International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management

United Kingdom http://ijecm.co.uk/ Vol. III, Issue 5, May 2015

ISSN 2348 0386

ASSESSMENT OF RETENTION STRATEGIES FOR MIDDLE LEVEL MANAGERS AT KENYA POWER: A SURVEY OF **CENTRAL RIFT REGION**

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Abstract

Retention of skilled employees has become critical to sustainable competition and effective service delivery, in the ever changing world of work. Globalization has tremendously enhanced mobility of skilled individuals, thereby accelerating the rate of employee turnover in organizations. The objective of the study was to examine how motivational strategies influence retention of middle level managers at Kenya Power Company. A sample of 64 respondents was selected from 179 middle level managers working with Kenya Power Central Rift Region. The research used descriptive technique, specifically case study. Primary data was collected from the sampled respondents using structured questionnaires. Secondary data was collected from published materials. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science. Study findings were presented in form of tables. It was revealed that, the selected retention strategies in place at Kenya Power were effective and contributed a lot in retention of the middle level managers. It is recommended that Kenya Power should identify its critical employees, understand their needs and continuously meet their expectations and needs. It is through proactive efforts that the organization can reduce the likelihood of losing critical employees.

Keywords: Employee retention, Employee turnover, Kenya Power, Middle level managers, Motivational strategies



INTRODUCTION

The contemporary global economic environment has changed drastically. Social developments such as continuing globalization, technological innovation, and growing global competition place pressure on companies and emphasize their need to maintain their competitive edge at least in part through maintaining the skills of their employees (Burke, 2006). Companies have to be able to anticipate technological innovation and be able to compete with other companies worldwide. This need makes important a company's ability to evolve through the continuous learning and development of the employees (Arnold, 2005). Having and retaining skilled employee's plays an important role in this process, because employees' knowledge and skills have become the key for companies to be economically competitive (Hiltrop, 1999). Therefore, it is important that employers give employees the opportunity to develop and learn (Bernsen et al, 2009). Beyond these economic pressures, companies also face some disturbing demographic changes.

The average age of employees in Western countries is increasing constantly. In addition, the workers of the so called baby boom generation are gradually retiring (Burke, 2006). With the retirement of this generation is a significant loss of skills and other capacities which are not being easily replaced by simply hiring new employees. The ending of the careers of the baby boom generation means that companies lose competence that is knowledge and skills, all of which are essential in the current economic environment in which companies have to compete (Hiltrop, 1999). Companies expect that the proportional rise in the ageing population will lead to a global competition for the 'best' employees. This 'competition' will be the most intense in the search for Chief Executive Officers (Harvey et al, 2001). Companies with policies that are future oriented and strategic might be aware of this problem and can take action to address it.

Employee retention should be at the forefront of every company's radar. Employees want to know they are being treated fairly, receiving the highest compensation possible and being appreciated by their employers (Schilit, 1987). This occurrence has undermined effective and efficient service delivery; a pointer to employee commitment and retention policies at these firms. Organizations that invest in committed employees are unlikely to lose them to competitors. Committed employees strive to achieve organizational ideals in circumstances that are sometimes extremely extra-ordinary. This may involve personal sacrifice among other factors. Since these attributes are both necessary and desirable, then firms will want to retain employees of this nature. On the other hand, some retained employees in the face of lay-offs will naturally be more committed as a 'pay-back' gesture to the management for sparing them while others will display their commitment to avoid being marked as candidates for subsequent retrenchment (Njiru, 2008).

