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Effect of motivational tools on employee satisfaction in small and medium enterprises

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Abstract

Research background: This paper begins by defining the small and medium-sized enterprises and their background in Slovakia. It explores the roles of SMEs in the economic development. Furthermore, the background of the paper analyzes motivational tools in practice.

Purpose of the article: The purpose of the paper is to provide a better understanding of the employee motivation issues in small and medium-sized Slovak enterprises; an examination of the motivational tools that influences the levels of satisfaction of employees of SMEs.

Methods: This research was conducted with members of small and medium enterprises in Slovakia. A personal information form and the motivation factors questionnaire form were used as data collection tools. The ending contains the results of the research and conclusions. The Pearson-correlation and the Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) were used as statistical methods.

Findings & Value added: The findings show that motivation is very individual and managers have a hard task by motivating their employees. Employees are more motivated by intrinsic factors rather than extrinsic, but none of the two can be overlooked by the managers.

Introduction

The motivation for writing the paper is that employee motivation is usually overseen by most of the managers, despite the fact that many studies have shown it as the key to having a successful and profitable enterprise. Managers need to understand that the work of employees is important in SMEs, so that customer can receive high-quality of product and effective service. SMEs constitute the backbone of Slovak economy. They are creating new jobs and contributing positively to the Slovak economy. That's why the paper deals with them.

The main objective of the paper is to provide a better understanding of the motivation in Slovakian SMEs. The aim of this article is to review and discuss the available motivation tools of motivation regard to their practical usage; to examine employee motivation and its effect on employee satisfaction. The sub-objectives was to examine the effect of salary on employee satisfaction; to identify the influence of recognition on employee satisfaction; to identify the relationship between salary and employee retention; to examine the employees' level of motivation.

The article was written by the authors' own research and observation, resulting from research in the management of human capital. The research illustrated in the practical part of the scientific paper analyzes the characteristics of motivational tools used in SMEs in Slovakia with various quantitative and qualitative research methods. Data were gathered through structured questionnaires by using a sample of 300 employees. The article is dedicated to managers, researches and other readers to encourage them to practical use of motivational tools.

Literature review and context of the research

The small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are important in worldwide economies, and their employees are great sources of delivering good products and services to customers. According to Belás *et al.* (2016), Havierniková *et al.* (2015) and Funta (2007), all SMEs want to achieve success on the market. It could not be possible without dedicated working staff. Excellent products and services provided by employees can create a positive feedback from customers. The good work of employees plays a major role

in achieving a high level of satisfaction among the customers. Although in recent years a lot of research has been done to explore what motivates the employees (Závadský *et al.*, 2015), unfortunately many organizations still do not use the motivational tools in practice (Tizazu, 2015).

Mačerinskienė *et al.* (2016) and Kordoš (2016) state that the impact of unbalanced conditions at a market, tendencies towards globalization and internationalization may result in a substantial transformation of intellectual capital represented by human resources in the European Union.

The abovementioned determinants have an impact on diverse transformations in human resources management that must be reflected in recruitment and development of employees (Jeřábek & Čapošová, 2016; Grabara *et al.*, 2016). The authors Spišáková *et al.* (2016) and Kačerová (2016) state that the field is prioritized by the EU strategic document called “Europe 2020”. Shuaibu & Oladayo (2016) point out that not only European countries are facing the problem, but also other countries all over the world have been struggling with the stated issue. Mentoring, according to Bencsik *et al.* (2015), represents one part of the Human Resources management, and has become a part of the corporate personnel policy.

According to Vetráková & Smerek (2016) and Krizanová *et al.* (2014), the transformation processes in HR management form naturally also the corporation culture in designing the company structure in national and international companies. Transformation in company organization forms a part of a large number of transformations in companies as Sueldo & Streimikiene (2016) and Michalski (2015) state. Managers responsible for HR management need to meet the requirements of companies, so that qualifications, gender and age of employees can be in balance with the labor market supply that is substantially influenced by the demographic development (Megyesiová & Hajduová, 2012). Due to the abovementioned dynamics, managing companies is not a simple process aided by information system for management that is, according to Merkevičius *et al.* (2015), an inevitable condition for effective work with human resources.

