

Employee Motivation strategies at Qatar's First Finance Company

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Student Name:

Student number:

Institution:

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Introduction

This paper will evaluate the work culture of First Finance Company a leading financial institution in Qatar and how it can be improved to attract, motivate and retain its skilled workers. Evidence indicates that human resources are critical to a company's successes for they provide the best returns on investments for any competitive advantage that is sustainable (Luthans and Yousef 2004). This paper thus argues that Qatar's First Finance Company should implement human resource management (HRM) at its strategic levels and benefit from HRM's emerging approaches if it is to attract, develop and retain its talented employees. Most research in the field of human resource management concentrates on the attraction, motivation and retention of skilled employees (Horwitz et al. 2006; Baron et al. 2001; Evans et al. 2002).

Background of Study

Qatar's First Finance Company provides corporate, consumer and commercial financial services. It is a leading company in Qatar's finance sector. This was realized after a number of belligerent growths to augment its services, deposit base and branch network to its customers. Given that it has employed professionals from a number of multinationals its management is

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renowned for its visionary capacity. The company started with a strategy that would see it carve out a unique position in the market through the provision of quality services to its clientele. It began with management trainee programs in support of its rapid operations.

As much as the company actively hired experienced employees averse in the market as well as fresh graduates from universities the Management Trainee Program (MTO) came in handy in hiring and training employees that would undertake the company's future management practices. Top graduates from universities were recruited and trained theoretically for ten months, after three years they were promoted to the position of managers. Since their training costed the company a lot of capital and time they signed a legal agreement not to leave the organization before two years are over since this was presumed to be adequate time for the company to have ploughed back its capital or else pay a certain penalty.

However, the minimum service position was not important to most of the graduates given the lucrative opportunities they had been promised in the company. Things turned nasty when the company expanded and decided to recruit middle level managers without training yet gave them the same remuneration as that of the senior trained managers a case that was different in rival organizations where senior managers were paid higher salaries. Apart from that the middle level managers decided to misuse MTOs to meet their targets rather than let them learn in the organization something that was not supported by the senior managers yet the owner of the company would not solve this problem. At the end of their contracts the senior managers left for greener pastures leading to high turnover. This served as a lesson to the company to consider employee satisfaction in its future endeavors.

According to the equity theory all companies wish to instill healthy competition amongst their employees. It is through this competition that employees attain their full potential (Luthans and Yousef 2004). Therefore the management trainees were dissatisfied because they were not remunerated in accordance with the existing rates. According to the motivation hygiene theory the gamut of emotional states tend to extend beyond satisfaction levels. Factors such as work conditions, company policy and salary structure will augment satisfaction if they are adequate. In this case study everyone started jumping out of the sinking ship when they realized that they were being paid peanuts. On the other hand the Maslow hierarchy of needs has five distinct needs levels; self actualization, physiological, esteem, safety and social needs. Self actualization was the problem that was faced by managers in the Qatar First Finance Company (Arthur 1994).

This paper will deal with how Qatar's First Finance Company has been unable to control its human resources and its related challenges. It critically evaluates why the company did not incorporate its HR policies within its strategic agenda leading to the incapability of attracting, developing and utilizing of its talent.

Objectives of Study

- To evaluate critically the working culture of Qatar's First Finance Company
- To analyze HRM challenges from the company's management trainee perspective
- To evaluate factors that lead to these challenges
- To propose recommendations that can overcome the HRM challenges

Literature Review

The much revered best practices of attractive flexible work hours, job design, increased autonomy, high pay offs, skill enhanced payoffs and paid holidays are employed by companies in an attempt to get experienced and skilled workers (Olson 2003; Stovel and Bontis 2002). Every company seeks for skilled workers and do all they can to optimize their performance. In order to obtain skilled workers companies tend to pull them from their competition through an offering of better remuneration. This has resulted in unparalleled job uncertainty. Critical layoffs have aggravated the situation through minimizing loyalty in organizations to new laws; this is what has now been coined as the battle for talent (Hargie 2004; Michaels et al. 2001).

