HUMINISATION OF WORK.

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ABSTRACT

Overtime, some jobs become routine and less challenging, resulting in the demotivation of the job-holders. Effort should be made to make work more rewarding or satisfying by adding more meaningful tasks to a worker's job. Such an act aims to spur employee self-esteem and feeling of self fulfillment, and hence long-term satisfaction and performance are upheld. This calls for the constant reviewing of seven factors of the humanization of work.

Keywords: humanization of work, job enrichment, self esteem, participatory management, social responsibility.

Introduction

As with labour turnover, another manifestation of workplace malaise, namely absenteeism, has numerous determinants. This loss of work time by temporary and voluntary withdrawal of services comes in many forms including tardiness, extended breaks and calling in sick when not ill at all.

Other forms of counter productive behaviour are sabotage and pilferage. When employees steal company property and interfere with company operations, they are guilty of offences punishable by law. While these incidents of theft and sabotage may be acts of a natural criminal worker, they also are manifestations of a workplace that has sowed the seeds of discontent against itself. In other words, an unhappy worker dissatisfied with his or her job may be moved to undertake destructive behaviour in the employing enterprise.

If individual workers are dissatisfied, the rather spontaneous behaviour of absenteeism, labour turnover and sabotage may result. However, group action may also be taken as a form of protest. That is, they may decide to strike to back up various job context and job content demands. While they are an obvious and measurable indicator of worker dissatisfaction, strikes are costly to the parties involved and to society at large.

The last symptom dealt with in this section is alienation. Being "turned off" by one's job is a problem considered by many authors to be increasingly significant. Recent technological and economic developments have considerably strengthened the organisational case for participation especially in developed economies (Heller, Pusic, Strauss and Wilpert, 1998 p 11). As mass production techniques have spread to low-wage countries, high-wage countries find it much harder to compete in the manufacture of standardized goods. Their comparative advantage rests increasingly on their capacity to adjust rapidly to technological and market changes and their ability to produce high-quality, high value-added, specialized high tech-products and services.

Seven Principles/Factors of spurring worker's performance at the work place

What can the worker rightfully expect from work? Growing evidence shows that the organization and nature of work are key elements in determining a worker's physical and mental health and his behaviour as a citizen. Certainly, then, he should have the right to expect a work environment that is not detrimental to his health and that encourages the practice of responsible citizenship. A central goal of our society, therefore should be the development of institutions of work that stimulate the creative abilities of workers:

activeness, cooperativeness, interest in learning and self-development – all of which will encourage positive attitudes of citizenship and spark the hope necessary to build a more just and humane society.

Seven basic principles/factors, which together underlie the humanization of work, and attempt to bring about quality of working life, are job design, adequate compensation, security, equity, individuation, democracy and social responsibility. The principles will be analyzed each in turn:-

I. Principle of Job Enrichment

Many studies relating to quality of working life and organizational changes have been carried out to try the ideas of job enlargement or job enrichment (Siggins 1992). When these two concepts are distinguished, job enlargement refers to integrating tasks with similar demands and degrees of skill, i.e. horizontal integration, while job enrichment refers to integrating planning and control with the tasks, i.e. vertical integration. The reported studies show, in general, positive effects on labour turnover and absenteeism, as well as on productivity (Bredeson, 1991). The effects on the organizational climate seem to be more mixed: some studies have even reported negative effects on interpersonal relations (Kirkcaldy and Athanason, 1999).

Job design has been defined by Davis (1992) as the specification of the contents, methods and relationships of jobs in order to satisfy technological and organizational requirements as well as the social and personal requirements of the jobholder. Job design has two aims: first, to satisfy the requirements of the organization for productivity, operational efficiency and quality of product or service, and second, to satisfy the needs of the individual for interest, challenge and accomplishment. Clearly, these aims are interrelated and the overall objective of job design is to integrate the needs of the individual with those of the organization.

