



Received: 04-03-2024
Accepted: 14-04-2024

ISSN: 2583-049X

Discussion on the Working Motivation of Employees in Construction Materials Firms

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Abstract

According to Stee & Porter (1983) ^[23], work motivation is the desire and willingness of employees to increase efforts towards achieving organizational goals and is the urge and persistence in the work process. The topic of attracting and motivating employees is one of the topics that many domestic and foreign scholars are interested in. Many motivation theories have been developed to explain the process of motivating employees. Work motivation is personal; it is expressed through the attitudes and behaviors of workers. Besides, work motivation is influenced by both internal and external factors. Therefore, administrators can use different measures and policies to change the working motivation of employees. In the context of the 4.0 industrial revolution, the entire society is implementing digital

transformation, and rapid socio-economic changes, etc., require firms in general and construction materials firms in particular to change and innovate to match the development trend in the new era, applying modern technology. Therefore, for construction materials firms, it is necessary to have strategies, plans, and orientations to suit the development trend. This study discusses and analyzes the work motivation of workers at construction materials firms in Vietnam. Besides contributing to perfecting the theoretical framework on employee motivation, this study also aims to propose some recommendations to help construction materials firms create more motivation for employees.

Keywords: Work Motivation, Employees, Workers, Human Resource Management (HRM), Labor Economics, Construction Materials Firms

JEL Codes: A14, M12, M54

1. Introduction

The topic of attracting and motivating employees is one of the topics that many domestic and foreign scholars are interested in. Many motivation theories have been developed to explain the process of motivating employees.

Work motivation is personal; it is expressed through the attitudes and behaviors of workers. Besides, work motivation is influenced by both internal and external factors. Therefore, administrators can use different measures and policies to change the working motivation of employees.

The existence and development of a firm depend greatly on the working efforts of its members and the dedication, hard work, and intelligence of people who are dedicated and devoted to the firm. Therefore, any firm needs to pay attention to motivating employees.

On April 28, 2010, the Prime Minister issued Decision 567 on the program to develop unburnt building materials until 2020. On April 16, 2012, the Prime Minister issued Directive No. 10 on increasing the use of unburnt building materials, restrictions on the production and use of fired clay bricks, etc.

Along with the general development of the country, the construction materials industry in recent years has continuously invested, innovated, and developed. In all fields of construction material production, there are positive changes.

Vietnam's socio-economy is on the rise, the urbanization process is taking place rapidly, and high construction demand creates great pressure on the construction materials production industry. The trend of developing green construction in Vietnam is not only a potential opportunity but also a significant challenge for the construction materials industry in particular and the whole society in general.

In the context of the 4.0 industrial revolution, the entire society is implementing digital transformation, and rapid socio-economic changes, etc., require firms in general and construction materials firms in particular to change and innovate to match the development trend in the new era, applying modern technology. Therefore, for construction materials firms, it is necessary to have strategies, plans, and orientations to suit the development trend. To do this, construction materials firms must have good human resources, dedicated work, dedication to production and business, and scale expansion. Analyzing and discussing the working motivation of employees to maintain an engaged labor force with construction materials firms is essential.

2. Theoretical basis and literature review

Literature review

According to Stee & Porter (1983)^[23], work motivation is the desire and willingness of employees to increase efforts towards achieving organizational goals and is the urge and persistence in the work process. This concept has been inherited by a number of scientists, such as Wright (2004)^[26] and Nguyen (2015)^[18].

Work motivation is an individual's willingness to make efforts toward organizational goals under the condition that some of his or her own needs are satisfied according to his or her ability to exert effort (Robbin, 1993)^[19].

Motivating work is understood as a combination of measures and behaviors of the organization and managers to create the desire and willingness of employees to strive to achieve the organization's goals (Luong, 2011)^[14]. According to Kovach (1987)^[10], if a firm knows why its employees go to work on time, stay with the firm throughout their lives and work, and work effectively, then that company seems to be able to ensure that all their employees behave in a positive way. Such a company will have an advantage in the marketplace, while their competitors are having to endure quite high costs in employee retraining and production delays.

