

MASLOW APPROACH IN DESIGNING JOB OFFERS

Radu D. STANCIU

“POLITEHNICA” University of Bucharest, Romania

Abstract. In a market economy, the success and stability of a company depend on the way its resources (materials, finance, information, technology, energy, employees) are used. Because of their importance, the human resources activities need a special consideration. The paper presents a possible approach to the work offer based on Maslow theory.

Keywords: job offer, motivation, Maslow theory

1. Introduction

In the last seventeen years, Romania was in long and frequently painful transition process from a strongly centralized economy to a real market economy. The politic and economic changes imposed also changes to companies' level, including there human resources.

The conventional personnel structure that defined the past regime, knew some turbulences during the first years after December 1989. Some organizations self-consciously tried to approach the recruitment and selection processes in a western manner. Nevertheless, the absence of a proper training of those involved in the recruiting and selection processes led to a high turnover of the work force. Both employers and employees indicated the absence of an explicit communication as the main reason of that situation. On one hand, employers do not succeed to suggestively present there offers to potential employees. On the other hand, the future employees stick between immediate objectives – to satisfy the need for a job, no matter where – and there long-term objectives – professional satisfaction and career development. [1]

The economic rebalance trends led to a reorientation of the active forces on the market. Therefore, starting with 1995 in Romania the human resources culture came to a new stage – the appearance of the first organizations specialized in providing personnel recruitment and selection.

More and more companies started to use the services provided by those organizations, even they have there own human resource departments. At the beginning, the companies that accessed those kinds of services did not apprehend the whole utility of those services. They considered the

organizations that provide consultancy services in the human resource domain as a *fashion*. Therefore, any company with a certain organizational status and image felt it *must* follow that trend. After a while, those companies understood the utility of such specialized services, mainly because of timesavings (activities like interviewing, testing, profile development, evaluations, etc. that consume a lot of time are done by consultancy organizations) [2].

Nevertheless, not all the organizations specialized in human resources services succeeded. The most frequent mistake that led to abortion was the way they approached the future applicants. They presented the job offers from the potential employers in a traditional manner, by *imposing* certain conditions and not taking into account the applicants needs. Alternatively, to putting in other words, they did not treat the applications as there *clients*. [3]

Simplifying, the main parts of a job offer (unfortunately often used by the Romanian employers) are the following:

- Job name: XXXX
- Reports to: YYYY
- Responsibilities: ZZZZ
- Skills and aptitudes: AAAA
- Salary level:

One may observe that this kind of offer covers only the first two levels of the Maslow pyramid.

A possible way to design a job offer to increase its impact (as the consultancy organizations do) is to underlay it on Maslow's theory – the needs pyramid.

2. Short description of the Maslow hierarchy of needs

Abraham Maslow (American psychologist) is one of the promoters of the sociological approach in management (known also as behaviourism or the human resources approach).

This approach initially appeared as a reaction to the classic approach that considered that employees are interested only by money because of their work. Maslow underlined that the employees are the core of an organization. In his opinion, the productivity increasing depends on human behaviour understanding and adaptation of organizational condition to employee's needs. The representatives of that approach emphasised the idea that an individual may be determined to work more productively by satisfying some of his psychosocial needs.

In the same time, Maslow is the founder of Motivation Theory. He started from the idea that one could not talk about productive human relations without motivation. His research was materialized in the theory of needs published in his paper [4] that starts from the following two assumptions:

- The human needs are structured into a hierarchy of relative prepotency. Once a need is satisfied, new needs emerge and so on;
- The needs of an individual depend on what that person already has. An already satisfied need will not influence someone's behaviour.

Based on this theory, there are five levels of needs like in figure 1.

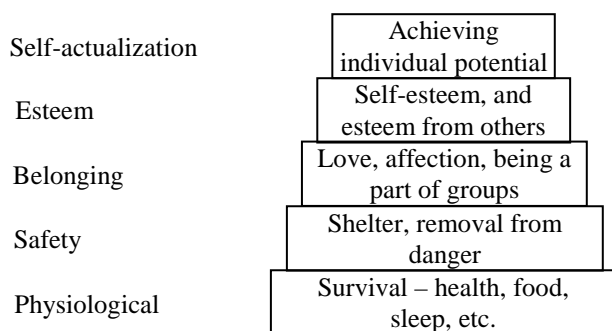


Figure 1. Maslow's needs hierarchy

Maslow considered that this approach assure the usage of motivational factors in a efficient manner.

In order to be satisfied, each of the five

categories of needs leads to a specific action. There are many factors that influence the individual action, the most important being the psychological factors, especially through their affective-emotional component. However, when an individual acts as a future employee, his actions can be structured very clear in a job offer.

Following, the paper presents the use of Maslow theory in developing job offers in a way specific to consultancy organizations.

3. Designing a job offer based on Maslow theory

Ideally, an offer must contain all the elements necessary to satisfy all the needs categories presented in the Maslow pyramid.