The battle for talent has become a calculated business problem and a fundamental driver for corporate performance (Michaels et al. 2001). High performing companies differentiate

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themselves from those that do not perform through an all-encompassing talent mindset. They believe in advanced talent and its control as a critical part of competitive advantage. The non performing companies on the other hand either are not capable of attracting the right talent or fail to control it upon obtaining it. The battle for talented employees has not just emerged as amongst the critical challenges in today's companies but the obtaining of talent to improve a company's competitive advantage has come out as a critical strategy for numerous fast growing companies.

The winners in this cut throat competition do it easily through their organizational capacities such as employee competence, speed, learning capacity, responsiveness and agility. Boudreau and Ramstad (2005) point out that as companies rapidly compete through talent it is their human capital investments that establish their competitive positions. Successful companies in this battle are those that are capable of turning their strategies into action create an environment of seamless change, effectively and intelligently control processes and optimize employee commitment and involvement. This rapid talent crisis has made companies to suffer from an imminent leadership crisis.

HRM entails the development and execution of strategies that are consistent with a company's objectives to guarantee that human capital contributes towards the attainment of long term strategic goals (Baird and Meshoulam 1988; Huselid et al. 1997). Companies that know how to control their human resources as their core organizational strategy tend to experience a lot of efficiency in their operations because it is cumbersome to acquire and employ human resources successfully because of the time involved (Wright et al. 1994). Studies indicate a

positive correlation between strategic HRM and minimized turnover of employees, greater general effectiveness in organizational performance, higher productivity and great cost effectiveness (Arthur 1994; Ferris et al. 1990).

Studies have verified that innovation is determined by the attraction, construction and nurturing of fundamental capabilities (Pavitt 1991). On the other hand, employee innovation attitudes are closely related to employment conditions (Storey et al. 2002). In order for an organization to successfully incorporate HRM to strategy it is critical for it to understand internal and external factors that are likely to impact the efficiency of strategic HR. Khatri (1999) points out that the relationship between strategy and HRM is determined by the kind of strategy that an organization pursues. HR's vertical and horizontal fits, organizational culture and HR managers competencies tend to function with strategy. The adoption of strategic HRM is also determined by ownership types, company's market orientation, HRM competency and its significance (Horwitz et al. 2006).

However, most companies are not sure on the kind of HR strategies that have the highest impact as far as sustaining competitive advantage is concerned. Toor and Das (2007) point out that most companies tend to establish their human resource practices founded on various aspects of human resource management including; labour management relations, planning, training and development, staffing, compensating and appraising. There are critical relationship between companies' performance and these core organizational functions. As much as remuneration and financial rewards tend to be employed in the attraction and retention of talent they are not consummate to employees' job motivation or their personal satisfaction.

Horwitz et al. (2006) points out that most companies struggle to be an employer of choice through the establishment of an impression of a perception of high performance, better lifestyle benefits, a reputation for opportunities for advancement and a challenging work environment. The creation of this type of firm character has been coined branding and is employed by most companies for strategic HR policies (Capelli 2001).

Amongst the robust and pioneering HR strategies employed in talent attraction, motivation and retention include the provision of attractive pay packages, the provision of problematic projects and assignments, availing opportunities for development in specialist fields, the freedom to work autonomously, guarantee of regular contact from senior management, the provision of performance feedback and providing incentive bonuses (Horwitz et al., 2006). Other HR strategies that are innovative in nature include; opportunities to top edge technology, assessment of the contribution and use of knowledge assets and assistance provided to others (Hansen et al. 1999; Kinnear and Sutherland 2000).

Methodology

Research methodology is a systematic manner in which a problem can be solved. It is also a science that studies the way in which to carry out research. It entails the manner in which researchers describe, explain and predict phenomena. There are three research methods qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods and they are critical in assisting researchers to get solutions to certain problems (Bryman 2008).