Content-oriented theoretical studies such as those of Maslow (1943)^[15], Herzberg (1959)^[8], and Clelland (1985)^[2]. According to the authors, the basis for creating work motivation is need and satisfaction. Satisfy the need. These theories help answer what motivates an employee (Chiang *et al.*, 2008). Therefore, administrators need to grasp the needs of employees and find ways to satisfy those needs, which will increase employee motivation. Empirical studies in this direction have also been conducted in many different fields, such as tourism and hotels (Silva & Thilakasiri, 2016)^[22]; service trade (Anupama, 2016)^[11]; and education (Sandhe & Joshi, 2017)^[21].

Process-oriented studies such as Vroom (1964)^[25], Hackman & Oldham (1976)^[7], etc. attempt to determine how motivation is created, helping to describe and explain the behaviors that are directed, energized, and motivated to maintain or stop (Mullin, 2006)^[17]. Empirical research in this direction is also supported. Liao *et al.* (2011)^[13] studied bloggers' work motivation based on expectancy theory.

Studies on employee motivation by Le (2010)^[11], Nguyen (2015)^[18], and Le (2021)^[12] have differences in subjects, circumstances, and scope of research, so the results of the studies are different. Research is also different, and although this result cannot be completely applied to other research subjects, future studies can inherit and develop. Nguyen (2015)^[18] applied job characteristics theory and equity

theory to studying the motivation of school lecturers in Hanoi. Le (2021)^[12] combines expectancy theory and job characteristics to study employee motivation at banks.

Achievement Motivation Theory

The need for achievement will create motivation to realize individual work results. The need for achievement is satisfied not by manifestations of success, which confer status, but by the process of doing the work to complete it successfully. The achievement drive helps individuals excel, achieve relevant goals, and strive for success. In other words, achievement motivation helps individuals engage in behaviors oriented toward competition and achieving high standards at work. McClelland *et al.* (1953)^[16] found that people with a high need for achievement performed better than those with a moderate or low need for achievement and noted regional and national differences in motivational achievement. Through their research, McClelland *et al.* (1953)^[16] identified three characteristics of people who achieve high levels of need for achievement, including: (i) a strong desire to be satisfied. Take personal responsibility for performing a task or finding a solution to a problem. (ii) People who achieve high needs tend to set moderately difficult goals and calculate the risks of the task. (iii) High-need achievers have a strong desire for performance feedback.

Individuals with high achievement needs and motivation will generally accept moderate risks, such as situations where they can take personal responsibility for finding solutions to problems and want feedback specifically about their work results. According to McClelland *et al.* (1953)^[16], no matter how high a person's need for achievement is, they cannot succeed if they are not given opportunities, if the organization keeps them from being proactive, or if it does not reward them if they do well. Therefore, if the organization wants to increase the motivation of individuals to perform based on their level of performance, it should assign them tasks that have a moderate level of risk of failure, give them enough authority, proactively complete tasks, and give them specific, periodic feedback on their performance.

Self-determination theory and motivation in human behavior

Deci and Ryan's (1985)^[5] and Ryan and Deci's (2000)^[20] self-determination theory of motivation reflected individuals oriented toward achievement motivation because they took into account basic desires for competence and autonomy. Self-determination theory has shown that individual motivation towards achievement includes internal motivation and external motivation.

Intrinsic motivation refers to a natural psychological process through which activities are pursued with the aim of achieving internal personal benefits such as enjoyment and satisfaction of personal curiosity (Deci, 1975)^[3]. Internal motivation exists within the autonomous limits of individual behavior and can have an impact on personal capacity. Personal capacity here is self-developed as a product of internal motivation to reinforce personal behavior (Deci & Moller, 2005)^[4].

Extrinsic motivation exists on a continuum of high to low external regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2000)^[20]. The four types of extrinsic motivation are arranged hierarchically by level and include: (i) External regulation represents the traditional

concept of extrinsic motivation, in which behavior is said to be regulated by interests outside. (ii) Introverted regulation is understood as individuals internalizing some external regulation without taking ownership of it or engaging in certain behaviors to receive the approval of others. (iii) Identity regulation reflects an individual's increased involvement in an activity because that activity is perceived to have particular value. (iv) Integrative regulation is theorized to represent extrinsic motivators that are regulated inwardly when recognized by the individual as consistent with values and needs.

