

THE INFLUENCE OF TRAINING STRATEGY ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE AT KENYA POWER CENTRAL RIFT REGION

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©2018

International Academic Journal of Human Resource and Business Administration

(IAJHRBA) | ISSN 2518-2374

Received: 13th May 2018

Accepted: 19th May 2018

Full Length Research

Available Online at:

http://www.iajournals.org/articles/iajhrba_v3_i1_325_332.pdf

Citation: Too, S. J. & Kwasira, J. (2018). The influence of training strategy on employee performance at Kenya Power Central Rift Region. *International Academic Journal of Human Resource and Business Administration*, 3(1), 325-332

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of training strategy on employee performance at Kenya Power Central Rift Region. The population of this study was 1421 respondents that were drawn from the different departments and geographical locations in the region. The sample size for this study constituted 93 respondents. The researcher used both purposive and simple random sampling technique to select respondents at KP central rift region. The research used a questionnaire to collect data. Descriptive statistics data analysis method was applied to analyze numerical data gathered using closed-ended questions. The study recommends that Kenya Power should enhance their training programs to encompass all employees in their departments. The training programs should also be regularized and geared towards sharpening the skills of employees and

also to bridge the knowledge gap. Additionally, continuous training should be geared towards stimulating employee productivity and performance. It was noted that there is correlation between performance and trainings. Kenya Power Central Rift Region should encourage training and development policy and award programs based on performance to enable workers to upgrade their skills and knowledge in their field or other relevant and urgently manpower areas. This will encourage to not only competition but also will motivate them for higher performance as well as positively improve community perception their services. Lastly, one of the key factors for Kenya Power Central Rift Region workers is career path and professional development.

Key Words: *training strategy, employee performance, Kenya Power, Central Rift Region*

INTRODUCTION

According to Weiner et al (2009) the dynamic nature of global business environment which results from technological advancements, economic restructuring, labor movements, and public demands for better products and services have forced organizations to reconsider their business strategies in order to achieve a sustained competitive advantage. It is through this competitive advantage that the organizations are able to maintain growth and profitability. Organizations are open systems that are influenced by the external environment and should use available resources of people, structures, and processes aligned with the right business strategy to yield gains in performance, efficiency, and productivity.

According to (Khilji, 2002) HR practitioners in developing countries are struggling to meet the emerging challenges of new values of knowledge workers who have necessitated a new paradigm of practices for attraction and retention of talent for organizational stability. The human resource is the most important resource that an organization has at its disposal. It is the utilization and management of the core competencies and capabilities of individuals and their ability to develop and use their knowledge that will be the most important part for the sustainability of many organizations in the 21st century, (Pfeiffer 2002).

HR strategies are essentially plans and programs that address and solve fundamental strategic issues related to the management of human resources in an organization (Schuler, 1992). Their focus is on alignment of the organization's HR practices, policies and programs with corporate and strategic business unit plans (Greer, 1995). The extent to which the achievements of a particular employee fulfill the mission of the organization that he/she works for is normally known as 'performance' (Cascio, 2006). Performance as a concept has earlier on has been understood in different ways by various academicians and researchers; however, the majority of scholars have always related performance with transactional efficiency dimension and the efficiency of an organization towards achieving its goals (Stannack, 2006).

An employee's job is put together by the degree to which an employee achieves targets as per the definition of the organization's mission, which in turn gives the definition of performance boundaries. Particular researchers have been long identifying dissimilar deliberations, attitudes and viewpoints of performance because it aids in measuring contributed inputs as well as output measures of effectiveness that result in transactional relationship. For achievement of goals and organizational objectives, ample strategies have since the beginning of time been premeditated on the basis of the performance of organizations.

The equity that has its foundation on elevated returns aids in successful managerial skills of an organization's resources in order for performance to improve. (McClay et al., 1994) have defined the performance of a job as those actions or behaviors that are crucial to the organizational goals. Similarly, (Campbell, 1990) views 'performance' as demonstrated behavior or something that is done by employees for the performance of an organization, and the assessment is effected via the outcome of performance that is operational in relation to sales, turnover, income, volume in addition to shareholders' dividend that has been declared by an organization, the quality and service quantity.