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Positivist and Interpretivism Approaches

Positivist approach tends to point out qualitative data with prepositions that can be verified in other case scenarios. On the other hand interpretative approach tends to combine this data into belief systems that have particular manifestations. The interpretative approach in empirical undertakings is obtaining more rapid attention as an authentic option to the ore conventional positivist approach. Interpretative approach tends to deal with procedures such as case studies, ethnography, phenomenology and hermeneutics. On the other hand the positivist approach tends to deal with procedures such as quasi experiential design, inferential statistics, mathematical analysis and hypothesis testing. In this regard this paer will apply the interpretative approach (Carr and Worth 2001).

Quantitative and Qualitative methods

Quantitative research is founded on the measure of quantity where processes are depicted in form of one or more quantities. The results are in form of a set of numbers. Quantitative research has the following attributes; It is numerical, applies mathematics, non description and mathematics. It is an iterative mechanism that evaluates evidence. Its results are presented in graphs or tables (Creswell 2003).

On the other hand, qualitative research concerns itself with qualitative phenomena that involve quality. Some of its attributes include; it is descriptive, uses words, applies reasoning and is non numerical in nature. It aims at obtaining the feelings, meaning and a description of the

situation. Its data is never put on graphs. Being exploratory in nature it evaluates the why and how of making decisions (Diener 1978).

Sampling

The researcher will employ probability sampling which is also referred to as random sampling. The term random stands for the mechanism through which elements are selected from an entire population; when this method is employed each element inherent in the population has an equal opportunity of being chosen through simple random sampling. The sample is usually referred to as a representative because the attributes of a sample that is drawn properly signify the whole population (Guba and Lincoln 1994).

Data Collection

Primary data was collected by survey method. This usually involves observation, personal interviews, telephone interviews, mailing of questionnaires and use of schedules. In observation the researcher does his own observations without any interviews. In personal interviews the researcher tends to undertake a rigid mechanism where he looks for answers for a set of questions that have been pre conceived through individual interviews. In telephone interviews the participants are conducted via the telephone and its advantageous if the interviews are to be conducted on short notice (Hakim 1982).

Questionnaires entail conduction of surveys where the researcher and participants will gain conduct. It is extensively employed in business surveys. Schedules entail the use of

enumerators who are trained to approach participants with the schedules. Occasional field checks are required to guarantee sincerity (Horn 2009).

Data Analysis

Upon collecting the data the task of analyzing it begins. Data analysis demands several closely associated operations for instance establishing categories, applying the categories to raw data via codes, tables and drawing statistical inferences. If the data is unwieldy it must be condensed into manageable tables and groups for more analysis. Coding is done to transform the data into symbols for counting and tabulation purposes (Linda and Alison 2003).

In order to attain the objectives outlined in the introduction the researcher adopted an in depth case study paradigm. Consequently, he conducted interviews with 59 management trainees that had been recruited in the company's management training program. Interviews were then conducted within a period of four months between December 2014 and April 2015. The interviews were informal in nature with the sole purpose of guaranteeing that the respondents were free to give their answers and give detailed reports on the actual situation and challenges without fear. These interviews were also carried out in informal environments such as during walk in appointments, coffee breaks and lunch times with the trainees. Each interview took about 18 minutes. The researcher took notes in the interviews and assured the respondents of their anonymity (Malhotra 2010).

The questions concentrated on fulfillment of contractual obligations in the perspective of the company, the successes of the management trainee programs, work life balance, the

company's work place culture, personal needs fulfillment, potential of the program in form of the trainees intellectual development, as well as the adequacy of the employee reward system.

Apart from the interviews the researcher used secondary data he collected from the company's database. These documents mainly included performance appraisal matrices, the company history, employee feedback surveys, annual financial reports, employee hand book, monthly periodicals and newsletters, values and ethics codes, as well as reports concerning the management trainee programs. The secondary data documents were employed in framing the background of the research (McPhail 1999)

Ethical Considerations

All participants in the research will be protected and they will remain anonymous throughout the research process. Research process participation would be through informed consent where the researcher will explain the objectives of the research and they will not be required to sign anywhere. Those who return the answered forms detailing their names will be deemed to have accepted to take part in the research process.

