



Learning from Google: Increasing the Quality of Work Life

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Abstract.

Managing human resources effectively has become vital to organizations within the modern and fast-paced business environment. How to ensure employees are still committed to the organization and bring them to reach high performance has turned the focus of human resources management (HRM) at every organization. Improving the quality of work life becomes one of the HRM's main goals. Giving attention to the quality of work life can increase motivation and performance of the employee.

Quality of work life is viewed as a wide-ranging concept, which includes adequate and fair remuneration, safe and healthy working conditions and social integration in the work organization that enables an individual to develop and use all his or her capacities. The definitions also emphasize the good feeling perceived from the interaction between the individuals and the working environment.

This article reviews how Google Inc. has been managing human resources effectively which affects the loyalty of all employees. Moreover, this effective human resource management has made Google voted as the number one 'Best Company to Work for' in America. Google utilizes a strategy to create workplaces and office locations all over the world which are built over sprawling spaces with providing the employees not only with every possible space for creativity and innovation, but also ensure that the employees' ideas are duly and uncompromisingly studied, worked on, and acknowledged.

This article concludes that dynamic changes in work environment increase the quality of work life.

Keywords: *Quality of Work Life, Google Inc., and Dynamic Changes in Work Environment.*

INTRODUCTION

A changing business environment as a result of technology changes and an effect of globalization has shifted human resources paradigms. Most capital owners treat humans only as one of the production factors in which technology advances,



productivity, and organization growth gain better priorities than human factors. However, the growth of industries has been a concomitant of the importance of human resources specialists in business strategists nowadays. The focus has turned on human resources department at every organization to ensure employees are still committed to the organization. Well-trained and competent employees, who are able to showcase themselves and their organization to the customers in a more effective manner, help in increasing customer satisfaction and overall clientele, by adding credibility and reputation to the business. Effective human resources planning and development practices bring quality and loyal workers who are committed and passionate about the success of their organization (Mirel, 2008).

Hence, the focus of organizations in order to successfully achieve their goals these days is how to maintain their employees so that they are satisfied with their work. Job satisfaction has identified a number of factors, such as reward systems in work, perceived quality of supervision, working conditions, and individual's information such as status and seniority, age group, marital status, and years of experience that cause people to become satisfied or dissatisfied with their job (Mosadeghrad et al., 2008). In addition to increasing job satisfaction, many organizations have begun to take a role in developing quality of work life programs.

From a business perspective, quality of work life (QWL) is important since there is significant evidence demonstrating that the nature of the work environment is related to satisfaction of employees and work-related behaviors (Greenhaus et al., 1987). QWL is also found to affect employee's work responses in terms of organizational identification, job satisfaction, job involvement, job effort, job performance, intention to quit, organizational turnover and personal alienation (Efraty et al., 1991). We conclude that the role of QWL is very important in achieving company's goal through improving the quality of their employee's works.

This current article reviews how Google Inc. has been managing human resources effectively which affects the loyalty of all employees. Firstly, keeping the work-life balance as a mediating construct, it is analyzed whether it leads to employee satisfaction. Secondly, we would like to prove that dynamic changes in work environment increase the quality of work life.

DEFINE QUALITY OF WORK LIFE

In principle, quality of work life (QWL) is a management philosophy which embraces the meaning of job enrichment, which is a way to maintain employees'



mental fitness, harmonious industrial relations, and participatory management, and one of the intervention forms in developing organizations (French et. al, 1990). As a management philosophy, QWL is a management paradigm about humans, work, and organizations which handle the work. Moreover, QWL is not only limited to the work itself, but QWL creates a conducive working environment in which everyone respects and recognizes one another's dignity so that employees are motivated and satisfied when they have done their jobs.

David Walonick (1993) stated QWL is an outgrowth of the human relations movement. Its goals are to increase productivity, while at the same time improve employee satisfaction by addressing the emotional needs of workers. The purpose of QWL management is to create an atmosphere of freedom, participation, and autonomy in which the worker is a partner in sharing a common objective.

