



Motivation through interests

Team Uplifting Onion

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Creative come together – the basics

In light of the previous brainstorm done as a team, a couple of directions for research came up. One of these is the creative come together idea. The basic gist of the idea is for Simac to have a regular timeslot for people with similar interests, and during this time they will work on a project together. Preferably this would be a project that would benefit Simac in some way. Along with the project work time, workshops will be given that align with the different interests throughout the company.

Research goal

The goal for this research is to discover if giving people time to work on a project in line with their interests increases motivation and productivity.

Research question

To what extent does allowing employees to work on tasks aligned with their interests enhance their motivation and job performance?

Hypothesis

Letting employees work on something they are interested in increases motivation and productiveness.

Methods

For this early research, the most effective way to gather lots of insights quickly is to perform a literature study. This is therefore the method that will be used.

Results

The benefits of intrinsic motivation

The reason interests is a motivator is that it touches on intrinsic motivation. Instead of motivating employees externally through monetary rewards or other factors, being intrinsically motivated is basically a free productivity boost. While extrinsic motivation could eventually lead to burnout if not being used carefully, intrinsic motivation does not have this problem. Interests are usually longer term, and will make an employee want to work willingly on a project that meets this interest. ¹

A more detailed dive on this matter clearly showed that extrinsic motivation can work well in certain situations. It is not a golden bullet, nor is its effectiveness regular. Extrinsic motivators can even decrease productiveness, due to the undermining effect. This effect causes intrinsic motivation to be undermined by the extrinsic rewards. In a 2018 research paper, a study was conducted amongst two groups of people doing the same task, with one having extrinsic rewards and one without. The group with extrinsic rewards showed less voluntary engagement in the task, suggesting that extrinsic motivation can sometimes cause motivation to decrease instead of increase. ²

This does not exclude the importance of extrinsic motivation. Although it is likely less effective in a lot of cases, it can still make an important impact. The most important way to improve motivation is to strike a balance between these types of motivation. Having both of these factors well substantiated improves productivity, happiness and performance. ³

At this point it is quite obvious that intrinsic motivation is an important motivating factor. Since it makes employees want to put time in completing the task, it is an effective method. Unfortunately, intrinsic motivation is also much harder to achieve. It needs to come from the person itself. Extrinsic motivation on the other hand is much simpler. By giving a bonus or other reward, this type of motivation is easily created. Therefore, it makes sense why companies give preference to extrinsic factors.

Interests and intrinsic motivation

So is there a way to use intrinsic motivation to a companies' advantage? Perhaps a focus on the employees' interests could improve intrinsic motivation.

According to research, being interested in a subject improves intrinsic motivation significantly. One of the most popular frameworks for interest based motivation is Achievement Goal Theory or AGT. This theory was tested on a number of students, where the majority of motivation is goal-oriented and often competitive. AGT instead focuses on self-improvement and engagement. ^{4 5}

Conclusion

In line with the hypothesis, interests are indeed very important for motivation. It plays the most important role in stimulating intrinsic motivation, traditionally one of the most difficult things to achieve. Although extrinsic motivation can work as well in some situations, it can decrease intrinsic motivation through an effect called the undermining effect.

Something else that was discovered is the Achievement Goal theory, a way to apply this in the real world. Tested on students, this theory allows a different type of learning to help during a project. Instead of the most common goal-oriented motivation, the motivation shifts to engagement-oriented.

Sources

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