

Motivated Employees:

Retail Success Mantra

By Barkat Charania



MOTIVATED WORKFORCE IS VITAL FOR THE SUCCESS OF ANY RETAIL BUSINESS. RETAIL MANAGERS ARE THEREFORE REQUIRED TO THINK OUT OF THE BOX AND CONSIDER VARIOUS CREATIVE JOB MOTIVATORS IN ORDER TO KEEP THEIR EMPLOYEES HAPPY AND POSITIVE AS IT WILL INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY AND LEAD TO A PROFITABLE BUSINESS

→ With the opening up of FDI, growing consumerism, unprecedented awareness, and a youth-hefty customer base, India is perceived as “the most promising land” for the global and domestic retailers. Retail is one of the highly manpower-intensive industries. With tremendous growth rate in Indian retail industry, the present scenario depicts a high demand for manpower to match the scope of roll out plans of various players in the near future.

A number of texts have appeared in recent years promoting the advantages of using high involvement human resource practices as well as on the use of high performance work practices, which can improve the knowledge, skills, and abilities of a firm’s current and potential employees, increase their motivation, reduce shirking, and enhance retention of quality employees.

Success of retail firms is dependent on a motivated workforce; hence, these retail organisations are trying to use different job motivators to keep employees motivated and satisfied. The most important motivators used by retail stores are working conditions, skill development, recognition, role clarity, career growth and support from management.

More than 60 percent of any retail organisation consists of fresh talent. These are entry level jobs specially the sales force. Youngsters join the retail industry at lower salaries, get some experience and then move on to better jobs or back to education. The work pattern of retail industry requires employees to put in long hours of work, which generally cause fatigue and lower motivation among employees. There is increasing work pressure, in particular from work overload, time pressures and deadlines, staff shortages and turnover rates and long working hours. Many retail companies are struggling to come out of this situation by emphasising on the career path in their organisations through strong human resources initiatives, trying to create emotional bond with employees, using retention tools such as raising salaries, offering incentive-based targets, etc. They have realised that effective retail store management depends on motivated, satisfied and loyal employees who will be productive, maintain work schedules, and develop tenure with the firm.

In order to motivate, keep satisfied and productive employees, retail store managers must know which dimensions of the job are most

important and most satisfying to employees. However, the concept of motivation is a complex one; therefore in this article, rather than providing a comprehensive overview of motivation and its possible determinants, we would try to find out some “out of the box” motivators, which can really add to the productivity of Indian retail employees.

Over the last few years, the world of human resource management has changed drastically due to globalisation, with organisations being assessed against international standards and best practices. Consequent to downsizing and expansion, diversification of workforce, new organisational forms and benchmarking, the emphasis upon people has increased. Therefore, organisations, including in retail, have realised that these changes have a profound influence on their performance and the key to quality performance is the company’s ability to motivate its people towards desired actions and behaviours. Since any firm has to produce its outcomes through its people, there is emphasis on motivation and concern for people through assessment, regular feedback, ongoing support and experience-based initiatives. Motivation is important

because of its significance as a determinant of performance and its intangible nature. Retail companies might perceive motivation as a strategic issue since it impacts directly on organisational cost, productivity and business performance.

DESIGNING MOTIVATORS FOR EMPLOYEES

Motivation is an imperative matter in most organisations as it is an important factor in getting employees to increase performance. It is of interest in the work environment because motivation influences work performance and productivity. Keeping employees motivated can be done in various ways and in fact lot of attention is given to it especially after learning from the foreign practices, but it is important to recognise that individuals are motivated differently

but always see what others have and desire to get them. This is what disturbs the motivation cycle. Also a particular factor, which is a major motivation for an employee, may not be a motivating factor for others. In India, we say that “roti, kapda and makaan” are the three basic needs for anyone and these are so far the best motivators for any employee to perform his best. But from a negative side, this is the most common factor that motivates people especially the entry-level employees to change their jobs just for a small hike in their salary.

A study done to measure the motivation for various levels of employees revealed that front-line sales persons are less satisfied with organisations. There may be different reasons for this outcome. The findings indicated that employees’

fact while designing motivators for sales employees.

There is incongruence between what employees want and what organisations are providing. Factors such as compensation, work-life balance and amount of work are not given much emphasis by retail organisation. Employees perceive that they are not getting adequate compensation and because of more work and long working hours, they are not able to keep work life balance. Further, compensation has been found one of the major factors affecting employees’ satisfaction with the organisation. To enhance employees’ productivity, there must be congruency between managers and their employees’ perceived importance of rewards.

MOTIVATING EMPLOYEES

Motivating employees to perform well and achieve goals is the constant challenge of every retail manager. Either by connecting with internal drives or by providing external incentives, managers can successfully incite action and motivate employees to work harder and achieve better results.