Kenya Power came into existence in 1922 as the East African Power and Lighting Company (EAP&L). In 1954 The Kenya Power Company (KPC) was created to be managed by EAP&L for the purpose of transmitting power from Uganda through the Tororo-Juja line. In 1983, its operations were confined only to Kenya; hence EAP&L was renamed The Kenya Power and Lighting Company Limited (KPLC). It was the only energy provider from generation, transmission and distribution. In 1997, the functions of generation ware separated from transmission and distribution and Kenya Electricity Generating Company (KenGen) took over the function. In 2004, The Energy Sector Recovery Project (ESRP) was started to rehabilitate and reinforce the transmission and distribution network in order to improve the quality and reliability of supply, reduce system losses and increase access to electricity. The distribution sector ever since was liberalized, where private entities were also allowed to transmit power. In the year 2008, Kenya Electricity Transmission Company (KETRACO) was incorporated by the government to accelerate transmission infrastructure development. In the same year, the government incorporated the Geothermal Development Company and was tasked with developing steam fields to reduce upstream power development risks so as to promote rapid development of geothermal electric power.

In 2011, the organization rebranded to Kenya Power from Kenya Power and Lighting Company (KPLC) to reflect growth and culture change. The aim was to enhance the company's image, its customer service and financial performance. The state corporation (Kenya Power) has many middle level managers who head various departments and branches across the country. Middle-level managers are essentially the implementers of the strategies and policies formulated by the top management. Therefore, their competence and retention is paramount in spearheading the company's agenda. It is thus important to assess how motivating them facilitates their retention.

Statement of the Problem

Liberalization of the energy sector has opened avenues for more entries into the sector, which has led to stiff competition. Electrical infrastructure has been identified as one of the pillars that will facilitate the Government of Kenya, to achieve its Vision 2030 goal of transforming Kenya into a middle-income economy. In line with this goal, Kenya Power has in its 5 year Corporate Strategic Plan, to achieve a customer base of 3 million by 2016 from the current total of 1.8 million. Currently the company has been forced to re -engineer its operations to remain a major player in economic growth of the country. Despite all the effort, the well trained and experts of the company are now shifting to other competitors and even some starting their own companies. The company places a lot of value to the technical staff who are majorly middle level managers, and looks for any available opportunity to retain them. But besides all the effort put in place by the management, most employees still leave the organization due to a number of reasons. These categories of employees translate & implements strategic decisions by top management into action through the operational employees. They serve as a link between top management and the lower level employees thus making their role to be of utmost importance to the survival and competitiveness of the organization thus necessitating the need of this study.

Research Objective

To examine the effect of motivational strategies on retention of middle level managers at Kenya Power

Research Hypothesis

 H_0 : $\mu_1 = \mu_\alpha$ Motivational strategies has no significant influence on the retention of middle level managers at Kenya Power.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The need theories of motivation are reviewed in this section. The Maslow's need hierarchy theory and Mclelland's need theory are reviewed.

Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory

Maslow's defining work was the development of the hierarchy of needs. According to Stephens (2000), Maslow believed that human beings aspire to become self-actualizing and viewed human potential as a vastly underestimated and unexplained territory. Maslow believed that there are at least five sets of goals which can be referred to as basic needs and are physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow (1943) stated that people are motivated by the desire to achieve the various conditions upon which these basic satisfactions rest and by certain more intellectual desires. Humans are a perpetually wanting group. Ordinarily the satisfaction of these wants is not altogether mutually exclusive, but only tends to be. The average member of society is most often partially satisfied and partially unsatisfied in all of one's wants (Maslow, 1943). The implications of this theory provided useful insights for managers and other organization leaders. One of the advices was for managers to find ways of motivating employees by devising programs or practices aimed at satisfying emerging or unmet needs.

Another implication was for organizations to implement support programs and focus groups to help employees deal with stress, especially during more challenging times and taking the time to understand the needs of the respective employees (Kreitner, 1998). When the need

hierarchy concept is applied to work for organizations, the implications for managerial actions become obvious. "Managers have the responsibility to create a proper climate in which employees can develop to their fullest potential. Failure to provide such a climate, would theoretically increase employee frustration and could result in poorer performance, lower job satisfaction, and increased withdrawal from the organization" (Steers & Porter, 1983). Champagne and McAfee in their book Motivating Strategies for Performance and Productivity: A Guide to Human Resource Development listed some potential ways of satisfying employee needs: Some of these ideas may be easy and inexpensive to implement while others can be quite difficult and costly (Champagne & McAfee 1989).