Doubtless dynamic processes of transformation take place in not only large companies and businesses but also in SMEs and it is necessary to follow the tendency in this field (Lelek, 2014; Šúbertová 2013).

As human resources management also covers some other issues, our paper focuses on assessing the effectiveness of motivation tools applied in HR management in Slovak SMEs, since they form a driving element in the market economy (Šúbertová, 2016). A special contribution of SME can be seen in the field of innovations and their implementation in the business practice (Koráb & Koudelková, 2016).

The SMEs are the backbone of Europe's economy and presents 99% of all businesses in the EU. In the past five years, they have created around 85% of new jobs and provided two-thirds of the total private sector employment in the EU. The European Commission considers SMEs and entrepreneurship as key to ensuring economic growth, innovation, job creation, and social integration (Report on the state of Small and Medium Enterprises in the Slovak Republic in 2015).

The classification of enterprises based on their size used in this paper is in accordance with the recommendation of the European Commission No. 2003/361/EC. The main factors determining whether an enterprise is an SME are: the number of employees is more than 50; the annual turnover is more than 10 mil. €; the balance sheet total is more than 10 mil. € (Report on the state of Small and Medium Enterprises in the Slovak Republic in 2015).

SMEs are the life force of the Slovak economy. The Slovakian business economy is heavily dependent on SMEs, as they provide more than 70% of employment and more than 60% of value added. Most SMEs are in services and retail trade, but manufacturing is also important (2015 SBA Fact Sheet Slovakia, 2015). Slovak Business Agency annually produces and publishes report on the state of SMEs in the Slovak Republic. The subject of the report is a description of the development and the situation of SMEs in Slovakia (Report on the state of Small and Medium Enterprises in the Slovak Republic in 2015). We looked at the report of SMEs in the Slovak Republic from 2013 to 2015, as you can see from Table 1 to Table 3.

Graphical visualization of characteristics of enterprises on research we can see in the Graph 1 to 3.

There are approximately only eight SMEs per 1000 inhabitants in Slovakia, which is considerably below than the EU average. In line with this result, the economic importance of the SME sector in Slovakia is smaller than the EU average (2015 SBA Fact Sheet Slovakia, 2015).

Motivation theory

The subject of the workplace motivation is the manager, and the object of the workplace motivation is the employee. The manager is responsible for creating an environment in which employees can motivate themselves. There is an old expression associated with employee motivation that says, that "People join companies, but they leave managers." Managers can motivate the individuals and the work teams. In the first case the manager applies an individual motivational program, where the needs and motivat-

ing factors of the individual should be taken into account. In other case, the leader may motivate the work team. In this case, group motivation program will be applied, where the needs and motivating factors of the group should be taken into account. Nowadays the SMEs mostly motivate the employees with money and financial benefits, despite the fact that many research indicates that this type of motivation might not be effective enough for employees. Beside the monetary motivation the managers can chose from a number of motivational tools, such as recognition for a job well done, involvement in decision-making, sharing responsibilities and tasks with employees, career advancement opportunities, etc. (Falcone & Tan, 2013; Scheiner, 2015).

Each employee is an individual with very different needs. What motivates one person, will not necessarily motivate others. For this reason, managers that want to motivate all employees, have get to know them and recognize what motivational factors influence them. Money is often the first factor to come to mind, but if the enterprise wants to be successful, the leaders have to use other motivational tools too (Kooser, 2016; Thibodeaux, 2016).

Some employees are motivated by the equipment offered by the enterprise to carry out their tasks, for example a company car, a laptop, or even a mobile phone can positively affect the employees. Financial benefits can include cash prizes, gift cards or restaurant gift certificates. Non-financial benefits can include extra vacation days, compressed work weeks or parking spots. Work conditions, for example the building in which the work is carried out or the office and its equipment are also motivating. A positive corporate culture also motivates employees to do their best. Employees will work harder for those managers who show help and careful attitude toward them. Managers play a key role in maintaining a good working environment (McQuerrey, 2016; Krumrie, 2016; Borowski & Daya, 2014).