In order to provide the “above and beyond” type of customer service, a retail store should deliver to be successful. It must begin by creating happy employees. Retailers who develop long-term incentives, perks, and rewards for its staff often see benefits such as less employee turnover and better customer service. There are various small things that employer can do to motivate their staff and give them a feeling of being a part of the organisation.

Discounts on merchandise: This perk may be the easiest for a retailer to establish. Offer workers a small percentage off on any product you sell.

Company parties: Holidays, inventory, or exceeding sales goals are all good times to throw a party. Plan the party away from the store or host a small gathering in the break room.

Event tickets: Businesses often receive promotions or discounts on shows, sporting events and even movie tickets. Give these event tickets to your staff as rewards or incentives



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and quite often it is complex to know what motivates them. Most managers do not know what motivates their employees because they do not realise that individuals in the organisation have unique motives for working. Therefore, communication is needed on a continuous basis in order to know what best motivates their employees.

Every employee has a separate set of needs, which keep on changing with time. It’s a very common practice that people don’t like what they have,

satisfaction is significantly influenced by compensation along with working conditions and support from management. Other motivators used by organisations were unrelated to satisfaction with organisation. One of the reasons of it may be that front-line sales employees in retail stores are from the age group of 20-25 and are working to earn their livelihood to satisfy their basic needs. At this stage, extrinsic motivators become more relevant over intrinsic ones. Retail organisations need to consider this

for meeting sales goals.

Free food: Who doesn't like to eat? This favourite low-cost perk can be as simple as bringing in pizza, or burgers, a few times each month. Some retailers even buy lunch every Friday for scheduled staff.

Break-room entertainment: If you don't have the room (or the budget) to put a pool table or carom in the break-room, consider a television set with DVD player.

Random acts of kindness: Not all perks need to be planned. A simple recognition of a job well-done can go far in improving employee morale.

Offer more flexible hours: Ask your staff to let you know in advance of your scheduling what days they will need off. Discuss your willingness to make it work for them. If business is slow, offer some bonus paid vacation time to your best salespeople.

Have fun: All work, and no play, can make for a dull day. Don't take your business too seriously. Lighten up, relax and enjoy some free time when your retail business is not in full swing. If you can't stand being around in during the down times, get out of the store and take a short vacation or attend workshops to build your business. Make sure to plan for a lot of relaxation time to refocus.

Remember birthdays and anniversaries: Recognise and celebrate with your staff often. Host an annual anniversary party for all the sales staff that have been with your retail store one year or longer. Make them feel special with surprise gifts and a very special evening out on the town. Or host an off-site meeting at a restaurant or a picnic in the park for their entire family.

Do not forget your ex-employees as

job which shows how a customer support associate can reach to a level of store manager within 32 months with a 150 percent hike in package if he performs his tasks meticulously.

Give them what they really want: As you create benefits and perks for your staff, be sure they are relevant and appropriate for them. You may feel you're being generous when you buy pizza for employees staying late the night before inventory, but they may not see it that way. An extra day off or allowing the worker to come in later one day may be a better offering of goodwill instead.

The best way to know what your staff would prefer is to simply ask them. Make a point during the next meeting to take ideas and suggestions for perks they would like to receive. You may be surprised to learn some simple perk you can easily implement in your retail shop. These findings suggest that retail companies need to understand employees' needs and expectations and to design motivators, which are in congruence with employees' expectations.

Inspire and motivate your staff through example, education, training and incentives. You can turn a mediocre employee into a business attribute, but the burden is on your shoulders. After all, the speed of the leader is the speed of the pack. You must be positive and enthusiastic. Do not bemoan the state of the economy or make excuses for lagging sales. Negativity is toxic and contagious. Tweaking your world view to a more positive outlook will benefit your staff, your sales, and your blood pressure. If an employee has a suggestion for a promotion, don't tell her why it won't work. Rather, brainstorm a way to make it work.

Enthusiasm leads to positive emotions; positive emotions result in happy customers, which in turn generate more sales and profit for the retailers. ❑

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The surprise benefit will motivate them to become more loyal to your organisation and they will return the favour with hard work and more determination to succeed.

Encourage creativity: When times are slow, hold more sales meetings to discuss new promotions, advertising, inventory, customer service, and future goals. Always get input from your staff at these meetings and have some fun with a creative brainstorming session that puts everyone's ideas to work.

Be open, not intimidating: Let your staff know that your door is always open to support them and listen to their ideas and concerns. Create a family atmosphere where people can feel they trust and support one another through the good and the bad times.

they are the ones who still carry the brand name and speak a lot about.

Try small reward programmes: Dinner with the head of the retail organisation for the best performer of the month. This really gives confidence and motivation to the employees to perform. Free parking to the best performers or may be free pick and drop for a month for the best performer of the month.

Create a succession plan for employees: The best way to keep any employee self-motivated is by creating and following a succession plan for all levels of employees. It's not only about a plan but very much about proving the same. A very good initiative taken by one of our clients is that they show the succession plan during the interview at an entry level