability, leadership, employee commitment and culture are all aligned to the strategy. While the elements of success are the same for all organizations, the answer for your organization is unique to your strategy, your customers, your employee and their engagement. It is relatively easy to discover the current reality and the drivers of success, the big challenge is in equipping your organization to act and embed the change while remaining focused and aligned to the strategy. The challenge brings a substantial return that ensures survival in a downturn and creates a competitive advantage when the economic upturn arrives. Business can’t afford to get it wrong. Employee Engagement is critical to success factor for any organization to achieve their performance and development. Effective attaining procedure of employee engagement is attained by their driving force which implies talent acquisition, leadership, training, culture and career development. These driving forces are enabled to be successful in any organization, when that organization keeps following a best quality management practice for achieving their functional processes, which lead to employee and customer satisfaction.

Reference