

Promoting Productive Work Environment in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Due to global business competition, employees are facing challenges of high job performance. Work load and job competition have also been increased at present. Employees' efforts and innovation make the business sustainable and competitive. That is why employee welfare needs special attention. Promoting productive work environment is one of the attempts for employee's welfare though it benefits both employees and employers. Productive work environment includes positive values, relaxed and productive work atmosphere, commitment to excellence, open and honest communication, sense of humor, cooperation, support, empowerment, compensation, respect, understanding, flexibility, positive reinforcement, emphasis on work-life balance, health and safety. This study reviews the existing literature & collects information from industry experts to do the summary on the meaning, importance and ways to make productive work environment. It is primarily based on desktop study that has collected data from existing literature. Data has also been collected in July 2019 through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) from ten Human Resource (HR) managers working both in service and manufacturing sectors in Bangladesh. This study has explored the key elements that comprise an energizing and productive work environment in which people flourish and become magnificent. It is found that regardless of generation, gender, or temperament, most people desire an open, safe, and welcoming environment in which they are challenged and encouraged to stretch beyond their

comfort zone, grow and learn. People also enjoy an environment that encourages participation, collaboration, sharing and a sense of community.

Key Words: Productive Work Environment, Productivity and Business Performance

1. Introduction

The art of living and the culture of working are undergoing and accelerating social and technological changes at present. Routine work either become automated or outsourced, but knowledge work is still performed by the employees. Painters, creative writers, sculptors and composers usually work from home on their own studio for creative works. Apart from them, most of the employees go to office and work on a regular basis. Society changes and technology advances which also have impact on employees at work. Due to global market competition and technological advancement, business organizations are focusing more on diversity in business for the growth and sustainability (Dessler, 2009). Work load and job competition have been increased as a recent phenomenon. Employees are the key role players on achieving firm's success (Kessels and Keursten, 2002). Their efforts and innovation make the business sustainable and competitive. Therefore, it has become the responsibilities of the employers to pay back their employees and work for their welfare. Australian Human Rights Commission (2013) has reported that good work practices bring good business. Promoting productive work environment is one of the attempts for employee's welfare though it benefits both employees and employers (Decenzo and Robbins, 2002). Productive work environment tends to exhibit a common set of traits that foster excellence, productivity and camaraderie (ILO,2008). Productive work environment includes positive values, relaxed and productive work atmosphere, commitment to excellence, open and honest communication, sense of humor, cooperation, support, empowerment, compensation, respect, understanding, flexibility, positive reinforcement, emphasis on work-life balance, health and safety (ILO,2008; Kogi,2002). This study reviews the existing literature & collects information from industry experts to do the summary on the meaning, importance and ways to make productive work environment.

2. Research Methodology

This study is primarily based on desktop study that collect data from existing literature as approached by Collis and Hussey (2014). Data has been collected in July 2019 through an 80 minutes long Focus Group Discussion (FGD) from 10 Human Resource (HR) managers working both in service and manufacturing sectors in Bangladesh. FGD collects data from targeted respondents through semi-structured questionnaire where discussion is facilitated by researcher to get the synergy of group interaction on a specific topic (Hossan.et al, 2012; Powell and Single, 1996). FGD of this study has been arranged through personal invitation. Discussion on collected data has been made based on existing literature and opinions provided by the respondents.

3. Meaning of Productive Work Environment

Productive work environment means efficient and cohesive workplace that promotes worker's morale and productivity by minimizing complaints, disruptions and legal wrangles (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2013; Faruque, 2009). It encourages employee to move more and provides support for better performance through the stimulus like improving communication, office facilities, motivation etc. Productive work environments are promoted by the activities of a workplace that are guided by a common idea of good work and a good work place (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Finland, 2011). Good work means fair treatment of employees, adoption of common values as well as mutual trust, genuine cooperation and equality at the workplace (F.7 & F.10). Whereas, a good workplace means a healthy, safe and pleasant place. Productive work environment means an atmosphere where employees feel comfortable (Decenzo and Robbins, 2002). It is an environment in which employees would be able to function as a contributing member. Employees would like to work in an environment that would allow them to hone their existing skills and gain experience to facilitate career growth (F.2 & F.6).

4. Benefits of Promoting Productive Work Environment

Productive work environment refers healthy work environment (ILO, 2008). Workplaces are an ideal setting for promoting healthy behaviors and preventing disability and disease through healthy and safe work environments (Faruque, 2009; Goldstein, et.al, 2001; ILO, 2008). Even more, healthy workplaces are good for business. Healthy work environments improve productivity and reduce costs related to absenteeism, lost productivity, turnover, worker's compensation, and medical and disability claims (F.1; F.2; F.7 & F.10). That is why work environment needs to be promoted. Productive work environment benefits for the employees and employers. The following benefits are identified by the respondents of this study.

4.1 Benefits to the organization	4.2 Benefits to the employee
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A well-managed health and safety program• A positive and caring image• Improved staff morale• Reduced staff turnover• Reduced absenteeism• Increased productivity• Reduced health care & insurance costs• Reduced risk of fines and litigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A safe and healthy work environment• Enhanced self-esteem• Reduced stress• Improved morale• Increased job satisfaction• Increased skills for health protection• Improved health• Improved sense of well-being

5. Facilities for Promoting Productive Work Environment

To make the work place productive, following facilities are pointed out based on the literature from different sources and suggestions made by the respondents of the FGD.

