



Innovative Workplace: A Strategic Approach To Employee's Satisfaction & Performance

Dr. Priya

Associate Professor, School of Management, BBD Univeristy, Lucknow, India.

ABSTRACT

In today's highly competitive environment organizations are increasingly revisiting their workplace strategies. Fixed office space and inflexible work arrangements are the reason for it because it provides little or no value to most organizations. Today's generation of employees expects adaptable office environments with high-tech features. Work pressure and continuous technological advancement, are transforming work pattern and creating the need for more innovative workplace. Innovative workplaces are cost effective, sustainable and flexible work environment that support organizational change and collaborative work pattern. The present paper focuses on how the innovative workplace becomes a strategic step for the competitive organizations. It also depicts the few elements which will required for innovative workplace and discuss the impact of innovative workplace on employee's performance and satisfaction.

KEYWORDS : Innovative Workplace, Workplace Environment, Job Satisfaction & Performance.

Introduction

The innovative workplace environment plays a crucial role for the employees. Nowadays employees may have a large number working alternatives, and then the environment in workplace becomes a critical factor for accepting and/or keeping the jobs. The quality of environment in workplace may simply determine the level of employee's motivation, subsequent performance and productivity. How well employees get along with the organization influence the employee's error rate, level of innovation and collaboration with other employees, absenteeism and ultimately time period to stay in the job. As defined by Audrey Schriefer, a leading workplace expert, workplace strategy is "the dynamic alignment of an organization's work patterns with the work environment to enable peak performance and reduced cost."

According to a two-year workplace study by DYG Inc. for Knoll Inc., consisting of 1,500 interviews with 350 full-time office workers, people increasingly believe the workplace affects their productivity and job satisfaction. Most people spend fifty percent of their lives within indoor environments, which greatly influence their mental status, actions, abilities and performance. Better outcomes and increased productivity is assumed to be the result of better workplace environment. Better physical environment of office will boost the employees and ultimately improve their productivity. Various literature pertain to the study of multiple offices and office buildings indicated that the factors such as dissatisfaction, cluttered workplaces and the physical environment are playing a major role in the loss of employees' productivity (Clements-Croome, D., Kaluarachchi, Y. 2000). Brill *et al.* (1984) ranked factors, which affect productivity according to their importance. The factors are sequenced based on the significance: Furniture, Noise, Flexibility, Comfort, Communication, Lighting, Temperature and the Air Quality. Sekar (2011) argues that the relationship between work, the workplace and the tools of work, workplace becomes an integral part of work itself. The management that dictate how, exactly, to maximize employee productivity center around two major areas of focus: personal motivation and the infrastructure of the work environment.

Elements of Innovative Workplace

Organizational innovation refers to the implementation of new methods for distributing responsibilities and decision making among employees and promoting flexibility and employee involvement. There are few elements that comprise an innovative workplace which create dynamic work environments that support employees while meeting organizational objectives. Though all elements appear segmented, but they are dependent upon one another, and only together do they create the underlying impact of an innovative workplace.

Encourage workplace flexibility: It refers to the change in work pattern or style greatly depending on the needs of the organization and of the individual employee. Flexibility includes how, when, and where work is accomplished. Flexibility can also be a great way of

cutting costs. Research has shown that workers on flexible schedules often prefer working flexibly over increased pay and report working in excess of 40-50 hours a week with greater satisfaction.

Significant or meaningful work: Jobs that challenge employees and offer them opportunities for accomplishment, creativity and a sense of purpose beyond task completion can promote job satisfaction, foster self-esteem and reduce stress. They also often lure talented and driven employees to a company and keep them there. Research suggests that people with meaningful work are happier and score high on job satisfaction which translates into less turnover and strong performance. (Gardner, P., 2007)

Learning opportunities: Providing learning opportunities to the employees is one of the successful management strategies that promote tasks and challenge employees, enabling them to perform and improve their skills on the job. When employees have opportunities for continuous learning on the job, not only are they engaged and invested in their work, but the organization becomes better poised to respond to global and local changes (Coetzer, A., 2007). When challenged by work and when offered career growth, professional development and supportive supervision, employees gain job satisfaction and confidence in their success.

