

EMPLOYEE'S ENGAGEMENT IN STRATEGIC PLANNING

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Abstract

The key to any successful organization is the positive contribution of its employees. Even though a lot of tasks have become automated with the introduction of technology and organizations tend to look for hardware and software solutions to make their workforce more efficient, the role of the employee and his contribution in strategic planning remains crucial. This paper studies the Employees role in magazine distribution industry, the issues faced and providing solution in fine tuning the operations In order to maximize efficiency and profitability.

Keywords: Automated, Technology, Workforce, Efficiency, Distribution.

1. INTRODUCTION

Print media is one of the oldest forms of information distribution. It remains one of the most popular forms of advertising due to its ability to reach a wide audience.

The distribution network and logistics is time bound and has to happen in a certain manner.

All magazines do not have to reach all outlets. The distribution of magazines depends on the area, type of store, customer base of the store and previous selling trends. It does not remain the same and it varies from week to week, fortnight to fortnight or month to month as the case may be. Sometimes there are special issues to be accounted for, like festival issues, annual issues or anniversary issues. These are supplied on demand and market understanding. Manpower play a major role in this entire operation

Also sometimes the stocks supplied are sold out within the period. Replenishments need to be supplied in time. This will require that the company has some extra stocks. Keeping extra stock on standby is not a viable option. The front page and lead story of a magazine is a parameter which helps to take decisions on the viability of extra stock.

2. OBJECTIVES

1. To understand and analyze an Employee's role in the growth of the organization
2. Factors governing Employee's behavior and contribution
3. Value of Employee's inputs in strategic planning
4. Organization's willingness to accept Employee's inputs and feedbacks.
5. Direct/ Indirect effect on the Organization

3. METHODOLOGY

1. Observation of departmental activities and individual activities by taking company workers for research by selecting 50 no of respondents as sample for research activity.

2. Questioners were given to both employees and employers to identify the problem area by studying the gap observed by studying the questionnaires.
3. Current performance level of employees (both descriptive and analytic data analysis) is observed.
4. Tracking the strategic tackling solutions suggested by the employees.
5. Discussion of solutions between management and employees.
6. Implementing of solutions suggested.
7. Statistical analysis done again to check the effectiveness of the implemented ideas.

The back end customer service associates at the distribution firm form the back bone of the organization. They form the key link between all departments and customers.

Publishers provide their respective magazines as per the indents placed by the distribution firm to the warehouse where it is in awarded by the back end team. This process is called GOODS RECEIPT (GR) the following data is captured at the time of receiving the magazine:

3.1 Publisher - Magazine Name - Issue Date – MRP - Quantity

Once the product is received, it is allocated to the respective stores as per required quantities and kept aside for distribution

The field staff will collect the magazines with the bill (INVOICE) provided by the back end team for their respective stores and proceed for distribution as per the pre fixed routes and assigned areas. Once at the retail store, their job is of a merchandised who has to get the new magazines in warded and any old issue of the same magazines out warded and collected back. (SALES RETURN) They submit the old unsold magazines to the the distribution firm warehouse.

The back end team at the distribution firm collates all the unsold magazines from the stores and divides the same as follows:

3.2 Magazine Wise - Issue Date Wise - Publisher Wise

Once this process is complete, A Purchase Return Note (PRN) is prepared by the back end team and the physical stocks are returned to the respective publishers.

Once the bills have been generated it falls on the supply team to take the job forward. The team has to make sure that the magazines reach those outlets the fastest where consumption is most.

Certain stores have a high concentration of regular buyers who expect prompt supply of their favorite magazines. This customer base is as important for the company as for the store, so they get first priority.

The supply team is also responsible for collecting and accounting for the unsold magazines that need to be returned to the publishers. Usually this does not happen on one visit. The supply happens at one time and collection takes place at another time.

On the other hand it is also dependent on the external elements i.e. printing, publisher's co ordination, reaching of the stocks on time and timely dispatch

The magazines need to be collected from railway stations, airports and bus stands depending on the publisher's whim. Some of the problems faced here are:

- A) Sometimes the issue is printed late due to addition or deletion of articles, which again throws a spanner in the works.
- b) The booking agent has not booked the dispatch on the right train. Delays of 24 hours are also a possibility.
- c) The train/bus/flight gets cancelled or delayed

Collection and distribution of stocks is dependent on availability of transport. This does not normally pose a problem except for unforeseen circumstances like bands, strikes or employee absenteeism.