Managers can motivate employees by giving them responsibilities and the authority to make basic decisions. They can also motivate employees by encouraging them to be creative and innovative. These techniques allow employees to feel like active participants of the enterprise (Borowski & Daya, 2014; Thibodeaux, 2016).

Self-improvement allows employees to receive the training they need to be better at their job. The managers should help employees to become self-motivated by helping them establish professional goals. Leaders should make sure that goals are reasonable and achievable, so employees do not get discouraged. This way employees will believe that they are capable of achieving additional skills and information (McQuerrey, 2016; Thibodeaux, 2016).

Regular feedback (positive and corrective) from managers helps keep employees on a path of continuous improvement. A simple “thank-you” or public praise will increase the employee's confidence. Recognizing employees for accomplishments — such as a finished project, reaching sales goals, or providing excellent customer services — can be an important motivating factor (Kooser, 2016; Krumrie, 2016).

The lack of the information has a negative impact on the performance, because the employees do not have a good starting point to do their job as well as they can. The availability of relevant information can motivate the employees and increase their efficiency. Managers, by giving relevant information, may reduce stress for employees and therefore get better work results (Llopis, 2010; Krumrie, 2016).

Research methodology

The purpose of this scientific paper is to point out to the importance of motivation factors in the life of SMEs. This research was made in Slovakian SMEs.

Before carrying out the research, we had analyzed a variety of secondary data. This included topics written in national and international literature, reviewing and organizing the collected funds. To perform the quantitative empirical research we have chosen a basic method, the questionnaire. 300 out of 768 people participated in the questionnaire survey. Before carrying out the research, we had made a probe query. To our probe query, we chose the people from the target crowd of the questionnaire. The probe query was made in an environment similar to the one of the real survey. We edited the questionnaire after the probe query, which meant that we corrected all mistakes which occurred during the probe query. While carrying out the questionnaire, we used interviewers to eliminate potential misunderstandings. The using of interviewers decreased the number of unanswered questions. Our questionnaire was filled out by 300 out of 768 persons from the employees of Slovakian SMEs. We have recorded and coded the filled questionnaires and selected the correct statistical methods. The empirical research was carried out early spring 2016. From the sampling techniques, we used the random sampling method.

For the evaluation of our data, we used SAS statistics software. For the calculation of our research, and to test our hypothesis we used univariate and multivariate statistical methods. In this scientific paper, from the univariate analysis we used the average and standard deviation. In case of the multivariate methods we used Pearson-correlation.

When we analyzed the hypothesis, we tried to answer the following questions: “Is the money the most motivating factor in Slovakian SMEs? Is the financial recognition the strongest motivational factor in the SMEs?” The Pearson correlation was used to test this hypothesis.

The Pearson-correlation coefficient is used to measure the strength of a liner association between two variables, where the value $r = 1$ means a perfect positive correlation, and the value $r = -1$ means a perfect negative correlation (Kumar *et al.*, 2002).

Results and discussion

One of the questions of the questionnaire was related to how the listed factor motivate the respondents. We listed 11 statements to find out what motivates the employees. The respondents had to choose one number from the five-point Likert scale (1 — “does not motivate me”, 5 — “motivates me very much”). The Likert scale is a psychometric scale commonly involved in questionnaires. The respondents specify their level of agreement or disagreement on a symmetric scale for a series statements. Because of the high number of data, we averaged it. When we evaluated questions with Likert Scale, we calculated the average and standard deviation. The Table 4 shows the average and the standard deviation of the answers.

The most important motivating factor in the SMEs is the financial recognition (4.33), and the recognition for job well done (4.33). The employees think that the working community (4.25) and the great leader is also important (4.18). It is important to give them continuous feedback about the job (3.93). The career advancement opportunities (3.65) and clearly defined goals and objectives (3.73) are less important for them. According the high value of the standard deviation, we can assume that not in every case the respondents have the same opinion compared to the average. Graphical visualization can be seen in Graph 4.

We listed 16 statements in the questionnaire to find out which motivational tools are presented at the workplace of respondents. Closed-response questions were used, where two alternatives were supplemented with a neutral one (“Yes”, “No”, “I do not know”). The respondents made one choice from a list of possible responses. Responses were averaged. The respondents’ answers were indicated with „1”, if the statement did not apply to them, and were indicated with „2”, if so. The neutral answers were indicated with „0”. Therefore, the obtained values were between 0 and 2. The higher the value is, the more likely the motivational tools is represented in the life of the SMEs. The values in parentheses represents the averag-

es obtained. The Table 5 shows the average and the standard deviation of the answers.