McClelland's Need Theory

Some people who have a compelling drive to succeed are striving for personal achievement rather than the rewards of success per se. These people have the desire to do something better or more efficiently than it has been done before (Robbins, 1993). McClelland's in the publication The Achieving Society, published in 1961 described the theory of needs focusing on three needs: achievement, power, and affiliation. The need for achievement was defined as the drive to excel, to achieve in relation to a set of standards, to strive to succeed. The need for power was defined as the need to make others behave in a way that they would not have behaved otherwise. The need for affiliation was defined as the desire for friendly and close interpersonal relationships. Achievement theories propose that motivation and performance vary according to the strength of one's need for achievement (Kreitner, 1998). McClelland's research supported an analogous relationship for societies as a whole revealing that a country's level of economic development was positively related to its overall achievement motivation (McClelland, 1985).

The need for achievement proposes that motivation and performance vary according to the strength of one's need for achievement and is defined as a desire to accomplish something difficult. Kreitner and Kinicki (1998) explained the need for achievement as mastering, manipulating, or organizing physical objects, human beings, or ideas. McClelland proposed that high achievers are more likely to be successful entrepreneurs. People with a high need for affiliation prefer to spend more time maintaining social relationships, joining groups, and wanting to be loved. Individuals high in this need are not the most effective managers or leaders because they have a hard time making difficult decisions without worrying about being disliked (Kreitner, 1998). The need for power reflects an individual's desire to influence, coach, teach, or encourage others to achieve. Because effective managers must positively influence others, McClelland proposes that top managers should have a high need for power coupled with a low need for affiliation.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

In this part, the empirical studies touching on motivational strategies and employee retention are reviewed.

Motivational Strategy and Employee Retention

The key to understanding the process of motivation lies in the meaning of, and relationship among, needs, drives, and incentives (Popoola et al., 2007). In mid-summer of 2008, Human Resource pros were worrying about the tight labor market and the challenges of finding and keeping good employees. With the drastic change in the economy and record-setting layoffs and business closings, human resources is now flooded with resumes even if they are not hiring or only hiring for an entry-level position. But for many employees today, their career hopes and fears are very different.

Many workers constantly live with the fear that they will be the next one fired or laid off. So what exactly can an employer do to retain good employees? Human resources are the backbone of an organization (Pfeffer 1998). Moreover, the continuing prosperity of a firm is likely to be enhanced by employees who hold attitudes, value and expectations that are closely aligned with the corporate vision (Feldman 2003). Clearly, hiring capable people is an attractive point of departure in the process, but building and sustaining a committed workforce is more likely to be facilitated by the employment of sophisticated Human Resource Management infrastructures (Raghuram et al., 1993).

Arguably, Human Resource Management policies and practices can be strategically designed and installed to promote desirable employee outcomes, which include the enhancement of the in role and extra role behaviours of employees. Recruitment and selection is used as a motivational strategy to achieve organizational prosperity. There are striking differences in the implementation style of a hiring exercise used in modern organizations. Newspaper advertisements and university qualifications are used as the medium to recruit talented cadres. Companies facilitate the hiring exercise by placing a great emphasis on the person and organization fit. A company may consider how the personality and the characteristics of a potential recruit may fit in well with its organizational policy and climate. For instance, a company will screen job candidates to gauge their work enthusiasm and compensation expectations (Brown, 2009). Salary and Compensation that involve pay increase strategies is critical in managing employee motivation and retention. Companies will endeavor to motivate and retain talented cadres by strongly differentiating the salary increase for average and excellent performance. Besides rewarding past performance, this strategy helps to motivate

future performance. Modern organizations implement percentage of pay increase for poor and excellent performers.