The highly volatile and fast paced nature of the job needs high level accuracy, on the feet thinking, adaptability and team effort. Every issue is a challenge and it should be handled in that manner. If not handled correctly, over a period of time, fatigue creeps in and this takes a toll on the performance of the employee, thus affecting his contribution to the whole setup.

We will focus on the day to day functions of all the departments and try to figure out their contribution and role in the whole setup. This will help us to find ways to make inter- department working and coordination smoother for better productivity.

Optimal use of existing workforce is the key to this problem.

Every employee should be made aware about their role and responsibility in the company. Suitable rewards should be instituted to keep morale high. Innovative ideas and plans should be encouraged so that the employee feels empowered and responsible towards the company. Strong loyalty towards company and assurance of recognition for work done will bring in positive developments. Keeping employees in the loop while formulating decisions for the company will help foster a sense of ownership and increase productivity.

The supply team needs to be given route plan such that when they head out of the office they take supplies with them and when they return they bring in as many returns as possible. This would reduce the need for double trips in the same direction.

Dependence on publishers is a problem which needs to be tackled as and when it arises.

4. LITREATURE SURVEY

There has been a need to understand and analyze the employer- employee relationship closely with the dynamics changing every single day. The markets getting competitive, work pressures increasing and employers looking forward to work smart then just working hard. The commitment levels in strategic planning, mutual trust and deliverability are the key ground realities which decide the outcome of any of these activities. The use of participative management practices has become the the key to success. Employee involvement in strategic decisions results in higher achievement of goals and better results in the respective KRAs.

On the other hand a conservative approach restricts the employee to limit the involvement of the employee in decision making as it fears the confidentiality, trust and sincerity of the employee also keeping in mind the competition activities and their eagerness to know the other's best kept secrets.

The major reason and intention to involve an employee in decision making is to improve the overall effectiveness of the organization.

Empowerment implies the freedom and the ability to make decisions and commitments, not just to suggest the =m or be a part of making them (Forrester 2000, pg. 67)

Engaging employees at different levels in strategy making process results in greater commitment to strategic goals as well as potential for improved decision making (Locke, Latham & Erez 1988)

5. GAPS

The generation of bills: This is a process which is being done repeatedly, with little or no changes.

Firstly the received stocks are accounted for manually. The details are entered in the system.

The stocks are divided according to stores, number of copies per store.

The billing is done on Tally, where the only parameter that needs regular changing is issue date and sometimes price.

Number of copies will rarely need changes. Still the complete process is repeated week after week.

This process is repeated for every magazine received. All magazines do not have a common issue date; hence as and when copies are received the entries and billing need to be updated.

The billing assistant is essentially entering the same data in a loop, day in and day out. This results in work fatigue and monotony. Monotony is very dangerous for employee morale. This is the main cause for unwarranted errors.

6. RESULT

The use of software that will take care of all the aspects of billing is the need of the hour.

Essentially the software should be able to streamline the billing process in such a way that the assistant needs to only enter the issue dates for the received magazines. Rest of the processes like distribution of copies to the respective stores should be done, keeping in mind the order copies and previous selling trends of the stores.

This software should also help to keep track of unsold magazines.

This will reduce;

- a) The workload of the billing assistant that will only need to monitor the number of copies and the prices.
- b) Human intervention in the billing process thus also reducing errors.

Although the organization will keep introspecting and review the performance from time to time, once we familiarize ourselves with the ground issues in the whole setup, we will be able to offer solutions from a fresh perspective and add value to the same.

7. CONCLUSION

The introduction of technology has helped even a manpower driven industry like magazine distribution immensely in terms of productivity and results. The key still remains a balanced coordination between new software, mobile applications and the foot soldier. The organizations need to work closely in tandem with both these important resources and make the best use of them by watching them closely and reviewing and updating their policies accordingly. An employee's contribution in strategic planning should be accepted with an open mind and turned into a win win situation for Employer as well as the employee.

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