Any potential risks and how they would be inhibited in the research process would be explained to the participants before they make a choice to participate. Their participation in the research process would be through voluntary consent without any coercion and they will be reserved the right to withdraw from the research process at any point they feel like doing so. The results of the empirical undertaking will be emailed to participants to go through before publication to confirm that their identity has not been mentioned (Neuman 1997).

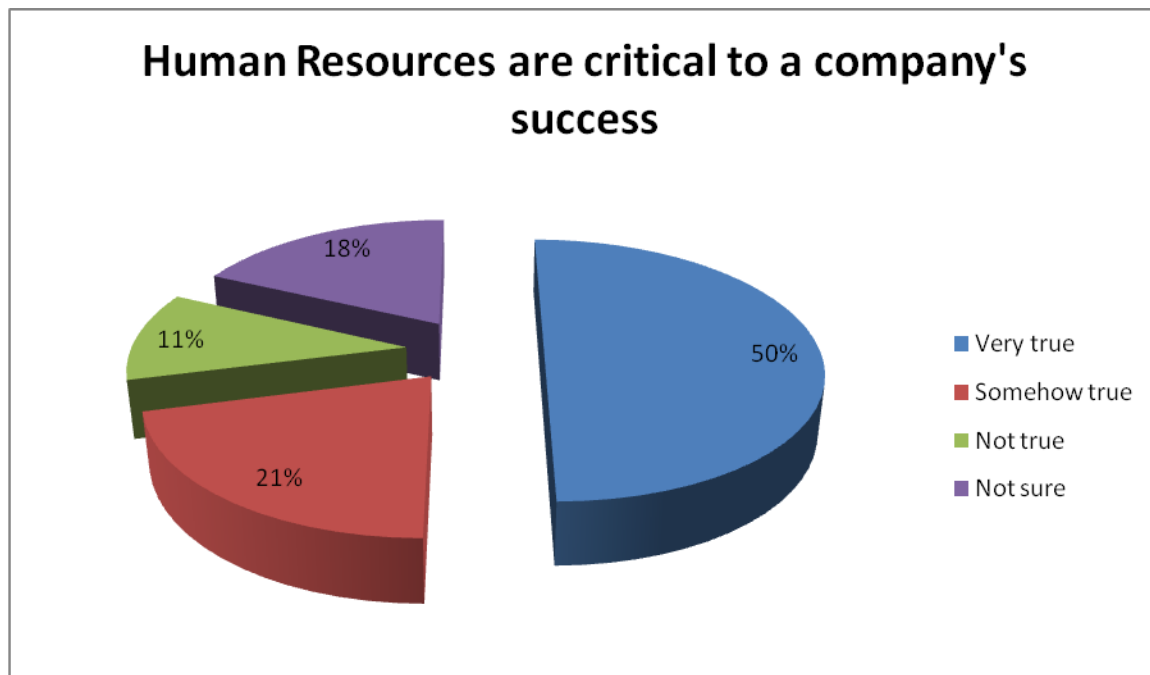
Findings and Analysis

Q 1; How true is this statement: human resources are critical to a company's successes for they provide the best returns on investments for any competitive advantage that is sustainable

Question one wanted to know how true is the fact that human resources are critical to a company's successes for they provide the best returns on investments for any competitive advantage that is sustainable.

Findings indicate that 50% of the respondents find it to be very true that human resources are critical to a company's successes for they provide the best returns on investments for any competitive advantage that is sustainable. 21% of the respondents asserted that it is somehow true that human resources are critical to a company's successes for they provide the best returns on investments for any competitive advantage that is sustainable. 11% of the respondents pointed out that it is not true that human resources are critical to a company's successes for they provide the best returns on investments for any competitive advantage that is sustainable while 18% of the respondents are not sure if human resources are critical to a company's successes for they provide the best returns on investments for any competitive advantage that is sustainable as shown in figure 1 below.