Although the respondents have stated previously that the recognition and the monetary recognition motivate them the most, SMEs do not use these motivational tools. Very few respondents replied that they receive the recognition for their work (0.63), and approx. the same number of the respondents said that the recognition is not visible on their salaries (0.65). The working community had been considered important before, and the answers showed that the good working community is present in the life of the enterprises (1.05). The working community can influence the staff in a positive way. The respondents also said that it is important to get a leader, whom they respect. Responses showed that a large number of respondents said that if they face problems, they can turn to the leader (1.03), but they are not fully satisfied with their leader (0.8). This may be because they feel they do not receive the necessary information and guidance from the leaders (0.98), they have no chance to evolve and move forward in the career-ladder (0.65), the leaders do not listen to their views (0.78) and they do not receive tasks in which they have a great autonomy in decision-making (0.55). The senior management does not support the grassroots initiatives (0.9). The results of these, employees feel that the employer does not pay enough attention to employees' motivation (0.73), and demotivation is rather typical than the high level of motivation among the workers (0.33). Simply, they do not feel important in the life of the enterprise (0.58). Graphical visualization we can see in Graph 5.

When we analyzed the hypothesis, we tried to answer the following questions: “Is the money the most motivating factor in Slovakian SMEs? Is the financial recognition the strongest motivational factor in the SMEs?” According to the questions, the hypothesis is: “The financial recognition influence the employees of SMEs to work harder and make better job.”

H₀: The financial recognition does not influence the job performance.

H₁: The financial recognition influences the job performance.

The Pearson correlation was used to test this hypothesis. To evaluate this hypothesis, we analyzed the question were the respondents needed to choose from defined motivating factors, and how these factors motivate them. Among these factors, we could find financial recognition.

The respondents had to choose one number from the five-point Likert scale according how the financial recognition is motivating them (1 — “does not motivate me”, 5 — “motivates me very much”). In case of

Likert scale, standard deviation and average were used. According the evaluated data, we can say that the most important motivational factor among the employees of SMEs is the financial recognition (4.33) and the recognition for job well done (4.33). However, according the standard deviation of the answers (0.8590 and 0.8286), we can assume that not in every case the respondents have the same opinion compared to the average. The high value of standard deviation indicates that the respondent's perceptions are not entirely uniform. Due to that fact the respondents cannot be seen as homogeneous.

We used the Pearson's correlation analysis to calculate the tightness between the metric variables. This index number represents the strength among two metric variables (Kumar *et al.*, 2002). The Table 6 shows the results of the statistical methods: Pearson-Correlation and the asymptotic significance (2-sided).

The table shows that there is a moderate positive significant relationship between the financial recognition and the motivation. The H_1 was accepted, due to the relationship among these two variables.

92.31% of employees answered that the greatest motivating factor in the Slovakian SMEs is the financial recognition, and 94.87% of them replied that the greatest motivating factor is the recognition for a job well done, the appreciation and praise. Despite this, the SMEs do not apply these factors. 53.85% of respondents answered that they do not get the recognition for their work. Even if their employees cannot be adequately rewarded by financial recognition, leaders should pay more attention to express their assessment for a job well done. Leaders are responsible for employees' motivation, they should pay more attention to using the motivational tools. The research revealed that managers do not listen to employees' opinions and do not involve them in decision-making. 48.72% of employees replied that. They do not give them complicated and complex tasks, which would make them feel they are important in the life of the enterprise. 61.54% of employees answered that managers do not share the information with them to have a complex picture of tasks. As a result, there is no opportunity to develop their talents and skills and move forward. Simply, 33.33% of respondents feel they are not important, are not necessary, it absolutely cannot be told about them that they are motivated.