Kenya Power is a limited liability company which transmits, distributes and retails electricity to customers throughout Kenya. It is a key player in the electric power supply sub sector with the mandate to purchase bulk electricity supply, transmit, distribute and retail electricity to end users or customers throughout Kenya. Its purpose, responsibilities and core functions as a commercial state corporation in Kenya are stated in its Vision and Mission Statements and are expressed in its relationships with other key players in the power sub-sector and in its contributions to the country's long term public policy and national development objectives.

The Company's main functions are conducted by 12 divisions. They are: Business Strategy, Infrastructure, Network Management, Street Lighting, Customer Service, Regional Coordination, Company Secretary & Legal Affairs, Supply Chain, Internal Audit, Human Resource and Administration, Finance and Information Technology respectively. The Company is further divided into 10 administrative regions: Nairobi North, Nairobi West, Nairobi South, North Eastern, North Rift, Central Rift, Coast, Mount Kenya, South Nyanza and West Kenya. Each region is headed by a regional manager who reports to the general manager in charge of Regional Coordination. Operational and customer service functions are

replicated in each region. Each of the country's 47 counties is headed by a County Business Manager who reports to a respective Regional Manager (www.kplc.co.ke).

The Central Rift region where this study is based covers about 7 counties which are Kericho, Bomet, Nakuru, Baringo, Nyandarua, Narok and parts of Laikipia County with its headquarters in Nakuru town. The region is headed by a regional manager and below him are section heads and county business managers. The chain of command is very distinct in order to ensure running of business. The current operating environment in which Kenya Power is in has become too turbulent and the changes experienced are happening at faster rates than never before (Muchina & Mokaya, 2012). Consequently, many techniques used by the company on daily basis to manage their affairs tend to become outdated overnight. In the past ten years, the company has undergone major strategic changes in its business processes and portfolio as well as in its organization structure.

Accelerated by the frequency of changes and rate of diffusion of change, today's world has moved from being evolutionary to revolutionary. According to (Fay & Luhrmann, 2004), organizations are constantly being forced to go through continuous adaptation due to forces of globalization, increased competition, changes in information technology and deregulations. The World is continuously changing and so organizations in it need to change in order to survive (Greenberg & Baron, 2002). During the last two decades the public sector has come under increasing pressure to improve performance and demonstrate greater transparency and accountability. This pressure has resulted in public sector organizations facing shifts in ways of operation (Ongegu, 2010).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive research design specifically a case study since it focused on a single entity of Kenya Power Central Rift region. A case study is an in-depth investigation of an individual, institution or phenomenon. Case studies allow a researcher to collect in-depth information with the intention of understanding situations or phenomenon. This design was considered for the study because it is based on the knowledge that case studies are the most appropriate for examining the processes by which events unfold since they provide a holistic understanding of the phenomena. The study employed a quantitative approach using a structured questionnaire with open and closed ended questions. Primary data was obtained through the administering of a questionnaire while secondary data was obtained from journals, available literature and records from the company. Primary data provided information regarding the extent to which HRM practices have been implemented while secondary data gave an insight of the company.

Population of the Study

Population is defined as a set of the entire individual which has got a given characteristic. The central rift region of Kenya Power has a total of 1421 employees. These employees are spread according to different divisions ranging from the technical departments of engineering

and IT to the less technical ones. They are also spread in different geographical locations i.e. Lanet, Nakuru, Molo, Kericho, Naivasha, Eldama Ravine, Narok, Bomet and Kabarnet. This study therefore targeted a total of 1421 respondents that were drawn from the different departments and geographical locations in the region.

Sampling Frame

A sampling frame is an exhaustive list from which a sample is obtained (Kothari, 2004). The 1,421 Kenya Power employees working in the central rift constituted the sampling frame. They were from the eight departments (also referred to as divisions) present in the region.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

According to (Frankel & Klallan, 2000) a sample is a group from which information is obtained. They define sampling as a process of selecting a number of individuals from a population. According to (Kothari, 2009) defines sample as a sub-group of a population or universe; while sampling is the process they are selected. (Baker & Gandhi, 2007) argues out that a sample should be picked in such a way that it represents the entire population to be investigated. (Kothari, 2005) explains that the size sample should neither be excessively large or small. An optimal sample is one which fulfills the requirements of efficiency, representatives, reliability and flexibility.