Armstrong (1992) says that job design has therefore to start from work requirements because that is why the job exists – too many writers on job design seem to imply that job design is only concerned with human needs. When the tasks to be done have been determined it should be the function of the job designer to consider how the jobs can be set up to provide the maximum degree of intrinsic motivation for those who have to carry them out. Consideration has also to be given to the third implied aim of job design: to fulfill the social responsibilities of the organization to the people who work in it by improving the quality of working life, an aim which, as stated in Wilson's Report (1996) on this subject, depends upon both efficiency of performance and satisfaction of the worker.

Turner and Lawrence (1997) identified the following five techniques of the job design:-

- Job rotation, which comprises the movement of employees from one task to another to reduce monotony by increasing variety;
- Job enlargement, which means combining previously, fragmented tasks into one job, again to increase the variety and meaning of repetitive work;
- Job enrichment, which goes beyond job enlargement to add greater autonomy and responsibility to a job and is based on the job characteristic's approach. Job enrichment is not just increasing the number of variety of tasks: nor is it the provision of opportunities for job rotation. It is claimed by advocates of job enrichment that these approaches may relieve boredom.
- Autonomous work groups, which means creating self-regulating groups who work largely, without direct supervision. The philosophy on which this technique is based is a logical extension of job enrichment but is influenced by socio-technical systems theory.
- High performance work design, which concentrates on setting up working groups in environments where high levels of performance are required. Of these five techniques, it is generally recognized that although job rotation and job enlargement have their uses in developing skills and relieving monotony, they do not go to the root of the requirements for intrinsic motivation ad for meeting the various motivating characteristics of jobs as described above (Armstrong, 1992).

These are best satisfied by using, as appropriate, job enrichment, autonomous work groups, or high performance work design.

The idea behind the concept "job design" is built on the two-factor theory formulated by Siggins (1992). A deeper involvement at work is attained through making the work itself, rather than working conditions, more attractive. The tasks are usually changed according to principles laid down by expert consultants and formulated by senior management. Some of the studies are experimentally very sophisticated: for instance, in the sense that none of the workers know that an experiment is being carried out. The enriched tasks are compared with the tasks in control groups.

II. Principle of Adequate Compensation

The typical impetus to work is to earn a living. It is fundamental, therefore, that the quality of working life is affected by how well this aim is achieved (Lindner 1998). What level of earnings is adequate for a particular job or for individual is the most relative of all aspects of the quality of working life discussed here. Also there is at present, no consensus on objective or subjective standards of adequacy of compensation.

Fairness in compensation, on the other hand, has various operational meanings: job evaluation specifies certain relationships between pay and such factors as training required, job responsibility and noxiousness of working conditions (Lindner 1998). By other approaches, supply and demand for particular skills or community averages determines the fair level of compensation. Another standard of fairness relates to ability to pay – more profitable firms should pay more. A variant of this standard is that when work rule changes and increases the productivity of employees, it is only fair that the economic fruits of productivity be shared with employees involved. But it may be that the application of one standard of fairness produces a pattern of compensation judged unfair by another standard.

The adequacy and fairness of pay are partly ideological questions. For example, a twenty-to-one ratio between the pay of the top executive and the hourly worker of a firm may have been generally accepted in the recent past, but it may become widely regarded as too large in the near future.

Even though accepted, operational measures are not available to judge the adequacy of income from work and the fairness of compensation. The two factors are important determinants of the quality of working life:

- **Adequate income:** Does the income from full-time work meet socially determined standards of sufficiency or the subjective standard of the recipient?
- **Fair compensation:** Does the pay received for certain work bear an appropriate relationship to the pay received for other work?

III. Principle of security

According to Lindner (1999), security at the workplace implies the worker's need to be free from fear and anxiety concerning his/her health and safety, income and future employment. One cannot regard work as humanized when physical conditions are dangerous or the air is polluted and when insecurity and economic want provoke fear and danger.

What is a measure of security?

Since the enactment of the Fair Labour Standards Act in 1938 providing for a minimum hourly wage, much has changed in our society: our notion of acceptable standards of living have increased, changes in the consumer credit structure have made an annual income rather than an hourly wage the measure of security: many employers have become larger and richer and better able to ensure the worker's security and the family as a social institution no longer provides insurance against economic hardship – individuals must turn elsewhere for help in time of need. Thus a worker in fear of losing his/her income lacks the security necessary to develop his/her present skills and ideas. He also

needs to be secure about his/her long range future. Besides social security, he/she needs protection of his retirement benefits, that is, immediate vesting and/or portability so these benefits are not lost if he/she wants to change his/her job.