Figure 1 Human Resources Are Critical To A Company's Successes

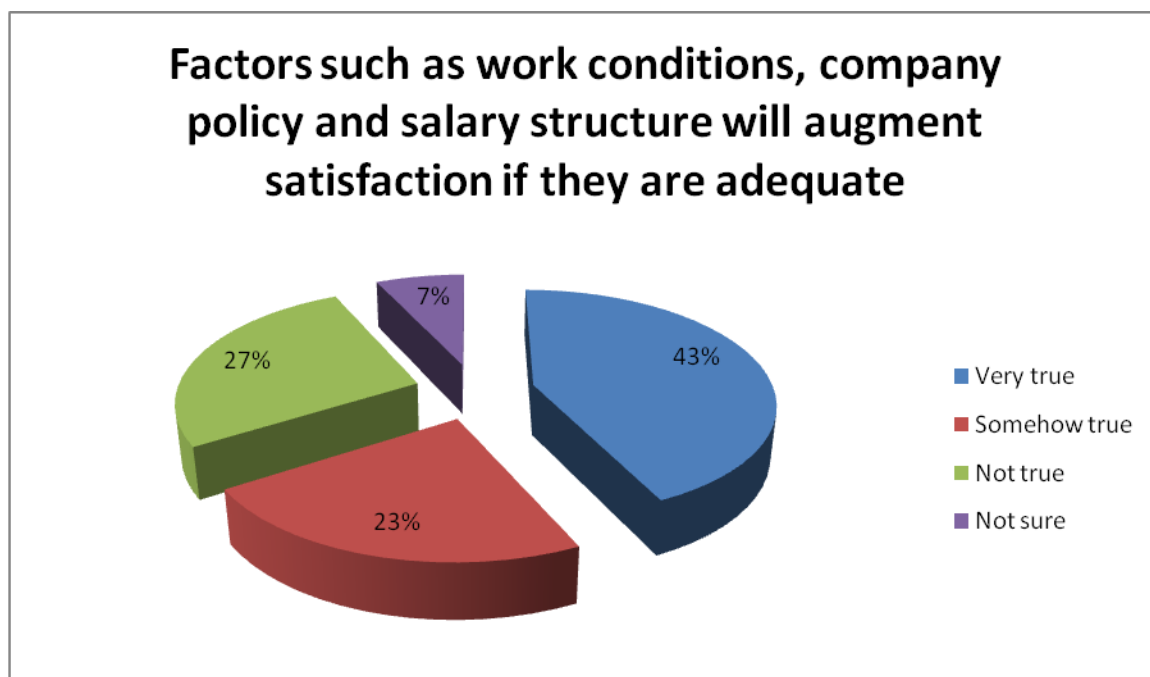


Q 2; How true is this statement: Factors such as work conditions, company policy and salary structure will augment satisfaction if they are adequate.

Question 2 wanted to know how true is the fact that factors such as work conditions, company policy and salary structure will augment satisfaction if they are adequate. Findings indicate that 43% of the respondents find it very true that factors such as work conditions, company policy and salary structure will augment satisfaction if they are adequate. 23% of the respondents asserted that it is somehow true that factors such as work conditions, company policy and salary structure will augment satisfaction if they are adequate. 27% of the respondents pointed out that

it is not true that factors such as work conditions, company policy and salary structure will augment satisfaction if they are adequate while 7% of the respondents are not sure if factors such as work conditions, company policy and salary structure will augment satisfaction if they are adequate as shown in figure 2 below.