They focus more on the motivation and the retention effort for average and good performers, given the medium and high degrees of variance in pay increase (Hale, 1998). Fringe Benefits as a motivation strategy refer to attractive perks that appeal to different groups of employees within an organization. These includes higher medical coverage, a generous housing subsidy and longer seniority based annual leave, health maintenance for senior staff, and an attractive retirement gratuity (Feldman 2003). A distinctively unique fringe benefit allows full reimbursement of education without any contractual binding, which is rare and very appealing to modern organizations.

May also involve redesign of some traditional benefits to better meet the needs of talented cadres such as, transferring the retirement allowance into an additional three per cent of payroll onto the employee provident fund (Wellins et al., 2002). Training and Development is one of the main strategies used by organizations to express the worth of their people, as well as their eagerness to invest and develop exceptional employees (Mclagan, 1989). replacement and retraining, organizations invest heavily in training for promotion and succession planning. For instance, job specific training is provided for replacement so as to equip new recruits with basic on the job skills, and comprehensive development programmes are extended to high performing staff as part of the succession planning, as well as to prepare employees for the larger responsibilities that accompany promotion (Harris, 2000).

Promotion and Career Advancement as a motivation strategy may be used to a varying degree. Excellent performance and consistent proven track records are the necessary recipes for promotion considerations in organizations (Hale, 1998). The promotion consideration is facilitated by performance appraisal, succession planning and performance management system to enable sound promotion decisions. Organizations offer various types of career plans, such as, upward promotion and overseas posting. Other organizations strongly support internal talent mobility when filling vacancies at the leadership level such as, upward and lateral promotion (Summers, 1999).

Despite such costly investments, corporations are continually searching for techniques to improve and cement the linkage between employees and their organizations. Weak employee organizational linkages are often displayed as the phenomenon of turnover. Indeed, people are likely to job hop to obtain better monetary rewards and career development opportunities (Kinnear & Sutherland, 2001). However, traditional approaches that rely heavily on competitive monetary rewards often have limited success in staff retention and job motivation in the long run. This limitation has brought practitioners to consider, along with the facilitation of

sophisticated Human Resource Management infrastructures, other techniques to enhance employee attachment towards their organization. For instance, person organization fit selection approach, performance based incentives, extension of the attractive executive perks to all employees. With proper implementation, these techniques often facilitate a more committed workforce. This effect can be achieved through the enhancement of in role that is, organizational commitment and extra role that is, organizational citizenship behaviours (Organ et al., 1990).

Figure 1. The conceptual framework



METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study was conducted using descriptive technique, specifically a case study which is best in describing and bringing out the elements of the different variables being assessed. Donald and Pamela (1998) argued that a study concerned with finding out, who, what, which and how of a phenomenon is a descriptive technique. The study described the retention strategies used in Kenya Power to retain its middle level managers. The descriptive technique enabled the researcher to summarize and organize data in an effective and meaningful way. The research approach used was both qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative approach enabled the researcher in taking an active role in interacting with the participants when filling their questionnaires, by giving guidance. The quantitative approach was used by the researcher in analysing the data with the help of statistics and percentages.

Target Population and Sampling

The target population for the study constituted 179 middle level managers working with the Kenya Power, Central Rift Sub-Region.

The sample size was derived from the target population using the formula outlined hereafter. This was due to the fact that it was not possible to get all the employees because of the relatively large number of the target population.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where

N =target population of 179

n = sample size

e = level of significant at 10%

Therefore,

$$n = \frac{179}{1 + 179(0.1)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{179}{1 + 1.79}$$
 = 64 respondents

The 64 respondents were drawn from the target population using simple random sampling technique which ensured that everyone had an equal chance of being included in the study. In this sampling method, each individual was chosen randomly and entirely by chance such that every respondent had the same probability of being chosen (Kothari, 2004).

Data Collection Instrument

The study was done by use of questionnaires, measured on a 5 Point likert scale as the main tool of collecting data. The sections of the tool were guided by the objectives of the study. The researcher used closed ended as structured questions. The importance of this instrument was that with the closed questions, the study was able to isolate the responses from external influences.