IV. **Principle of Equity**

Lillydahl and Singell (1993) state that equity that workers should be compensated commensurately with their contribution to the value of a service or product. Lack of equity (for example large difference in income between managers and workers and lack of sharing in profits) causes resentment and hostility. In practice, equity requires searching for methods of evaluating individual contributions considered just by all involved. Although collective bargaining has contributed toward equity in many industries, adopting the principle of equity leads to increased responsibility and concern for fairness in both work and other relationships.

The principle of equity also includes the concept of profit sharing. Worker should be assured contractually of a specified percentage of the profits divided among work groups, taking into account the contribution of each group toward increased productivity. While this may be difficult to ascertain, once the principle is accepted, many companies have developed equitable profit-sharing plans with good effects on both the attitudes of the worker and the economic health of the industry.

A final element of equity is the concept of paying a worker not for a particular task, but on the basis of skills and knowledge developed with respect to other jobs in the establishment – paying him/her for what he/she knows and can do rather than for his/her specific job (in contrast to payment according to credentials). This idea makes sense, particularly when other aspect of work is humanized, for example, when work is structured around democratic teams than authoritarian hierarchies. In sum, all experience indicates that the principle of equity results in greater productivity on the part of the worker.

V. Principle of Individuation (Craftsmanship, Autonomy and Learning)

Work should stimulate the development of unique abilities, craftsmanship and the capacity for continued learning (Kirkcaldy and Athanason 1999). The principle of individuation, once adopted, can lead to a non-bureaucratic work environment in which workers are encouraged to develop themselves and learn as much as they wish about the organization as a whole. Individuation also involves bringing back the concepts of craftsmanship, which means that workers have maximum autonomy in determining the rhythm of their work and in planning how it should be done.

For example, recent studies of workers' attitudes have clearly revealed their desire that jobs be more interesting, provide more autonomy and allow them to develop abilities, factors concerning them more after they have reached a certain level of income. These studies indicate that the workers have a sense of what is important to their sanity. As Erich From (1993) has written, both psychological ad physiological studies show a direct relationship between boredom and destructiveness in people. The health of both the worker and the society we live in depends on putting into practice the principle of individuation at the work place.

VI. Principle of Democracy/Participatory Management

Degrees of democracy at workplace range from participatory management where workers' views are heard and considered in decision-making, to systems of worker control, where a structure is created in which workers' authority and responsibility are institutionalized. The principle of democracy, like that of individuation, is opposed to making the worker into a passive object or part of a machine. Wherever feasible, workers should manage themselves; authoritarian and hierarchical control should be replaced by cooperative and self-managed groups.

The concept of democracy also includes the right to citizenship, including free speech within the workplace as well as outside; it requires great activeness and responsibility on the part of all participants (Igbara and Parasuraman, 1994). In its fully developed form, democracy in the workplace means that workers also take responsibility for what is produced, how money is invested and for the social consequences of production.

Why participatory management has become popular?

While these arguments may be appealing, they do not completely explain why the concept of participation has become popular in recent years. There are a numerous other explanations. Recent technological and economic developments have considerably strengthened the organizational case for participation especially in developed economies. As mass production techniques have spread to low wage countries, high-wage countries find it much harder to compete in the manufacture of standardized goods. Their comparative advantage rests increasingly on their capacity to adjust rapidly to technological and market changes and their ability to produce high-quality, high value-added, specialized high tech-products and services.

All this requires a flexible, better-trained and highly skilled workforce. These qualities are especially important in technologies where initiative is required and shirking difficult to detect. Under these circumstances, there is an advantage in having employees who are willing and able (motivate and trained) to make decisions on their own. Further, teamwork and rapid communications are required. Thus participation may be the key to maintaining a competitive edge.

Rapid technological change, plus increased competition, require what Germans call "flexibility" and change in what Americans call "work rules" and the British call "custom and practice". Especially given the possibility of union and employee-opposition, such changes are typically more easily accommodated when made participatively than when introduce autocratically.

