Monitoring Employee Performance at the Workplace

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Abstract

Employee performance monitoring is one of the essential functions of human resource management and contributes to effective management of individuals and teams in order to achieve stated organizational goals. An exploratory study was carried out to ascertain the various tools employed in monitoring the performance of employees in the selected organisation and the general opinion of employees about these tools were sought. The results indicated that telephone, video, computer, and the use of suggestion boxes were the main tools used by managers to monitor the performance of their employees. However, majority of the respondents did not feel comfortable with video monitoring and saw it as invasion of their privacy.

Keywords: Employee performance monitoring, human resource management, workplace

1. Introduction

The monitoring of employee performance in an organization stands as an integral aspect and segment of organizational growth and development. Managers are expected to perform the important function of monitoring the performance of subordinate so as to boost organisational growth and achieve stated goals. When the valid performance of employees is not well monitored by the human resource management, finances of the organization will be disbursed without a purpose, which at the long run will lead the organization to internal loss (Otley, 1999). The main objectives of this study were to ascertain how employees' performance is monitored by managers and the opinion of employees concerning monitoring tools.

2. Literature Review

Cascio (1992) referred to performance as an employee's accomplishment of assigned tasks. He posited further that pre-determined standards are set against which actual performances are measured and that without any rule of measurement it will be difficult to assess performance. In other words before claims can be made that people are under-performing then there must be some performance expectations. The objective of employee performance analysis exercise is to review performance against standards set and identify strengths and weaknesses of individuals both in terms of personal characteristics and delivering skills (Walters, 1999). It is then a question to undertake individual assessments and follow this with a development plan so as to achieve higher productivity and a result yielding team.

The type of monitoring system that is most effective depends on the type of workplace it is to be implemented as stated by Hartman & Bucci (1999). Many employers feel that employee monitoring through call-monitoring, video surveillance, or computer monitoring, has helped increase efficiency, develop customer service and improve the evaluation process of the employees (Hartman, 1998). In effective organisations, assignments and projects are monitored continually. Monitoring well means consistently measuring performance and providing ongoing feedback to employees and work groups on their progress toward reaching their goals.

Regulatory requirements for monitoring performance include conducting progress reviews with employees where their performance is compared against their elements and standards. Ongoing monitoring provides the opportunity to check how well employees are meeting predetermined standards and to make changes to unrealistic or problematic standards. And by monitoring continually, unacceptable performance can be identified at any time during the appraisal period and assistance provided to address such performance rather than wait until the end of the period when summary rating levels are assigned.

Feedback is the process of providing individuals with information about their performance. It should be objective, specific, timely and give a clear indication of how people perceive behaviour and performance. Wherever possible, there should be supporting evidence and actual examples of such specific behaviour (McAffee & Champagne, 1996). For feedback to effect the correction needed, it must specify what was good about the performance, specify what should be changed about the performance and how it can be done. The one giving the feedback must express confidence in the receiver and in his or her ability to deliver the expected performance. According to Bach (2000), this type of feedback enhances performance and is motivational. He posited that having well defined goals for a company can improve performance by 15 to 25 percent in the short term but measuring or monitoring performance provides more. He also agreed with the view that the impact of quality feedback in a one-to-one situation greatly enhances performance. He stipulated that performance can be increased by 80 to 100% if goals, monitoring, recognition and quality feedback are properly used. In one financial institution with branches in the U.K. and America, research showed that the use of feedback resulted in improvement in performance between 95 and 280 percent (Epstein, 2006).

3.   Methodology

This study employed exploratory survey design approach. The target population was the entire employees of Unibank Ghana Ltd. The research was conducted on a selected sample size of 60. Convenience sampling technique was used to select the respondents primarily on the basis of their ability, availability and willingness to respond to the questionnaire. Descriptive statistics was used analyzed the data collected.

4.   Results and Discussion

The study sought to ascertain the various ways performance is monitored within the organization. The results indicated that employees were monitored through telephone, computer, video, and use of suggestion boxes feedback. Majority of the respondents (86%) agreed that these monitoring programmes have been consistently implemented within the past one year. Again, monitoring was done by the various heads of units and also the human resource department. Respondents agreed that monitoring of employees assist managers in analyzing and evaluation performance. Furthermore, respondents agreed that feedback from monitoring activities is essential to improving employee performance as it will enable corrections to be effected on time. Armstrong and Baron, (2010) agreed that performance monitoring contributes to the effective management of individuals and teams in order to achieve high levels of organizational performance. Effective monitoring also enable supervisors to objectively distinguish between those who are working hard and those who do not make an effort (Mishra and Crampton, 1998). Furthermore, monitoring employees enable managers to counter the chance of mistakes, wastages, material resource losses, accidents, sub-standard and non-compliant behaviour.

The respondents agreed that effective monitoring is essential to achieving to improving productivity of employees. However, there was strong disapproval of video surveillance as a tool to ascertain performance. 82 percent of the respondents objected to constant video surveillance of their offices. They viewed it as an invasion of their privacy. However, Kidwell & Kidwell (1996) argued that video surveillance gives managers information to improve performance as well as remove bias from evaluating work, efficiency may be enhanced.

The respondents (97 percent) were in high agreement that the monitoring process should be accompanied by feedback so as to inform employees of their limitations and strength. The timing of the feedback, the content of the feedback, and the motivation guiding the feedback process, can have a powerful impact on the target individual's willingness and ability to improve (Whetten & Cameron, 1998).

5.   Conclusion

This paper explored the issue of employee performance monitoring. The results indicated that managers used various tools to assist them to monitor their employees. The respondents were generally favourably disposed towards the use of telephone, computer, and suggestion boxes in monitoring their work activities. However, majority of them felt uncomfortable being monitored constantly via video by their superiors. Notwithstanding, effective performance monitoring of employees has been demonstrated to be essential to achieving stated organisational goals.

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