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IMPROVING EMPLOYEE MORALE AND INCREASING PRODUCTIVITY

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INTRODUCTION
Employee morale is the relationship that a particular employee or a group of employees have with their work and the organization they work for. High employee morale means that employees are happy, and this is reflective in the kind of work they produce. On the other hand, low employee morale results in less productivity and pessimism among employees. It is important for every organization to continually keep employee morale high. Morale is basically a group phenomenon. It is a concept that describes the level of favourable or unfavourable attitude of employees collectively to all aspects of their work—the job, the company, their tasks, working conditions, fellow workers, superiors and so on.

NATURE OF EMPLOYEE MORALE:
Morale represents a composite of feelings, attitudes, and sentiments that contribute to general feelings of satisfactions. It is a state of mind and spirit affecting willingness to work, which, in turn, affects organizational and individual objectives. It describes the overall group satisfaction.

HIGH MORALE AND LOW MORALE:
If the enthusiasm and willingness to work of a group is high, we can say morale is high and vice versa. Just as good health is essential for an individual, high morale is necessary for an organization. High morale represents an attitude of satisfaction with desire to continue and willingness to strive for the goals of the group. Under conditions of high morale, workers have few grievances, frustrations, and complaints. They are clear about the goals—individual and organizational—and are satisfied with human relations in the organization.

MORALE VERSUS MOTIVATION:
Morale should be distinguished from motivation. Although both are cognitive concepts, they are quite different. Morale is a composite of feelings, attitudes and sentiments that contribute to general feeling of satisfaction at the workplace. But motivation is something that moves a person to action. It is a process of stimulating individuals to action to accomplish the desired goal. It is a function of drives and needs. Motivation is concerned with 'mobilization of energy', whereas morale is concerned with 'mobilization of sentiments'.

MORALE AFFECTS PRODUCTIVITY:
Morale has a direct effect on productivity. High morale leads to high productivity and low morale leads to low productivity.

MEASUREMENT OF MORALE:
It is hard to measure morale directly as it is an intangible state of mind of the workers. There are four methods which can be used for measuring the morale of the employee indirectly:

Observation:
The managers can measure the morale of the employees by keenly observing and studying their activities and behaviour. Since the manager is close to the scene of action, they can always find out unusual behaviours and report promptly. Observation is not a very

reliable way of measuring

Attitude or morale survey:
Survey helps to know the opinion of the employees either by direct interview or by questionnaires. Efforts are made to find out the view of employees about their job, co-workers, supervisors, and the organization.

Morale indicators:
Employee morale can be measured by examining company records regarding absenteeism, labour turnover, fluctuations in output, quality records, excessive waste and scrap, training records, accident rate, and the number of grievances filed.

Suggestion boxes:
Employees can be asked to put in their complaints, protests, and suggestions in suggestion boxes even without disclosing their identity. Morale generates long-term benefits such as improving the goodwill and increasing the productivity for the organization, and a satisfied employee is an asset to the organization.

Significance/Importance/Benefits of Morale:
Morale is an important part of organizational climate. It is a vital ingredient of organization success because it reflects the attitudes and sentiments of organizational members towards the organization, its objectives, and policies. Morale is the total satisfaction that employees derive from their job, their work group, their boss, their organization and their environment.

High Morale Benefits:
- Willing cooperation towards objectives of the organization.
- Loyalty to the organization and its leadership or management
- Good discipline—voluntary conformity to rules and regulations
- High degrees of employees' interest in their jobs and organization
- Pride in the organization
- Reduction of rates of absenteeism and labour turnover
- Happy employees are productive employees

LOW MORALE INDICATORS:
Low morale indicates the presence of mental unrest. Such a situation will have the following adverse consequences;

- High rates of absenteeism and labour turnover
- Excessive complaints and grievances
- Frustration among the workers
- Friction among the workers and their groups
- Antagonism towards leadership of the organization
- Lack of discipline

MEASURES TO IMPROVE MORALE:
Morale building is a continuous process which cannot be stopped even for a moment. Morale cannot be maintained at a high level forever. It is dynamic. Morale building may be done either on individual basis or on ground basis. Morale building on group basis

is always preferable. Group morale can be increased by understanding the group dynamics. It will automatically achieve the individual morale.

Handbook. Dallas, TX: Personnel Decisions, Inc

STEPS TO ACHIEVE HIGH MORALE AMONG EMPLOYEES:
Fair remuneration:
Remuneration should be fair and equitable since this is the most important factor affecting the employee morale. The basic and incentive pay plans should be fair.

Incentives:
Monetary and non-monetary incentives to the employees are important to motivate them. Employees can be offered extra perks to improve morale. These can include time off, the option to work from home, a flexible schedule, or simple recognition when work is well done.

Work environment:
The condition of work should be friendly for the employee's mental and physical well-being. Employees may be more concerned with intangible benefits, such as work- life balance and the atmosphere in the workplace.

Two-way communication:
Two-way communication (upward and downward) is necessary to know the sentiments of employees in the organization. Organization policies and programmes should be properly communicated to employees.

Training:
In this ever-evolving world of new technologies and ideas, employees need to stay up- to-date with developments in their field. Training gives psychological satisfaction to employees and improves their performance.

Social group activities:
These activities encourage employees to take on a community-service project together. Employees will likely enjoy the opportunity to give back to their local community. Management should encourage social group activities by the workers. This will help to develop greater group cohesiveness for building high morale.

Counselling:
Employee counselling helps the employees with their problems and complaints, and provides an opportunity to get back on track since the counsellor is impartial. It helps to reduce absenteeism and labour turnover. The release of emotional tension alone may serve to minimize dissatisfactions.

Treating employees with respect:
Treat employees with the courtesy and respect they deserve— say please and thank you. Ask about their weekend, and take an interest in projects that they are working on. Thus, an unhappy employee is an unproductive employee.

CONCLUSION
Adoption of a formalized program designed to increase morale thereby increasing productivity could be implemented. There are several successful programs of this type, all of which included listening to the employees, honoring their contribution, and providing a feedback mechanism. A company needs to pursue policies like the ones mentioned above to help its business become a more enjoyable place to work. Not only will employees start to look forward to their workdays, the organization will benefit from the new-found efficiency.

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