Figure 2 Factors such as work conditions, company policy and salary structure will augment satisfaction if they are adequate



Q 3:How true is this statement: The battle for talent has become a calculated business problem and a fundamental driver for corporate performance

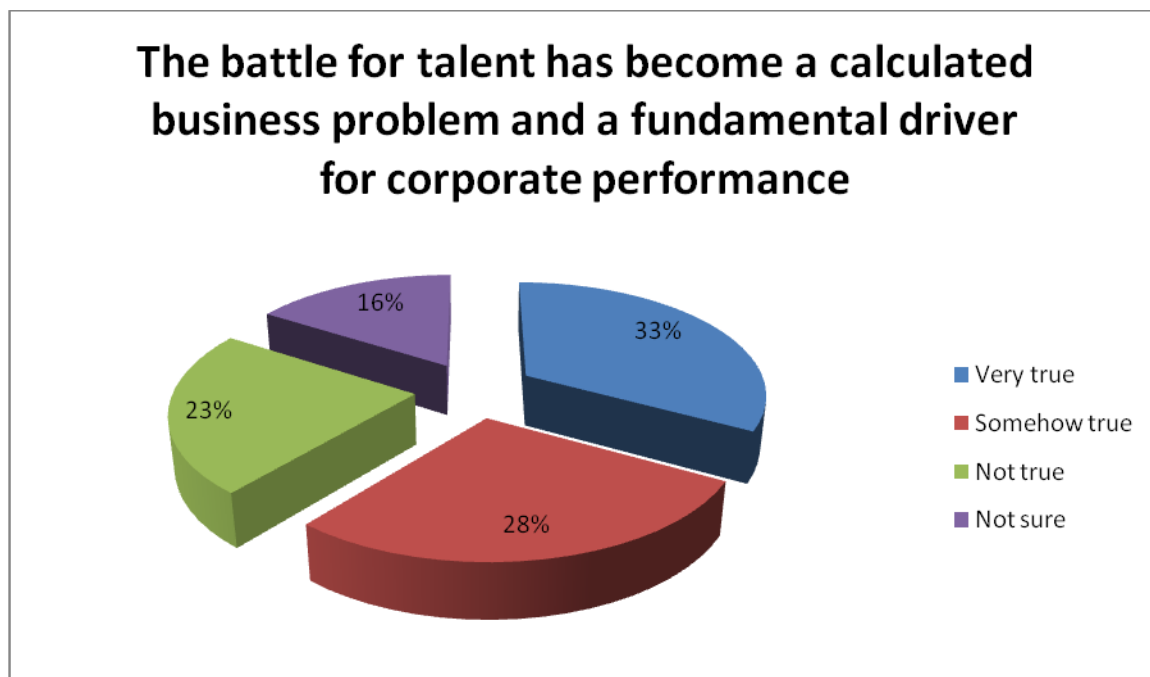
Question 3 wanted to know how true is the fact that the battle for talent has become a calculated business problem and a fundamental driver for corporate performance.

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33% of the respondents find it very true that the battle for talent has become a calculated business problem and a fundamental driver for corporate performance. 28% of the respondents asserted that it is somehow true that the battle for talent has become a calculated business problem and a fundamental driver for corporate performance. 23% of the respondents pointed out that it is not true that the battle for talent has become a calculated business problem and a fundamental driver for corporate performance while 16% of the respondents are not sure if the battle for talent has become a calculated business problem and a fundamental driver for corporate performance as shown in figure 3 below.

