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Features of personnel management in the conditions of economic crisis

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Abstract. In human resource management (HR), loyalty is an important issue and, therefore, "a serious problem for many organizations. Uncontrolled staff turnover can have serious consequences for companies. This problem is especially acute during the crisis. The introduction of loyalty measures is especially relevant when there are many job offers and employees can easily find an alternative position. The object of the study is to study the use of the loyalty tool as a mechanism for preventing and regulating crisis situations. For this purpose, methods were used: comparative and statistical analysis, formal-logical, functional and process approach to research, as well as methods of studying documentation and information materials, SWOT analysis, etc. Research results: in the long term and to prepare for economic recovery, organizations realize the importance of retaining their personnel, mainly high-potential and key people, for their survival in a competitive market. This way they can maintain their skills, as well as increase the satisfaction and loyalty of their employees. Then the relationship between the loyalty of human resources and the effectiveness of the organization becomes clearer: loyalty ensures better company performance, maintaining competitive advantages, better quality of personnel management by optimizing personnel management costs and reducing social dysfunction.

Keywords: management, crisis, human resources, loyalty, efficiency.

Introduction

Employees are the main driving force of most organizations. Therefore, employee retention is crucial for both productivity and efficiency. High staff turnover can also negatively affect employee motivation and lead to additional costs.

Among the advantages of maintaining a high level of loyalty and employee retention is considered:

- reducing the costs associated with hiring staff;
- performance improvement;
- maintaining the best customer service;
- increase employee engagement and satisfaction.

Currently, employee loyalty is an important task and an integral part of the strategy of companies and state organizations. A loyal employee is someone who has "significant work experience in the company, a very low propensity to search for and consider external vacancies and, in general, a strong sense of belonging." Companies really face a high risk of staff turnover, which arises due to various factors. Limitations, such as the desire to continue studying, increasing the level of education, experience of unemployment, development of professional mobility, lack of human resources, or even the economic context. However, this is also due to factors specific to certain business sectors, sectors that tend to be particularly competitive and in which there is a large supply of jobs.

The benefits of employee loyalty include:

- reduction of hiring costs and total labor costs;
- improving hiring strategies;
- improving employee productivity;
- increase employee motivation and morale;
- reducing staff turnover;
- improving workplace relationships;
- improving the quality of customer service;
- increase employee satisfaction and engagement;
- a stronger corporate culture;
- increase in income.

Thus, the chosen topic is relevant for both private and public organizations. Moreover, such a policy will help prevent crisis situations and save the budget.

Problem Statement

The purpose of this article is to better understand how organizations approach the issue of loyalty in times of economic crisis.

The relevance of the topic is due to the fact that in conditions of crisis and high unemployment, the company's solution to the issue of loyalty a priori seems paradoxical for three main reasons.

Firstly, when a crisis leads to a situation of staff bloat, the company, in order to ensure its survival, uses partial unemployment or even dismissal as the first lever of action. Taking measures to retain employees seems inconsistent at first glance.

Then, during these periods, most employees have few or no job alternatives. Therefore, it would be useless to introduce employee retention practices, because it would be very difficult for these employees, even if they wanted to, to find another job.

Finally, even if we wanted to carry out loyalty measures, it would be difficult to get the necessary funding for these actions during the crisis. In fact, management priorities in these periods relate rather to reducing the cost of human resource management.

History

The literature distinguishes between the concept of loyalty and retention and discusses its implications, mainly in terms of job satisfaction and engagement. Paillé [1] points out that "loyalty emphasizes individual behavior in a professional situation, while loyalty forces a company to mobilize management systems to achieve the loyalty of its employees." Thus, employee loyalty is what loyalty practitioners hope to create. Her questions can be very important for companies at different levels.

Poulain-Rehm [2] notes that the term "fidelity" comes from the Latin *fideltas*, close to the words *fides* (faith) and *foedus* (contract, agreement, union). The dictionary also mentions its most extreme meaning — "the quality that allows you to keep the faith promised to the sovereign." Thus, loyalty has an object: a person (a), an organization, a business, a country, etc. And these various loyalty objects can come into conflict. Schrag [3], however, notes that loyalty is not based on the characteristics of these objects (or people), but on a specific relational relationship: an employee is loyal to Mr. X because he is his friend. Other people may have the same characteristics, but the employee will not be loyal to them. Finally, the author defends the idea that in order for an employee to be loyal to a company, certain conditions must be met that allow him to see a common future with this company. His loyalty will then grow into goodwill, identification, and even sacrifice. However, if an employee can offer some of these elements, the company is unlikely to be able to demand them.

Just as in marketing, when analyzing the relationship between a company and its customers, loyalty can be approached from the point of view of behavior or attitude. Guerfel-Henda et Guilbert [4] note that the very fact that an employee remains in the company does not necessarily reflect his loyalty: it is necessary to know whether his retention in the company is due to a real desire or a kind of retention. Luchak [5] distinguishes two forms of loyalty to the company: affective and emotional attachment and rational and calculating attachment. The first form is similar to what Peretti [6] calls real loyalty, which he distinguishes from conditional loyalty and external loyalty. For Hirschman [7] loyalty is a form of possible response to discontent, just like humility (withdrawal) or expression of discontent (voice).