Richard Walton (1985), one of the founders of the QWL approach, identified eight factors to improve the working life of employees. These are:

1. *Fair compensation* - Workers should receive sufficient pay and benefits to reach an acceptable standard of living, and the pay should be similar to others performing equivalent work.
2. *Safety and health* - The work environment should not pose any physical or environmental dangers to workers.
3. *Self-development* - Management must find ways that enable workers to develop themselves.
4. *Growth and security* - Training should be provided to avoid obsolescence, and workers should be encouraged to make use of their advanced skills.
5. *Social integration* - Management needs to provide an atmosphere of encouragement and openness that is free from prejudice.
6. *Constitutionalism* - Management must recognize that workers have rights, and workers need to be assured that they have a way to protect those rights.
7. *Life space* - Management must recognize that employees have life outside of work, and they should look for ways to minimize the impact of working life on the workers' families.
8. *Social relevance* – The company maintains high ethics, and acts responsibly with respect to its products, marketing, and the environment.



In addition, 12 QWL factors working towards the development of employees for gaining competitive advantage in the market by Sinha (2012) are:

1. *Communication*: Achieving some level of personal growth may be quite related to the quality of communication in the organization. Proper communication plays a pivotal role to achieve results in this priority area.
2. *Career Development & Growth*: The purpose of career planning as part of an employee development program is not only to help employees feel like their employers are investing in them, but also help people manage many aspects of their lives and deal with the fact that there is a clear promotion track.
3. *Organizational Commitment*: The relationship of organizational commitment with work life quality is another aspect of working life that is often investigated by researchers. Studies have concluded that committed employees remain with the organization for longer periods of time than those who are less committed and they have a stronger desire to attend work, and have a more positive attitude about their employment.
4. *Emotional Supervisory Support*: It has been suggested that emotional support at work helps balance work and family roles because it contributes to the employee's energy level.
5. *Flexible Work Arrangement*: Flexible work arrangements (flextime and telecommuting) are thought to contribute to job motivation and dedication. They also enable the employee to use time more efficiently by scheduling activities in a way that suits his or her situation best.
6. *Family-Responsive Culture*: in addition to providing flexible work arrangement and emotional supervisor support, the organization's culture toward combining work and family roles is at least as important for employees seeking work-family balance.
7. *Employee Motivation*: It is important to recognize that individuals have unique motives for working and quite often it is complex to know what motivates employees.
8. *Organizational Climate*: the climate of the organization is divided into affective, cognitive, and instrumental.
9. *Organizational Support*: the support is defined as the extent to which employees perceive that the organization values their contributions and cares about their



wellbeing. This is a key factor in influencing employee commitment to the organization, job satisfaction, and general quality of work life.

10. *Job Satisfaction*: this part of feeling enthusiastic or having sense of enjoyment in one's work.
11. *Rewards & Benefits*: They emphasized the personal needs are satisfied when rewards from the organization such as compensation, promotion, recognition and development meet their expectations.
12. *Compensation*: a system where people may see a pay increase for lateral moves that are appropriate for their own development.

Developing employees has become a unique challenge for all human resource departments at any organization. It has to ensure that the employees are motivated and committed to the organization with complete integrity and honesty. Tony Schwartz (2011) mentioned that the organization that comes closest to fulfill all the above criteria is Google and it is a key to their success.

WHAT GOOGLE DO FOR THEIR EMPLOYEES?

Best companies develop their own unique cultures in which employees are able to say "I trust the people I work for, have pride in what I do, and enjoy the people I work with." Along with that statement, Google's employee gave a statement as followed: "Google is a great company and I am very proud to be a part of it. The perks are extra ordinary and this is the most unique working environment I have ever been in. The products, ideas, creative minds that we have continue to amaze and inspire me."

What has Google done so that one takes pride when one works at Google's company? Google's company is deeply concerned or managing all its employees; firstly, the managing process starts with a principle of respecting any diversity. Diversity of its workforces can be seen through the number of communities formed by Google employees, such as: Black Googlers Network (BGN), woman@Google, VetNet: Google's Veterans Network, Gayglers: Google's LGBT Network, The Capability Council, Hispanic Googler Network (HGN) (Google.com 2013).