The research also showed that the theory has been verified in practice. The answers are compatible with Herzberg's two-factor theory that said that the lack of hygiene factors leads to dissatisfaction of individuals. In this case, the respondents mentioned the lack of suitable working environment, the appropriate wage system and the good relationship between man-

agers and employees, so the hygiene factors. These factors are not present in everyday life, so the employees are not satisfied.

The answers are compatible with the theory of Vroom, too. Respondents also pointed out that there is no complete picture of tasks to be performed and that is not specifically defined what or what kind of efforts are expected from them. 61.54% of respondents replied that. Based on the theory of Vroom, objectives and tasks must be defined clearly. 61.54% of employees replied that they are motivated by clearly defined goals and objectives. If these goals are reached by the person, by a work team, or by the enterprise, the managers should always praise those individuals who participated in the realization of objectives. 76.92% of employees answered that they are motivated by continuous feedback about the job, and 94.87% of them replied that they are motivated by recognition for job well done. Vroom also mentioned in his theory the identity of the manager. 89.74% of employees answered that they are motivated by a great leader. The leader must be aware what the employees are evaluated and what things they deem important, so the rewards can be adjusted at least in part to their needs.

Conclusions

Employee motivation is an important task for managers. Enterprise managers should recognize that motivation is personal, as Maslow and Herzberg demonstrated that employees are motivated by many different factors. Enterprise managers therefore need to find out the personal goals of their employees. What motivates one employee will not necessarily motivate another.

SMEs should provide opportunities for the managers and employees to take a share and a greater interest in their own employment. Since every employee is an individual with different needs, the process of reviews and personal development allows recognition of their abilities and achievement. This benefits the individual by providing career progression. It also benefits SMEs by delivering high level of customer service through skilled employees.

The SMEs should organize leadership training courses in order to train their managers. Since especially the manager's responsibilities include the motivation, managers must be trained and develop themselves in this area. A manager needs to engage his or her team and assist them in reaching goals. A manager should learn how to build effective coaching techniques; analyse problem; make good decision; communicate effectively; strengthen listening skills; recognize team success; use management theories and lead-

ership best practices. These will help maximize the productivity of individuals, of team and of enterprise.

Today's successful leaders are willing to adapt and improve themselves and improve team performance by developing their own leadership development skills. By taking leadership programs, the manager will become an engaging manager who motivates the employees.

From the preceding paragraphs, it can be concluded that it is important for managers' to have a thorough understanding of the motivation theories. It enables the managers to enhance not only the individual performance, but also the performance of the whole enterprise. The primary objective of enterprises is to survive, sustain and grow, and the objective can be met when the employees are happy. This can be achieved by understanding the motivation theories and implementing them effectively to achieve the best results for an enterprise. It can be said that effective implementation of the motivation theories can help the enterprises' to have a competitive advantage which would ensure its growth, survival and maximized revenue generation. Thus, it can be concluded for managers' to perform efficiently it is necessary for them to have knowledge of the motivation theories.

During the research, we established one hypothesis. The hypothesis examined whether the financial recognition is the main motivation factor or not. For the testing, we used the Pearson correlation analysis, which indicated moderate positive significant relationship between the financial recognition and the employees' motivation. Due to this relationship, the hypothesis was confirmed.

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Annex

Table 1. The number of enterprises, the number of persons employed and the value added (2013)

	Number of enterprises			Number of persons employed			Value added (MEUR)		
	Value	%	EU average (%)	Value	%	EU average	Value (billion €)	%	EU average
Micro enterprise	334 035	95.1	92.2	454 433	32.9	29.7	6	20.9	21.5
Small enterprise	14 221	4.0	6.5	246 703	17.9	20.6	5	15.8	18.6
Medium enterprise	2 557	0.7	1.1	264 995	19.2	17.2	6	18.1	18.3
SMEs	350 813	99.8	99.8	966 131	70.0	67.5	17	54.8	58.4
Large enterprises	571	0.2	0.2	413 926	30.0	32.5	14	45.2	41.6
Total	351 385	100	100	1 380 057	100	100	31	100	100

Source: 2013 SBA fact sheet Slovakia (2013).