The sample size was arrived at using Nassiuma's (2009) formulae. As shown below:

$$n = \frac{NC^2}{C^2 + (N-1)e^2}$$

Where: n is the sample size; N is the target population (1421); C is the coefficient of variation (0.5); e is the margin error (0.05).

$$n = \frac{1421 * 0.5^2}{0.5^2 + (1421-1)0.05^2}$$

$$n = 93 \text{ respondents}$$

Therefore, the sample size for this study constituted 93 respondents. A total of 93 questionnaires were distributed according to geographical location of the different stations of Kenya power Central Rift.

Sampling Technique

The researcher used both purposive and simple random sampling technique to select respondents at KP central rift region. Purposive sampling was used in distribution of questionnaires based on the number of employees in different stations. Then simple random sampling was then used to determine the respondents in those stations. This was most suitable because it ensured that the sample was reliable, flexible and efficient.

Research Instruments

The research used a questionnaire to collect data. The choice of tool was informed by the nature of data being collected, the study objectives and time constraints. The questionnaire also helps the researcher to collect a lot of information over a short period of time.

Research Questionnaire

The researcher used self-administered questionnaires for collecting data. The questionnaires are important for the study because respondents are provided with questions for each construct and a lot of information can be collected over a short period of time (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The questionnaire was designed to poll the opinions of the respondents with respect to: the influence of strategic human resource practices on enhancing employee performance at Kenya Power Central Rift Region. The opinions were measured on a five-point Likert - type scales, anchored on “1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=undecided, 4=agree, and 5= strongly agree.’ The questionnaire consisted of closed ended questions. The questionnaire had two sections: Section A which contained demographic information while section B contained the variables of the study based on research objectives.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This objective of the study sought to establish the training and development strategy on employee performance. The finding for different tested items is shown in Table 2. The discussion follows after Table 2.

Table 2: Training Strategy and Employee Performance

Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	S.Dev
1. My department has regular training programs for employees	87	1	5	3.00	.792
2. Training needs identified are realistic, useful and based on the business strategy of the organization.	87	2	5	3.24	.872
3. Training enhances my utilization of skills, abilities and resources and has an overall impact on my performance.	87	2	5	3.81	1.057
4. Training has positively changed my attitude towards work	87	2	5	3.36	.997
5. There is a budgetary allocation for training in my department.	87	2	5	3.57	1.026

Table 2 shows that slightly less than half (mean 3.00) of respondents agree that there is regular training programs for employees in their departments, some respondents reported that they had never gone for training since they were employed. Majority (3.24) of the respondents agreed that training needs identified is realistic, useful and based on the business strategy of the organization. A majority also of 3.81 agreed that training enhances their utilization of skills, abilities and resources and has an overall impact on their performance.

This means that there is correlation between knowledge gained through training and performance in the organization. It is also noted that many respondents (38.3%) are not sure whether there is a budgetary allocation for training in their department. However a majority (3.57) indicated that there is a budgetary allocation for training in their departments.

These findings are congruent with those of Tahir et al., (2014) who examined the relationship between training and development and employee performance and productivity and concluded that it leads to employee engagement and thus translates to employee performance.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of this study regarding this objective, it can be concluded that training practice is a critical strategy that defines the performance of employees at the KP central rift region. The presence of regular training programs for the employees is an indicator that the company is aware of the important role it plays in regard to performance. The study however cannot wish away the fact that some departments do not have the regular trainings.

When employees are trained it leads to improved performance. There is a direct correlation therefore between training and development and employee performance. Training boosts employees' morale in their area of work and thus leads to increased performance. It also helps employees to sharpen their skills and therefore increase their capability of accomplishing work first and meeting their set targets.

The study recommends that Kenya Power should enhance their training programs to encompass all employees in their departments. The training programs should also be regularized and geared towards sharpening the skills of employees and also to bridge the knowledge gap. Additionally, continuous training should be geared towards stimulating employee productivity and performance. It was noted that there is correlation between performance and trainings. Kenya Power Central Rift Region should encourage training and development policy and award programs based on performance to enable workers to upgrade their skills and knowledge in their field or other relevant and urgently manpower areas. This will encourage to not only competition but also will motivate them for higher performance as well as positively improve community perception their services.

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