Job characteristics theory

The approach of job characteristics theory is to attempt to identify objective characteristics of jobs that facilitate an individual's internal work motivation. Based on the earlier work of Turner & Lawrence (1965)^[24], the theory's current claims suggest that individuals will be motivated to perform well when they experience meaningful work and feel they have personal responsibility for work results. Five objective job characteristics were identified as important in making decisions, including skill variety, task identity, job meaningfulness, autonomy, and feedback from the job itself (Hackman & Lawler, 1971; Hackman & Oldham, 1976)^[6, 7]. When a job is designed to secure its status based on these characteristics, improvements in the motivation, satisfaction, and performance of incumbents are increased. However, individual differences in employee knowledge and skills and personal development needs are considered to influence the impact of job characteristics on work behavior and attitudes. The strongest effects are predicted for individuals with extensive work-related knowledge and skills and relatively strong developmental needs.

3. Context of the construction materials industry

In recent years, the construction materials manufacturing industry has developed strongly in quantity, quality, and type, meeting the increasing demand for infrastructure construction, urban development, and housing.

Construction material development has gradually received more attention towards sustainable development and environmental protection. The design capacity and output of some construction material products have increased 2–3 times compared to the period 10–15 years ago (Hong Hanh, 2022)^[9].

According to Mr. Nguyen Quang Hiep, Deputy Director of the Construction Materials Department, product designs are diverse and abundant, and product quality meets the standards of developed countries, meeting the increasing and diverse needs of the domestic market, gradually replacing imported goods, and exporting to the world market.

Besides the advantages, the construction materials production industry also faces many challenges, such as increasingly depleted mineral resources, requiring solutions and technology to use low-quality raw materials and take advantage of waste. Emissions from other industries, fuel costs, etc. (Hong Hanh, 2022)^[9]. Fossil fuels are increasingly scarce, fuel and energy costs are increasing, and requirements for environmental protection and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions create significant challenges that require the construction materials manufacturing industry to make drastic changes in production technology (Mr. Nguyen Quang Hiep said).

There are a wide variety of advanced construction and finishing materials that have come to market or are approaching the market. Despite their great potential, new materials still find it difficult to enter the market, let alone achieve widespread acceptance (Hong Hanh, 2022)^[9].

According to data from the Department of Construction Materials, in 2021, the whole country consumed a total of 21.75 billion standard bricks, of which 3.35 billion QTC unburnt building materials accounted for 15.4%. In the first 8 months of 2022, the whole country consumed a total of 11.94 billion standard bricks, of which 1.94 billion unburnt building materials accounted for 16.25%.

4. Discussion and implications

Motivating workers to work not only stimulates workers' working psychology but also increases labor productivity, increases production and business performance for firms, and at the same time builds a team of professional staff, increasing the competitiveness of firms in the market. Therefore, managers need to have solutions to motivate employees to work harder.

Managers at construction materials firms should be oriented toward designing appropriate jobs, always giving employees the opportunity to express their creativity and contribute more to their expertise, such as through undertaking research, testing and practicing new products, and applying new technology. In addition, construction materials firms should also create conditions for workers to develop their expertise and career skills through knowledge-sharing activities organized in a team or workshop environment or department.

Construction materials firms should develop a competitive income policy, ensuring income commensurate with work results as well as fairness among workers, with good support when they encounter problems and difficulties in work and life.

Construction materials firms should create a convenient working environment to help workers complete their work well, fully equip necessary equipment for work and create a safe working space comfortable. In addition, firm managers should have reasonable and flexible arrangements for working time and location. Employees also need to be notified promptly if there are any changes in the working environment.

Construction materials firms should regularly renew workshops and departments through activities such as repair, maintenance, and renovating the workplace. The leadership of workshops, departments, and divisions regularly urges each employee to know how to plan their work. Firm leaders should regularly check, maintain, or replace necessary equipment and machinery for work. Firm leaders should create space for workers to rest and ensure the maintenance of good health for workers.

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