As it was previously presented, the physiological needs represent the basics for all human needs: food, home, rest, sexual relations. Even so, 1/3 of the world population fight hard to satisfy this kind of needs.

One of the components of the first needs category is food. This need is frequently neglected within a company because management considers that is enough to compensate the work only through salary (the financial expression of the first needs category). Even if, at the first sight seems to be unimportant, introduction of the lunch tickets in the salary package has a very important psychological impact on employees because this simple idea may increase the loyalty of the employees to the company.

Lunch break represents another way to satisfy the physiological need for food. One could observe that organizations that use the services of catering companies or have their own canteens (shops) maintain a high cohesive level between employees, and therefore stimulating the individual performance and the overall company performance.

Many times, even if a future employee considers the level salary being satisfactory or fully satisfactory, the existence of alimentary *stimulus* increases the satisfaction level, especially in this part of the world famous for excessive food consumption.

Therefore, the job offer has to refer also to food need satisfaction at the *salary package* point.

The *safety needs* covers a large range of needs from physical to material, financial, or even *emotional safety*.

Within the job offer, those needs may appear in a variety of forms like following:

- *material and financial safety* as *salary package*: salary, wage, commissions, etc.) specific to the job position, other fringe benefits (car, telephone, note book, etc.);
- *emotional safety* as *tasks and responsibilities* that depend mainly on the importance of that job position within the company.

The emotional safety represents an important stimulus for the future harmonious development of the employees within the organization. This kind of safety is represented by the work place safety that is more profession safety or development. This need take different form depending on the nature of the desired job position. For example, if an individual looks for an assistant manager position, the emotional safety is represented by the professional promotion opportunities. In the same time, a person that looks for a CEO position is interested more in the company development (acquisitions, mergers, etc.).

The emotional safety has different intensity levels (the risk associated to need satisfaction). The higher is the position of the job within the company, the higher is the level of intensity.

Even if nor obvious, there are a certain similarity between the first two levels of Maslow's hierarchy – physiological and safety needs. One may assimilate the first category to social safety.

The *belonging (social) needs* represent the needs of belonging to a social group: family, group of friends, colleagues, etc. International companies promote the image of a great family in which the race, religion, political believes differences disappear in front of the company image that is also the image of its employees.

The belonging (social) needs lead to certain rapports between employees materialized in different types of relations between them – coordination, subordination, collaboration – depending on the job position within the organization.

The *esteem needs* are very important in the individual motivation context. Often, the certainty of satisfying those needs is the motivation an individual will stay with the company. In the same time, the uncertainty of professional or other type of recognition is the main reason for leaving the company.

There is a biunique relation between esteem and recognition, on one hand and employee's motivation on the other hand. Sustainable

motivation determines the increase of esteem and self-respect and, in the same time, the motivation level will increase if the manager will recognize more often the merits of his employee. Many times, public recognition of an employee merits is more important for him then a salary rise.

Consequently, the job offer must invoke the promotion opportunities within the company. Company's attention paid to assure those opportunities is a clear sign for its intention to recognize the employees' efforts.

Some organizations, especially small companies, offer the opportunity of participation in professional training programmes. This is also a way to recognize the merits of the employees.

The *self-actualisation needs* appear when one already satisfied the needs from rest of the categories. The only exception is the great missionaries who have that need in the same time with the needs from the first level of Maslow pyramid.

This superior type of needs consists initially of over passing of human personality limits, like selfish, enviousness, gossip, denigrating other (e.g. co-workers). One possible way of manifestation of need for esteem and recognition not yet satisfied is *competition*. This notion has a negative connotation if its manifestation is as absurd, unfair competition, a competition just for competition.

Within an organization, self-actualisation appears when an employee having some degree of autonomy succeed to improve his performance by identifying new resources, applying new ideas as a results of his work.

In fact, in the most comprehensive way, self-actualisation reflects the vision of employee about his own growth as part of the organization. This personal growth may lead to a new life style, a new way of thinking, or even a new culture. Results that a well-structured job offer must presents right from the beginning references to mission statement, the role that statement will play both from economic and social points of view.

All the ideas previously presented are shown in figure 2.

By carefully analysing the interdependence between Maslow's pyramid and the job offer one may conclude that such an offer structured on Maslow's pyramid is actually the professional performance pyramid [5]. Performance is higher when the employees' position is higher on Maslow pyramid or, to put in other words, the company offer them the opportunities to satisfy there needs.



Figure 2. The ways to satisfy the human needs through job offers

5. Conclusions

Unfortunately, the absence of material resources at an adequate level for developing and maintaining a human resource department represents a feature of the actual Romanian companies. Moreover, through a rigid approach, there management mainly focuses on immediate results rather than the needs of these employees.

Many times, the absence of a real and clear communication between management and employees leads to a high fluctuation of work force.

Therefore, a structure of a job offer based on employees' needs correlated with the company's mission statement has greater success rates in inveiglement, employment and especially preservation of the most appropriate individuals. That will lead to individual performance increasing and, therefore the overall performance at the company level.

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