- ❖ Adequate office space (including space for canteen and fresh room)

- ❖ Standard work schedule and hour for employees
- ❖ Easy office location
- ❖ Furniture and interior decoration
- ❖ Painting and poster
- ❖ Green work atmosphere (Availability of in-house plants and fresh flowers)
- ❖ Adequate ventilation and lighting
- ❖ Facilities for entertainment (like availability of Television, Music system)
- ❖ Sound protected work atmosphere for better work concentration
- ❖ Ensure occupational health and safety

6. Factors Improve Employee Productivity at Work

The respondents of this study have recommended the following factors that can improve productive working conditions.

- Ensure accountability of every employee.
- Follow up & feedback on a regular basis.
- Manage the work force but avoid micromanagement.
- Encourage, motivate, reward and recognize employees.
- Reach out to employees by seeking them out.
- Demand realistic targets by managers.
- Promote team work.
- Ensure that people enjoy their work.
- Break the monotony and rotate employees (Job rotation).
- Provide training and skill enhancement program.
- Spend less time on meetings and more on action.

7. Tools for Promoting Productivity at Work

Finally, the workplace must have the best machinery, devices and equipment that yield error free results in the minimum possible time (Dessler, 2009). Efficient electronic equipment with no connectivity issues and breakdowns will help to save precious time. They should take the place of paper work, and yield fast results. HR experts of this study have mentioned the following tools that can promote productivity at work.

- Smart phones
- Laptops
- Tablet computers
- Latest applications and software that offers quick connectivity and access
- GPS to stay on track on the road
- Digital recorders-these help to record thoughts and new ideas when they strike, when no paper is available and the fear is of forgetting the idea
- Bluetooth & wifi to stay connected
- Personal digital assistants or PDA's

8. Guidelines for Creating Productive Workplace Environment:

The following activities can be the best practice guidelines for creating a productive workplace environment as recommended by the HR experts of this study.

- ✓ **Induction** for new employees with information about the organization which will help them to be effective in their job.
- ✓ **Appraisal** of employees in an effective manner where both evaluator and the employee understand the criteria to judge work performance and the feedback to the employee should be constructive instead of generalized.
- ✓ **Promotion** of the employees needs to be ensured for career growth and motivation.
- ✓ **Positive work environment** is essential at work. Work atmosphere should be friendly and supportive where individual employee should be accountable for specific duties and responsibilities.
- ✓ **Grievance** needs to be handling carefully for better employment relation. Grievance is employee's dissatisfaction for any factor involving wages, hours or conditions of employment that is used as a complaint against the employer (Dessler, 2009).

Some of these above mentioned guidelines are also recommended in 2013 report of Australian Human Rights Commission. Ministry of business, innovation. There are seven drivers of work place productivity also mentioned by all the respondents. These are [building leadership and management capability](#), [creating productive workplace cultures](#), [encouraging innovation and the use of technology](#), [investing in people and skills](#), organizing, [networking and collaboration](#), and [measuring what matters](#).

9. Conclusion

A workplace, however large or small has to be driven by efficiency and achievement that manifests itself in the form of tangible results for the organization, and is rewarding for the employee. Less productive inputs and lower efficiency levels are bound to affect the business and jeopardize its sustainability and survival. Employee productivity is a major concern for employers and lower productivity cannot be blamed on the employee entirely. A lot of it has to do with the environment at the work place, and the work conditions along with a series of factors that define the work culture. Most people desire an open, safe, and welcoming environment in which they are encouraged to stretch and grow. This study has explored the key elements that comprise an energizing and productive work environment in which people flourish and become magnificent. It is found that regardless of generation, gender, or temperament, most people desire an open, safe, and welcoming environment in which they are challenged and encouraged to stretch beyond their comfort zone, grow and learn. People also enjoy an environment that encourages participation, collaboration, sharing and a sense of community. Employers have to implement wide spread changes in their setup to improve the productivity of their work force. Employee talent is a valuable asset for a company or organization, and it needs to be tapped to its fullest by keeping the employees motivated to perform and deliver the results they are qualified for and capable of. Employers may often believe that once they have recruited the best talent in the field, the results will inevitably follow. Today, an organization's success depends on the collective wisdom of all its employees. The leader's job is to guide these workers to use their collective power effectively and to build and sustain a motivating work environment for higher productivity. Therefore, productive work environment needs to be promoted in order to face the increasing global business competition.

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Appendix: Participants' details for Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

FGD	
Code	Participant's Details
F.1	Head of HR & Admin, Company-A (Pharmaceutical Industry)
F.2	HR Manager, Company-B (Export Oriented RMG Company)
F.3	Head of HR & Compliance, Company-C (Leather Goods & Footwear Multi-National Company)
F.4	Senior HR Consultant, Company-D (HR Consulting Organization)
F.5	Senior HR & Labour Welfare Manager, Company-E (RMG Industry)
F.6	Head of Admin & Compliance, Company-F (Consumer Goods Manufacturing Company)
F.7	HR Manager, Company-G (Telecom Industry)
F.8	Head of HRD, Company-H (Private Commercial Bank)
F.9	Manager, Employee Development Division, Company-I (IT Industry)
F.10	HR Manager, Company-J (Consumer & Toiletries Manufacturing Organization)