The second step is that Google company acts as a service provider for the employees, and treat employees as its customer base – treat the employees the same way you would like them to treat their customer, and the whole paradigm of customer satisfaction and delivery becomes easy to adopt and adapt. Kuntzhe and



Matulich (2009) stated Google provides its employees a wide range of benefits to make sure that employees are satisfied and are loyal to the company. These benefits include:

1. Free Food (Gourmet Cafeterias & Snack Rooms). Google offers free gourmet meals to all its employees at any of the company's 11 gourmet cafeterias, at its Mountain View and New York campuses as well as satellite offices. The rule at Google is that no staff member should ever be further away than 100 feet from a source of food, so various snacks, fresh fruit and drinks are a stone's throw away.
2. Onsite Childcare Facilities. Google offers child care service in its Mountain View campus and also back-up child care to help California parents when their regularly scheduled childcare falls through.
3. Healthcare Services. Google provides 100% health care coverage for its employees and their family. In addition on-site physicians and dentists are available at Mountain View and Seattle campuses.
4. Transportation Services. Google operates free, Wi-Fi-enabled shuttle services to several San Francisco, East Bay, and South Bay locations.
5. Laundry & Dry Cleaning Services. Employees can do laundry for free in company washers and dryers and also drop off dry cleaning in the Mountain View campus.
6. Sport Facilities. Google Mountain View campus contains a swimming pool, beach volleyball court, a climbing wall, running trails. Employees can work out in the gym, attend subsidized exercise classes, and get a professional massage.
7. Pets Allowed. Google is very unique in its policy that allows employees to bring their pet to work on condition that pets are reasonably well behaved and house trained. However, the pet will have to be taken home upon the first complaint.
8. 20% Creative Time Program. Google encourages all of its engineers to spend 20% of their work time on projects that interest them. This program not only makes engineers enjoy what they do and keeps them challenged, but also provides some good business opportunities for the company. Gmail, Google News, Orkut, and AdSense are Google services that were all started as individual projects.



9. Environmentalism. Google is very enthusiastic about environmental conservation and makes every effort to be as energy efficient as possible. Google subsidizes employees who buy hybrid or electric cars and who install solar panels in their homes.
10. Numerous Holidays and Leave Days. Google's employees can get 25 leave days and 12 holiday days a year. New mothers get 18 weeks of paid maternity leave and new dads get 7 weeks of paternity leave.
11. Other Services. Google Mountain View campus also includes services such as hair dressing car wash, and oil change. The company also offers its employees personal development opportunities like foreign language classes.

What Google has done to facilitate all its employees has made Google voted as the number one Best Company to Work for in 2007, 2008, 2011, and 2012 based on Fortune's Magazines (Google.com 2013). Besides 11 benefits offered by Google to its employees, Google has also designed working environment in corporate headquarters of Google – Googleplex that is located at Mountain View, California. Googleplex is a unique working place where Google's employees work hard yet have fun at the same time.

Furthermore, Kuntzhe and Matulich (2009) stated that The Mountain View headquarter has a college campus-like environment where the virtues of creativity and innovation are extolled. Google uses its corporate servicescape and corporate culture and climate to create an informal 'value-added' environment. In Googleplex people's workspaces are full of individuality, and the atmosphere is relaxed. There is neither dress code nor formal daily meetings. All Google's employees can play beach volleyball, foosball, videogames, pool tables, table tennis, or even roller hockey on the campus, which makes this young population feel like they are still at a college campus rather than being in an office.

Due to the above reasons, Google is the best company to work for. The Google's success story should give rise to new trends in the organizational culture and values. It doesn't cost much to provide your employees their freedom and comfort, on the other hand, what Google has provided for its employees has enabled Google to gross \$209,624 in profit per employee in 2008. This number beat all other large tech companies in the sector, including big hitters like Microsoft, Apple, Intel and IBM, and competitor Yahoo! (at \$31K per employee) (Kuntzhe and Matulich, 2009).



CONCLUSION

The way taken by Google to facilitate all its employees has made Google the number one company in the Fortune's list of "100 best companies to work for". The Google employees hold their pride in saying they work for the best company in the world; they say proudly that they are working "to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful" (Murari, 2008). By changing the working environment into a place like a college and designing a very comforting workplace, Google has managed to spoil all its employees. Additionally, the way Google designs dynamic changes in working environment has increased the quality of life from its employees.

What Google has done may sound ordinary; however, there is not much of effort to be put in enhancing the employees' pride. But it does a huge impact when it comes to the talk of the company among aspiring employees. Google employees has high job satisfaction; this can be seen from low turnover ratio (4,3%), knowledge retention, and low absenteeism (Google HR Policies 2013).

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