Creating & fostering social supports & teamwork: Creating and fostering social supports and teams within an organization will help employees feel connected and supportive, which resultant into longer tenure. According to research conducted by the HRI Institute (2001), it was found that employees will stay with an organization if they have a good relationship and open communication with their boss. Effective teams understand their goals and try to achieve them by their best efforts. Every individuals of team understand their roles and recognize that they need to be team players. It will not only teams and social supports that help the organization operate more collectively, but they help employees feel allied, synergistic, and purposeful.

Promoting health & wellness programs: Studies (Karasek, et.al., 1998) have shown that jobs high in psychological demands and low decision latitude produce psychological strain and stress.46 Alternatively, jobs low in psychological demands and high in decision latitude produce feelings of job satisfaction and motivation to learn new things, and resulting in minimal stress. Innovative companies understand that benefit packages and health and wellness programs not only help recruit and retain talent, but increase the commitment, efficiency, and productivity of their workforce.

Competitive compensation & benefits: A 2008 survey (HR Services, 2008) of US employees found competitive base pay and benefits as the top two drivers that attract them to an employer. If organizations provide competitive compensation & benefits to their

employees it not only helps the employee to manage their financial status but also fostering organizational loyalty and commitment.

Effective supervision & leadership: It means that supervisor utilizes best management techniques that both respect and support a variety of work while challenging and motivating workers to do their best. Recent research reports (Deloitte, 2009) that strong leadership is not only an important retention tool, but that management greatly underestimates just how important it is to employees. Effective supervision also fosters creativity and vision in the organization in order to build future leaders and develop its workforce. Talent management practices, workforce planning, and even general support and inclusion are all hallmarks of effective supervision and leadership.

Strategies for making Workplace Innovative

Spatial Equity: It means that all employees have the space, equipment, and support they need to excel at their job, with equal access to important workplace elements, such as natural light, outside views, and space to talk privately.

Sense of Place: A workplace that has a unique character, with an appropriate image and identity, instills a sense of pride, purpose, and dedication for the individual and the workplace community. It is good to add some recreational amenities in the workplace, such as a television lounge (that doubles as an informal meeting area), informal seating or lunch areas, or a small area with a pool or ping-pong table. Consider providing some areas that incorporate color and direct sunlight to warm up neutral tones typically used in office furniture.

Comfort: Allowing people to control their workspace goes a long way toward satisfying their needs and reducing complaints. Providing furniture and task lighting that occupants can reconfigure to suit their work needs, and giving them the ability to adjust lighting levels, temperature, and ventilation within the personal workspace will result in more satisfied and productive employees.

Connectivity: A robust communications system providing access to people and/or data from any place, at any time.

Flexibility: Easily adaptable workplaces that support varied work strategies and help balance an individual's work and home life—including systems and furnishings that accommodate organizational change with minimal time, effort, and waste.

Reliability: Efficient and state-of-the-art building, security, computer, and telecommunication systems that is easy to maintain.

Healthfulness: Clean and healthy work environments with access to air, light, and water—and free of contaminants and excessive noise.

Impact on Employee's Performance and Satisfaction

Employees increasingly believe that innovative workplace affects their productivity and job satisfaction as well. The study (GSA, 2001) showed that satisfaction is crucial to staff retention. Employees planning to leave the organization were 25 percent less satisfied with their physical workplace than those who planned to stay. Similar research studies have revealed that when employees do not have control over their individual work environment (e.g., lighting, ergonomics, and quiet space), it negatively affects their physical health and mental disposition leading to increased absenteeism, employee dissatisfaction, inferior work products, and unsatisfactory customer service. Haynes (2008) explains the behavioral office environment behavioral components of the office environment that have the greatest impact on office productivity. In all of the work patterns, it was found that interaction was perceived to be the component to have the most positive effect on productivity, and distraction was perceived to have the most negative. As people are the most valuable resource of an organization, and that the management of people makes a difference to company performance. Such studies make clear that failing to provide space, systems, furniture, and technology that optimize individual's performance can have unfavorable long-term effects—reducing the organization's performance and increasing operational expenses. If all being equal, individual will more often choose to work for organizations that provide better workplace accommodations. An effective and innovative workplace help employees to find their strengths and

weaknesses which leads to their skill development. Therefore, if a company wants a higher profit they should build an innovative workplace for the employees so that their satisfaction level may increase.

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