Pilot Testing

The Researcher carried out a pilot study at Ketraco (Kenya Electricity Transmission Company) to enhance the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. Six questionnaires were hand delivered to middle level management staff of Ketraco, Capitol Hill Square, Nairobi which was an organization that had similar groups of employees to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. The pilot data was not included in the actual study. The clarity of the instrument items to the respondents was established so as to enhance the instrument's validity and reliability.

The reliability of instruments was established through a pilot study, which was carried out in different organization (Kenya Electricity Transmission Company). All questionnaires from the respondents were verified and checked for reliability. As defined by Walliman (2001), reliability was assessed using the test-retest reliability method, by including similar items on the measure, and tested a diverse sample of individuals. Motivational strategies variable and employee retention variable returned $\alpha = 0.78$ and $\alpha = 0.74$ in that order and were as such deemed reliable. According to Somekh and Cathy (2005) validity is the degree by which the sample of test items represents the content the test is designed to measure. Content validity which was employed by this study was a measure of the degree to which data collected using a particular instrument represents a specific domain or content of a particular concept.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed by use of descriptive and inferential statistics. Quantitative data collected by using a questionnaire was analyzed by the use of descriptive statistics using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Descriptive statistics involves the process of transforming a mass of raw data into tables and charts with frequency distribution and percentages which are vital in making sense out of data. Descriptive statistics employed were percentages and measures of central tendencies whereby the mean and standard deviation were computed. In order to draw conclusions pertinent to the study objectives, chi-square was employed to analyze the association between motivational strategies and retention strategies.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Motivational strategies and Employee Retention

The study assessed the following selected retention strategies to find out the deliberate actions used by the company to enhance employee motivation, improve performance and reduce labour turnover. The information was presented in tables and the results are as tabulated.

Table 1: Retention Strategies

Retention Strategies	Frequency	Percent
Fringe benefits	22	37.3
Training and Development	16	27.1
Reward and Recognition	17	28.8
Others	4	6.8
Total	59	100.0

Respondents were asked a question on the motivational strategies put in place to minimize employee turnover. As seen in table 1, majority of them said that fringe benefits (37.3%) were used as a major motivational strategy. These includes medical cover, accident medical insurance that covers them for 24hrs, pension scheme, house allowance, mileage allowance, electricity concession and many others. This was followed by reward and recognition (28.8%) as another form of motivational strategy. These involved better pay and excellent recognition awards held annually. 27.1% of the respondents said that training and development was also used as a motivational strategy. The implication here was that, employees are taken for training to increase their skills level and enhance their performance. They are also encouraged to develop themselves through fee reimbursement at a certain percentage. These were the three major forms of motivational strategies put in place. Other forms of motivational strategies constituted a small percentage (6.8%).

Table 2: Impact of retention bonus on the motivational levels and performance

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	47	79.6
No	6	10.2
Sometimes	2	3.4
Don't Know	3	5.1
Never	1	1.7
Total	59	100.0

As seen in table 2, a significantly large number of respondents (79.6%) agreed to the fact that the retention bonus had an impact on the motivational levels and performances in the company. Here employees are motivated to work hard to achieve above set targets since they are assured that their effort will be recognized and rewarded. 10.2% of the respondents claimed that retention bonus did not have any impact, 3.4% of the respondents believe that retention bonus sometimes have impact on motivational levels and performance, whereas 6.8% of the respondents did not know whether retention bonus did or did not have an impact. However, 1.7% of the respondents argued that retention bonus did not have any impact at all. This indicated that some of the employees are on the lookout for greener pastures and that they can leave the company any time if chances allow.