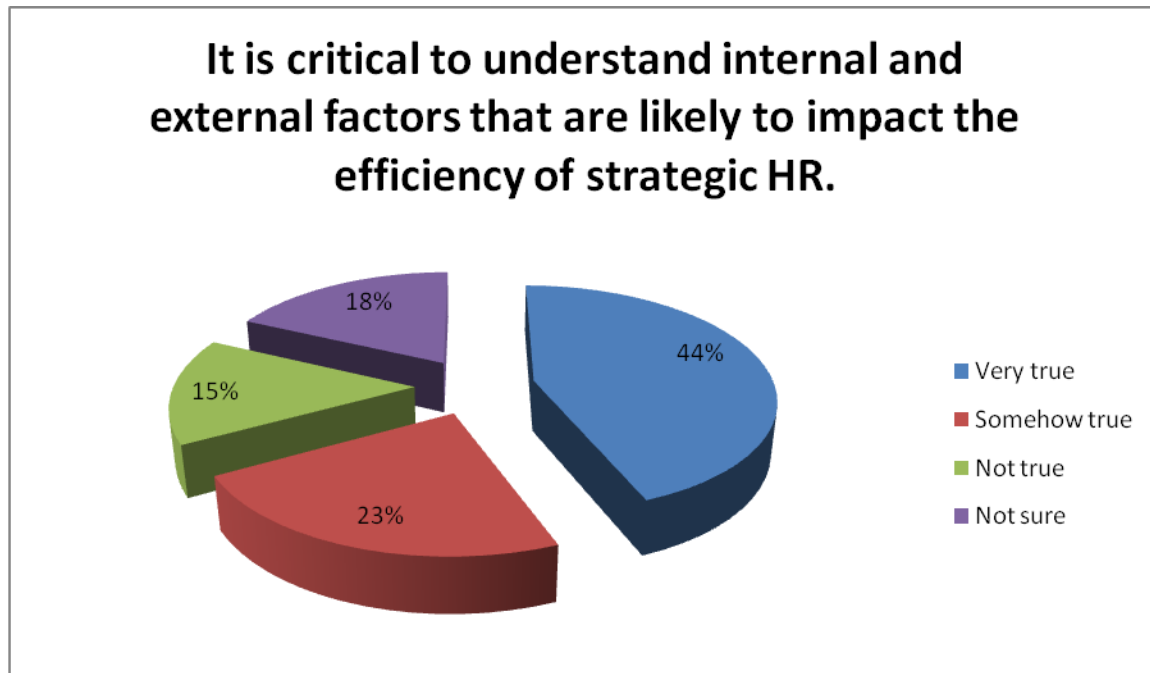
Figure 3: The battle for talent has become a calculated business problem and a fundamental driver for corporate performance



Q 4; How true is this statement: In order for an organization to successfully incorporate HRM to strategy it is critical for it to understand internal and external factors that are likely to impact the efficiency of strategic HR.

44% of the respondents asserted that it is very true that in order for an organization to successfully incorporate HRM to strategy it is critical for it to understand internal and external factors that are likely to impact the efficiency of strategic HR. 23% of the respondents pointed out that it is somehow true that in order for an organization to successfully incorporate HRM to strategy it is critical for it to understand internal and external factors that are likely to impact the efficiency of strategic HR. 15% of the respondents asserted that it is not true that in order for an organization to successfully incorporate HRM to strategy it is critical for it to understand internal and external factors that are likely to impact the efficiency of strategic HR while 18% of the respondents are not sure if in order for an organization to successfully incorporate HRM to strategy it is critical for it to understand internal and external factors that are likely to impact the efficiency of strategic HR as shown in figure 4 below.

Figure 4: In order for an organization to successfully incorporate HRM to strategy it is critical for it to understand internal and external factors that are likely to impact the efficiency of strategic HR.



Discussion of Findings

In question 1, 50% of the respondents find it to be very true that human resources are critical to a company's successes for they provide the best returns on investments for any competitive advantage that is sustainable. This is supported by Luthans and Yousef (2004) who add that according to the equity theory all companies wish to instill healthy competition amongst their employees. It is through this competition that employees attain their full potential. The

winners in this cut throat competition do it easily through their organizational capacities such as employee competence, speed, learning capacity, responsiveness and agility.

Boudreau and Ramstad (2005) point out that as companies rapidly compete through talent it is their human capital investments that establish their competitive positions. Successful companies in this battle are those that are capable of turning their strategies into action create an environment of seamless change, effectively and intelligently control processes and optimize employee commitment and involvement.

In question 2, 43% of the respondents find it very true that factors such as work conditions, company policy and salary structure will augment satisfaction if they are adequate. According to Arthur (1994) Maslow hierarchy of needs has five distinct needs levels; self actualization, physiological, esteem, safety and social needs. Self actualization was the problem that was faced by managers in the Qatar First Finance Company. Wright et al. (1994) adds that Companies that know how to control their human resources as their core organizational strategy tend to experience a lot of efficiency in their operations because it is cumbersome to acquire and employ human resources successfully because of the time involved.