Table 2. The number of enterprises, the number of persons employed and the value added (2014)

	Number of enterprises			Number of persons employed			Value added (MEUR)		
	Value	%	EU average (%)	Value	%	EU average	Value (billion €)	%	EU average
Micro enterprise	375 780	95.8	92.4	537 760	37.6	29.1	10	28.9	21.6
Small enterprise	13 810	3.5	6.4	263 387	18.4	20.6	7	19.9	18.2
Medium enterprise	2 213	0.6	1.0	230 254	16.1	17.2	6	15.8	18.3

Table 2. Continued

	Number of enterprises			Number of persons employed			Value added (MEUR)		
	Value	%	EU average (%)	Value	%	EU average	Value (billion €)	%	EU average
SMEs	391 803	99.9	99.8	1 031 401	72.2	66.9	23	64.7	58.1
Large enterprises	465	0.1	0.2	397 534	27.8	33.1	12	35.4	41.9
Total	392 268	100	100	1 428 935	100	100	35	100	100

Source: 2014 SBA fact sheet Slovakia (2014).

Table 3. The number of enterprises, the number of persons employed and the value added (2015)

	Number of enterprises			Number of persons employed			Value added (MEUR)		
	Value	%	EU average (%)	Value	%	EU average	Value (billion €)	%	EU average
Micro enterprise	377 379	96.4	92.7	552 381	39.0	29.2	8	27.1	21.1
Small enterprise	11 474	2.9	6.2	224 291	15.8	20.4	6	17.6	18.2
Medium enterprise	2 083	0.5	1.0	224 798	15.9	17.3	6	16.5	18.5
SMEs	390 936	99.9	99.8	1 001 470	70.7	66.9	20	61.2	57.8
Large enterprises	469	0.1	0.2	415 365	29.3	33.1	13	38.7	42.2
Total	391 405	100	100	1 416 835	100	100	33	100	100

Source: 2015 SBA fact sheet Slovakia (2015).

Table 4. The average and the standard deviation of the answers

Motivational tool	Number of respondents	Average	Standard deviation
Continuous feedback about the job	300	3.93	1.0225
Recognition for job well done	300	4.33	0.8286
Involvement in decision-making	300	3.80	0.8228
Clearly defined goals and objectives	300	3.73	0.9868
A great leader	300	4.18	0.6360
Financial recognition	300	4.33	0.8590
Working community	300	4.25	0.7071
Acceptable working environment	300	4.03	0.5768
Career advancement opportunities	300	3.65	1.1447
Application of acquired knowledge, skills and experiences during the job	300	4.03	0.7334
Challenging tasks and appointments	300	3.75	0.7763

Table 5. The average and the standard deviation of the answers

Alternative	Number of respondents	Average	Standard deviation
I get challenging tasks in accordance with my working position.	300	0.65	0.4830
I can use my acquired knowledge, skills and experiences in the practice and I can improve them.	300	0.78	0.5768
I have the opportunity to move forward in the career-ladder.	300	0.65	0.6998
I am fully satisfied with my leader.	300	0.80	0.6485
If I have problem, I can turn to my leader whenever I need it.	300	1.03	0.5768
I am in good relationship with my colleagues.	300	1.05	0.3162
I get the respect at my workplace.	300	0.98	0.5305
My leader listens to my opinion before he makes a decision.	300	0.78	0.8002
The senior management supports the grassroots initiatives.	300	0.90	0.9282
I have great autonomy in decision-making.	300	0.55	0.7959
I always get the proper recognition for my work.	300	0.63	0.5856
The recognition for my work is visible on my salary too.	300	0.65	0.8336
A high level of employee motivation characterizes my workplace.	300	0.73	0.9334
The motivation of employees' gets a lot of attention at my workplace.	300	0.33	0.5668
I get all the necessary information and support to carry out my tasks.	300	0.90	0.6325
I feel important in the life of the enterprise.	300	0.58	0.7121

Table 6. Pearson-correlation between motivation and financial recognition

Financial recognition	Pearson-correlation	,394
	Asymptotic significance (2-sided)	,000
	Number of respondents	300

Graph 1. Distribution of enterprises on research

Graph 2. Distribution of employees in small and medium enterprises

Graph 3. Value added by type of enterprises

Graph 4. Mean of importance – graphical visualization (part 1)

Graph 5. Mean of importance – graphical visualization (part 2)