Another factor contributing to the spread of participation is the growth of service work. By contrast with manufacturing, service employees' attitudes are an essential part of the product they provide a cheerful waiter or a concerned nurse provides a totally different product from one who is surly. To the extent that participation improves attitudes, it also improves the quality of the service provided. Further, new organizational forms, such as contingent employment, telecommunication and networks all have some impact on both the desirability and feasibility of participation, though more study is needed.

Forms of Participation

There are various forms of participation and these are direct participation, representative participation, employee ownership and producers' cooperatives. For purposes of this paper, only direct and representative forms of participation will be analyzed. More attention will be paid to representative participation simply because it is the form of participative management that appears popular with workers.

a. Direct Participation

Direct participation schemes often called E1 or QWL programmes (work humanization in Germany), attempt to empower employees. They constitute a reaction against Taylorism and tendency to deskill employees. Their popularity is derived also from their frequent association with Japanese management.

Among the most common forms of direct participation are problem-solving groups (such as quality circles) and decision-making work teams, also called semi-autonomous work groups (or some ex-communist countries brigades). Decision-making teams can implement their decisions on their own, within specified limits, while problem-solving groups can only make recommendations to management.

All are formalized means of taking advantages of employee ideas or what economists call their "insider knowledge". But they differ in the extent to which groups actually exert influence.

Representative participation, in which committees of employees' representatives meet with management, take many forms. Participation may occur at the plant, divisional or company levels; there may even be representative on the company board of directors. Participation may deal with narrow topics, such as safety, or broad ones, such as overall organizational investment policy.

Employees may be merely able to make recommendations or may have the right to block management action until agreement has been reached. Sometimes, as commonly in the case of university faculty, they may have limited power to make decisions on their own. Here, the writer considers only two types of representative participation: works councils and employee representative participation: works councils and employee representation on boards of directors.

a) Works Council

The main differences between works council and consultative committees are that the former have generally more power and have jurisdiction over a broader range of issues. However, the differences among countries are great. This is especially true with regard to the topics with which works councils deal. In some countries their jurisdiction includes what might be called collective-bargaining issues, such as wages, hours of work, redundancy of work rules and grievances. In other countries, their functions are confined to less adversarial issues, such as safety.

Works councils are required by law in most Continental Western European countries for middle and large size companies. E.U legislation mandates that by the end of the century, firms with 1000 or more employees must set up Works Council whose function will be consultation and information.

Many countries owe their existence primarily to the legal backing, rarely do they enjoy much more power than the law requires. Portuguese law, for example, mandates that councils be kept informed of technological changes but not that they be consulted. Consequently Portuguese councils have little direct input into work-place governance but receive a great deal of information. German works councils, by contrast, have considerable power to block proposed management activities which lack their consent. In Germany works councils have the right of co-determination with regard to a broad range of topics. Similarly, larger Australian plants are required to have elected health and safety representative who may, in some circumstances unilaterally order the cessation of work. Elsewhere, works councils monitor compliance with governmental regulations relating to safety, health and the like.

b) Representation on Company Boards

Most large companies in Austria, Germany, Netherlands and Norway are largely required to include employee or union representatives on their boards of directors. Similarly there are union/employee directors in small number of British and US firms (Chell, 1993). In France a works council representative is entitled to attend board meetings but does not vote. Elsewhere employee representatives are in a minority.

Overall, Heller, Pusic, Strauss and Wilpert (19998) say that democratizing organizational life through participative arrangements depends on more contingencies than much of the current literature leads people to believe. None of the obstacles highlighted is insurmountable. It is possible to overcome resistance to change, cosy feelings of dependency, inauthenticity, neo-classical economic pessimism, lack of trust and inadequate competence training. Technological development and social needs are capable of being integrated. Formal and informal measures of influence-sharing, incorporating appropriate measures of conflict management must be seen as complementary rather than antagonistic sub-system of a framework that recognizes that the decision-making process

in organizations must be sanctioned and agile and will remain hierarchical while recognizing the legitimate interests of employees as stakeholders.

