

TOP MARKS FOR THE BEST EMPLOYEE AWARDS

***AKACHUKWU**

**Research Secholar Department of Management University of Nigeria*

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays an increasing number of organizations employ 'Best Employee Awards' as a means to motivate their employees, and managers believe that best employee awards could encourage employees to reach their goals or accomplish their tasks in an efficient manner. In fact, as the saying 'every coin has two sides' goes, "top marks for the best employee awards" has its own advantages and disadvantages. Therefore it is crucial for managers to make full use of the benefits of this kind of motivation while avoiding its negatives.

This paper is separated into three parts. The first part shows the structure of the paper while the second part focuses on analyzing the benefits and problems of "top marks for the best employee awards". At the same time, views from relevant literature and the examples from the case are used to support the points of the Paper. The conclusion of this paper can be found in the last part where several useful suggestions are given for operation of organizations.

2. ANALYSES AND DISCUSSION

2. 1 The scheme of "Top Marks for the best employee awards" and the motivations of using it

The "Top Marks for the Best Employee Awards" is a method of staff motivation and an annual performance evaluation method. It gives managers a chance to recognize the employees who produce the best-quality work during month or year of evaluation. Usually organizations will evaluate the best employees according to their performances and then award them with bonus, trips, promotion and so on (Murray, 1982). The purpose is to encourage desirable behaviors by spotlighting role models, so that every employee could set a goal to be the best employee. Consequently, organizations could obtain augmentation in productivity and profitability by rewarding and keeping their top performances.

2.2 Advantages of using Best Employee Awards as staff motivators

Different organizations set up different awards; however, these various methods will lead to different effects and results of staff motivation. Hence it is really important for organizations to make right use of staff motivators such as best employee awards. According to the literature reviewed and the case, the advantages of using this scheme are summarized as follows:

First of all, best employee awards can generate fierce competition between individuals or teams of employees within an organization. While only a few employees could receive awards based on their individual performance, all the other employees usually would regard those awards owners as role models to inspire themselves and to work harder. (Lloyd, 2009). Needless to say, it is a strong staff motivator. As the case mentioned, Mr. Devine takes the best employee awards as a part of an overall strategy to identify who top performers are so that all the employees try their best to improve their performances. Without the competition, the organization will decrease its productivity and profitability.

Secondly, intelligently designed incentives can be a boon to companies that seek to retain excellent employees for the long term. Lucrative awards, whether these are in the form of stock or bonuses, make it worthwhile for employees to stay at their firm, even if a salary offer from a competitor is more attractive (Grote, 2005). Incentives can also make employees feel as if their hard work is appreciated and recognized, thus reflecting well on their managers and the company as a whole. Those persons receiving the awards in the organization will become more loyal and respect the value of the organization. As a result, they will put all their energy into work to contribute the organization.

Thirdly, by using positive reinforcement to motivate employees, a manager may build a good relationship with his employee, which fosters a sense of trust (Lindner, 1998). In a good manager-subordinate relationship, employees may feel respected and comfortable in their working environment. Providing rewards, both tangible and in the form of praise, can make employees happier. Happier employees often perform better at work. Just as the example of the case mentioned, Stephen Carella was a team leader at Kwik-Fit Financial Services and he set the best employee awards as a goal at the start of the year. He said the best employee awards was a great incentive and motivated him to do his best at work. According to him, when he was rewarded the great cash prize, it was the best moment of his life. Such rewards could make employees more loyal to their organizations and they may regard the organizations as their homes, which, in turn, will benefit the organizations.

2.3 Disadvantages of using Best Employee Awards as staff motivators

Although there are so many advantages of Best Employee Awards, we should see the other side of it, the disadvantages of it can be concluded as follows:

First of all, employee resentment will be a serious problem in the organization. Because best employee awards can only be awarded to few persons, then some employees who think they work harder than award winners will feel unfair (Kerslake, 2002). In other words, in a perfect scenario, where the employees who work the hardest always reap the most rewards, incentives pose little problem. But no companies operate in an ideal world and thus incentives can breed resentment and discord among teams and employees. So like the example in the case mentioned: it's very important that staff believe you have chosen the right person; it's vital for the credibility of

the scheme. It would be a disaster if the prize is awarded to the wrong people. At the same time, Best Employee Awards will lead to poor teamwork because individual incentive schemes by definition encourage individual rather than team effort (Clemmer, (2004). Some employee will focus on their personal performance but pay less attention to the cooperation of team as well as the whole company's interest.

Moreover, while it's easy to quantify a salesman's performance, it is harder to quantify a staff writer's contribution to the department, even if the writer is adding just as much value to the company. That can cause those under an incentive scheme to feel unappreciated as well as lead to the case of the recipients of unfair treatment. Therefore, using negative enforcement as a form of motivation could cause employees to become dissatisfied with their jobs. Unhappy workers typically produce less quality work, become sluggish or fail entirely to meet deadlines (Podmoroff, 2005). So how to make appropriate rewards troubles all the managers. Good rewards could encourage employees but inappropriate rewards may not. In the case, the salesman was awarded Best Employee but felt embarrassment because of the poor prize. As a result, the most excellent employee left the company.

Thirdly, even though the organization executes the ideal scheme of rewards, for the best employee, applying too much motivation or offering too many rewards can also have a negative effect. Employees can become over-confident and they may feel that they are the bosses' favorite workers, even if they start to slack off on their projects or test the limits of their working relationship with their supervisors (Messmer, 2001). Best Employee Awards may create reluctance to exert the expected level of effort: workers may believe that management will progressively increase the performance targets required to trigger the same bonus payment (Smith, 2004). They may therefore be reluctant to carry on at the incentives level of performance they have achieved, on the grounds that this will only result in higher targets that will make the bonus more difficult to obtain.

2.4 Recommendations

The analysis of Best Employee Awards will help us to make full use of the staff motivation. As to how to deliver powerful praise and rewards in the organization rightly, there are three primary factors that determine the effectiveness of Best Employee Awards.

The first one is right time. Managers should deliver praise and awards at the right time, letting employees feel proud about the awards rather than feel ashamed. If award winners feel ashamed, then such awards would go the opposite way just as the two examples in the case.

The second recommendation is right person. Managers are supposed to choose the most excellent employees to award (Bruce, 1998). Then, the right persons will be role models of the organization. If not, other employees will be unsatisfied with the awards so that the staff motivation would fail. The organization should give the prize which is what the employees really want. That way the employees will feel that they are valued by the company and will get motivated.

The third one is right praise. We all know that 'how you say something is as important as what you say'. The same principle applies in staff motivation. Praising with energy and enthusiasm is more powerful than being stoical about it. In other words, managers should use high praise to reinforce staff motivation. For example,

the general praise such as “Good job!” contributes very little to its effectiveness. The more enthusiastically supervisors deliver their praise, the more impact it has. Regardless of the level of enthusiasm, it is critical that supervisors deliver the feedback sincerely. Managers should never leave their employees with the possible notion that the praise is not sincere.

CONCLUSION

This paper discusses the positives and negatives of ‘Best Employee Awards’, which is a popular method employed by managers to motivate their staff. It first outlines the basic scheme of “Top Marks for the best employee awards” and then looks at the advantages of using Best Employee Awards as staff motivators in three ways. What Follows is the coins of such means of motivation. Finally three practical recommendations are given to avoid those possible drawbacks of using ‘Best Employee Awards.