However, Toor and Das (2007) begs to differ when they point out that most companies tend to establish their human resource practices founded on various aspects of human resource management including; labour management relations, planning, training and development, staffing, compensating and appraising. There are critical relationship between companies' performance and these core organizational functions. As much as remuneration and financial

rewards tend to be employed in the attraction and retention of talent they are not consummate to employees' job motivation or their personal satisfaction.

In question 3, 33% of the respondents find it very true that the battle for talent has become a calculated business problem and a fundamental driver for corporate performance. This is supported by Olson (2003) who point out that the much revered best practices of attractive flexible work hours, job design, increased autonomy, high pay offs, skill enhanced payoffs and paid holidays are employed by companies in an attempt to get experienced and skilled workers.

Michael et al (2001) adds that the battle for talent has become a calculated business problem and a fundamental driver for corporate performance. High performing companies differentiate themselves from those that do not perform through an all-encompassing talent mindset. They believe in advanced talent and its control as a critical part of competitive advantage. The non performing companies on the other hand either are not capable of attracting the right talent or fail to control it upon obtaining it. The battle for talented employees has not just emerged as amongst the critical challenges in today's companies but the obtaining of talent to improve a company's competitive advantage has come out as a critical strategy for numerous fast growing companies.

In question 4, 44% of the respondents asserted that it is very true that in order for an organization to successfully incorporate HRM to strategy it is critical for it to understand internal and external factors that are likely to impact the efficiency of strategic HR. Hargie (2004) and Michaels et al., (2001) concur with this assertion when they state that Every company seeks for

skilled workers and do all they can to optimize their performance. In order to obtain skilled workers companies tend to pull them from their competition through an offering of better remuneration. This has resulted in unparalleled job uncertainty. Critical layoffs have aggravated the situation through minimizing loyalty in organizations to new laws; this is what has now been coined as the battle for talent.

In addition, Khatri (1999) points out that the relationship between strategy and HRM is determined by the kind of strategy that an organization pursues. HR's vertical and horizontal fits, organizational culture and HR managers' competencies tend to function with strategy. The adoption of strategic HRM is also determined by ownership types, company's market orientation, HRM competency and its significance.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

This empirical undertaking presented a case study of Qatar's First Finance Company which was somehow unsuccessful in the conduction of its management trainee program. An evaluation of the case indicates that a number of fundamental factors led to numerous challenges that realized, low motivation, a decline in work culture, high turnover rates and reduced productivity.

An evaluation of various motivation theories indicates that sufficient measures can be undertaken to augment the company's management trainee program. Given that there is a shortage of human resources in Qatar the findings of this empirical undertaking have critical lessons across the board for companies in Qatar. In order for companies in Qatar to realize the attraction, development, and optimization of human resources they have to employ strategic human resource principals rather than depending on the emerging HR practices.

Recommendations

It is critical that the management of First Finance Company should revise their workers' salaries as well as their incentive structure. The company management has to rectify the problem in remuneration by coming up with proposed incentives for increment in both the company and employee performance.

The company management should consider developing accountability processes as well as procedural justice. This is because the management never took any feedback before appraising its employees. The deliberate misuse of authority should be avoided at all costs. The company management should listen to MTO advice and make its appraisal based on their concerns. The MTO's faith in the management will in turn be increased thus propelling the input and output ratio almost to near perfection.

There should be greater independence in the hierarchy of the company. The company should also offer more independence in the making of decisions so that employees do perceive to be secluded from the decision making organs. The management should adapt a participatory strategy that enables workers to take part in decisions that impact them. When the workers find out that their remuneration is founded on exogenous factors that they cannot control this would reduce their self efficacy and thus decrease productivity.

The company should be objective in its management activities. The First Finance Company witnessed some disagreements between the senior and middle level managers. As much as the top management stressed on participative management, job rotation for MTOs and increased independence, middle level managers would hear none of these. They forced the TOs to do ordinary work so as to meet their targets. This is a visible case where the management should read from the same script in order to avoid such conflicts.

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