Table 3: Impact of fun at work on the motivational levels and performance

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	45	76.2
No	6	10.2
Sometime	4	6.8
Don't Know	2	3.4
Never	2	3.4
Total	59	100.0

Table 3 shows majority of the respondents (76.2%) fun at work had an impact on the motivational levels and performance, 10.2% said that fun at work did not have any impact. This indicates that to them, fun is something that cannot be achieved during work. 6.8% of the respondents thought that sometimes fun at work had an impact on the motivational level and performance. 3.4% did not know whether fun at work had or did not have impact on motivational levels and performance. Another 3.4 % of the respondents believed that fun at work do not have any impact at all. This indicates that they do not have any interest in the connection between job satisfaction and job performance. With the majority agreeing that fun at work had an impact on the motivational and performance levels, this clearly indicated that they work hard and have pride in their work because: they enjoy what they do, there is appreciation and recognition for their contribution and that they are involved in giving suggestions on how to make their work better.

Table 4: Reason for Leaving the Company

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
Personal Reasons	15	25.4
Career Opportunity	34	57.6
Team Fitment	5	8.5
Company restructuring	3	5.1
Others	2	3.4
Total	59	100.0

The respondents were asked the number one reason that would make them leave the company. As shown in table 4 majorities said that career opportunity (57.6%) would make them leave the company. This implied that they were dissatisfied with advancement opportunities in the company. 25.4% percent said they would leave the company for personal reasons indicating that, they want to be challenged and also to contribute to something meaningful. 8.5% said they would leave because of team fitment, indicating that to them work was not just about making money but about far more than that, hence cultural fit coming into the play. Meaning they want congruence between the norms and values of the organization and those of the person. 5.1% said they would leave because of company restructuring. This implied that middle managers are responsible for implementation and they are the ones that are really stuck delivering the message from the top. Their challenge is that they have to put on the good face, the face of the company, when they may not even believe or understand what they are being asked to do. Only 5.1% said they would leave because of other reasons.

Hypothesis Testing

Chi-square test was conducted to arrive at a valid conclusion whether motivational strategies influence the retention of middle level management employees at Kenya Power. The calculated chi-square values were compared to the chi-square table values at the 0.05 level of significance. The results of the test are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Chi-Square Tests for Motivational Strategies and Employee Retention

Chi-Square Calculated Value	df	Critical Value
13.65	6	12.59

The hypothesis tested was that motivational strategies had no significant influence on the retention of middle level managers at Kenya Power. As seen in table 5, the calculated chisquare value was 13.65 and the corresponding table value at the 0.05 level of significance was 12.59. Since the calculated value was greater than the table value, the null hypothesis as stated was rejected. Therefore, there was a significant dependence between motivational strategies and retention of middle level employees at Kenya Power. Therefore, for KP to retain its middle level management employees, it needs to enhance the motivational strategies in place.

Summary

The study found the following motivational variables to have significantly influenced retention amongst the middle level management employees of Kenya Power Company. When ranked in order of intensity of application revealed the following: Fringe benefit was rated the highest contribution at 37.3% which is used as a major motivational strategy. This was followed by reward and recognition at 28.8% as another form of motivational strategy. 27.1% of the respondents said that training and development was also used as a motivational strategy. These were the three major forms of motivational strategies put in place. Other forms of motivational strategies constituted a small percentage of 6.8%.

CONCLUSIONS

The motivational strategies in place at KP were effective and contributed a lot in retention of the middle level management employees. This was mainly achieved through: fringe benefits, training and development opportunities, better rewards and recognitions, retention bonuses and good relation with their immediate supervisors. The null hypothesis was tested and it was concluded that motivational strategies significantly influence on the retention of middle level managers at Kenya Power.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The key to an effective workplace employee motivation strategy is to provide a range of incentives that will appeal to different personalities. While one individual may be highly money motivated another may find job satisfaction or creative opportunities as more powerful factors. It is recommended that Kenya Power should identify its critical employees; understand their needs with regards to career, family, education, and community; and be able to continuously meet the expectations and needs of these employees. It is through proactive efforts that the organization can reduce the likelihood of losing the critical employees.

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