Participation has both advantages and costs. To the extent that technology becomes more complex and the environment more turbulent, management may become increasingly dependent on employees' knowledge, commitment and ability to exercised discretion. Only then will participation's relative advantages become apparent and participation more widespread. Will this happen? At the moment, the myths surrounding participation are stronger than reality. In future, they may be more equally balanced.

Principle of Social Responsibility

Organizations have for a long time acknowledged their responsibility towards the community and the environment in which they operate. Responsibility does not end with the production of goods or the rendering of service of a high quality as required by the community, but extends into the social field. De Kock (1994 p. 21) says that, in the Middle Ages, Popes gave generously of their personal fortunes. Wright (1992 p 398) defines social responsibility as follows: "…….. a social norm. This norm holds that any social institution, including the smallest family unit and the largest corporation, responsible for the behaviour of its members may be held accountable for their misdeeds". Wright (1992) states implicitly that an organization's responsibility extends far beyond the internal maintenance of its human resources outside the work environment as well.

The social responsibility of an organization is becoming even more important today. It would also appear that organizations are expected to become involved in real social problems of the community within which they function. Therefore organizations are increasingly involved in the community to show that they do not only want to use the community for personal gain, but that they want to give something back to the community to ensure better dispensation for both parties. Today, however, organizations pursue multiple goals with emphasis on social awareness, social care and social

commitment. Social responsibility is at present so important that the success of an organization may depend to a large extent on its social commitment.

The Involvement of an organization in Social Responsibility

Why does an organization become involved in social responsibility programmes? Social responsibility is just as important to an organization as is the achievement of good profitability. In addition to this, there are several reasons why an organization should show its social responsibility, namely:-

- **Relationship with employees**

  A good relationship with employees is established if an organization supports the education, culture and welfare organization serving these employees. By supporting the organization that serves its employees, an organization may ensure improved employee morale because their living standards are raised and this may result in increased productivity. The promotion of these relationships is inherent in human resources management process such as equal employment opportunity programmes and health and safety programmes.

- **Relationship with the community**

  Skinner and Von Essen (1995 p 258) state that an organization cannot build a relationship with the community on the basis of promises and propaganda. A good relationship with the community is the product of responsibility, policy and conduct on the part of an organization. Raymond Ackerman, Chairman of "Pick 'n Pay"(1995), states that, "if we help the community, it will respond by helping us."

- **Relationship with consumers, commerce and shareholders.**

By making contributions to social causes, an organization fosters good relationships with consumers, commerce and shareholders. Pincus (1992 p 31) report as follows, "Pick 'n Pay, which won the Food Marketing Institute International Hall of Fame award for Social Responsibility in 1984, was founded on consumerism and a strong base of social responsibility". He says that, after all, consumers, commerce and shareholders are the groups who provide the financial resources that enable organization to become involved in social responsibility programmes.

Importance of Social Responsibility

It is maintained that the social responsibility of business is increasingly coming to the fore. Nowadays the public expects an organization to become closely involved in the real social problems of the community within which it operates. One of the tasks of management is to initiate programmes to bring the corporate sense of social responsibility to the attention of the external public. Management should also keep a watchful eye on any activities that might be construed by external groups as irresponsible, giving rise to resentment.

The conclusion to be drawn is that long-term profitability cannot be attained if an organization does not act in socially responsible way. Social responsibility is not confined solely to matters affecting the external environment. The internal environment and the well-being of workers and their working conditions are no less important. Cronje et al (1990) are of the opinion that the support of such services by an organization fosters good morale and allows for a higher standard of living for its staff, which can also lead to higher productivity. When it becomes known that an organization has the welfare of its employees at heart with particular attention to the motivational properties of transient dissatisfaction and to the social implications of pathological satisfaction – that is satisfaction

achieved at the cost of longer – term personal, organizational and societal enhancement.

Conclusion

The seven principles of the humanization of work (job design, adequate compensation, security, equity, individuation, democracy, and social responsibility) describe a system that is made to optimize the worker's well being and correspondingly, that of society. Such a system would develop in the worker a sense of hope, activeness and productiveness, alleviating symptoms of discomfort, mental illness and despair. Such a state of affairs is intended to retain workers and accelerate their work performance.

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