Loyalty is "a set of measures to reduce voluntary employee departures." A company does not always strive for the loyalty of its staff, or at least all of its staff: voluntary layoffs are not always harmful to the company, as they can become an opportunity to see the departure of poorly performing employees, and they contribute to renewal: the arrival of "new blood", allowing ideas to be introduced and avoiding excessive aging of the workforce.

According to a study by Hewitt [8], only 20% of companies whose shares are listed on the stock exchange have implemented explicit loyalty programs. The survey shows that this happens even

less often with young people under 30 (generation Y): even if companies have identified a need and expressed a desire to preserve this population, they do not implement a specific program. In the literature on human resource management, it is often said about the intention to leave or participate in an organization, but the specific issue of retention is rarely touched upon: out of 131 articles published in the *Revue de Gestion des Ressources Humaines* in the period from 2002 to 2008, only one is specifically devoted to loyalty [9].

Payet [10] notes that the retention of human resources raises the question of the quality of professional relationships. Job satisfaction seems to be an important factor in employee loyalty: it enhances emotional engagement and, consequently, attachment to the company. Job satisfaction and organizational participation are considered key variables in most employee turnover models. "Engagement is a connection that connects a person to an entity, concept, or behavior." This relationship can be of three types: affective, calculated or normative. Affective involvement reflects an employee's emotional attachment to their organization through identification with the company and attachment to values. The second form of organizational involvement is calculated involvement. It reflects the perception of the costs associated with leaving the organization. This form of participation is also called "continuous participation". Finally, normative participation is "an attitude of loyalty to the organization arising from a sense of moral duty to it."

Thus, employee loyalty seems to be an important issue for companies.

Research methods

The methodological basis of scientific research is the fundamental work of leading domestic and foreign scientists in the field of personnel management system formation.

To solve the tasks, scientific tools were used, including comparative and statistical analysis, formal-logical, functional and process approach to research, as well as methods for studying documentation and information materials, SWOT analysis, etc.

Results

The first task in preserving human resources is to establish strong relationships at a time when labor relations have become more unstable. Baudet [11] emphasizes that "the old model of a manager who is devoted to the company and cares about job security has shifted towards a model in which a person wants to succeed in his work without sacrificing his personal life." The concepts of limitless career or "diverse" career emphasize the predominant role of a person in the management of his career. These "new approaches" claim that companies are no longer willing or even able to take full responsibility for career management in the long run.

Employee loyalty, which is aimed at greater stability of labor relations, seems to contradict the essence of these approaches. Some employees do not necessarily have the desire or ability to lead a "nomadic" career and continue to strive for a career in the organization. In addition, the company must convince people that it needs to stay in the organization to ensure its smooth operation.

The arrival of generation Y in the labor market makes us believe that the difficulties with retaining employees are likely to increase. These young people under the age of 30 actually seem

to be more individualistic, attaching less importance to professional ethics, as well as to the place of work in life. Thus, retaining generation Y will present more difficulties, since they are a very mobile population and are ready to "break out" into the labor market [12].

The most recent foreign works devoted to the problem of loyalty were published during a period of quiet economic growth. The researchers acknowledge that "when studying the loyalty of human resources, it is necessary to take into account the limitations that arise as a result of environmental changes." Steel and Lounsbury [13] note that most existing commodity turnover models include contextual variables, such as "perception of alternatives" (88% of models) or even "objective criteria of the market condition" (63% of models). However, HR researchers did not seem to question whether the loyalty of human resources is really an urgent problem.

During the economic crisis, as far as we know, only the work of Maccooey [14] addresses this issue, but without scientific depth. However, in times of economic crisis and high unemployment, it will be useful for the company to solve the problem of loyalty. It is probably necessary to qualify the three paradoxes above.

Strengthening loyalty can be justified in the medium and long term, especially in those activities where skills are a key source of competitive advantage. In fact, even if the salary fund should be reduced, it is also necessary to guarantee the survival of the company by ensuring the loyalty of certain experts with high potential or key people leading crucial projects. Jolis [15] explains that "by wanting to reduce the payroll too much and no longer worrying about human skills, which, in our opinion, currently do not bring direct profit for this market or the period under consideration, we risk drying up, desertification of human resources in favor of partners, competitors."

Thus, strengthening loyalty allows the company to retain the skills necessary both for survival and for distinguishing itself from competitors, whether during periods of growth or economic crisis. This is probably what prompted HR departments during the crisis of 2009 to consider the identification and retention of talents and high potentials as one of their priorities. Employees represent "human capital", a source of sustainable competitive advantage due to their level of skills and knowledge. It is strategically important for the company not to lose certain elements in which it has invested in the long term. It is difficult to imagine how the return on investment in the training of "ephemeral" employees is possible.

Low job satisfaction causes even more frustration among employees when alternatives in the labor market are rare, which is the case in times of crisis. This frustration often leads to deviant behavior associated with leaving the organization or other social dysfunctions that disrupt the functioning of the company. Strengthening loyalty during a crisis allows you to avoid breaking the psychological contract, avoid this kind of frustration and anticipate a potential recovery period.

Despite the priority tasks of reducing costs in a crisis, employee loyalty can become a means of rationalizing the costs of personnel management in the medium and long term. For example, this avoids the costs associated with replacing an employee. "The departure of efficient, competitive and competent employees generates high costs for any organization." These high costs represent not only the costs of replacing an employee, estimated depending on the case from 6 months to 2 years of salary, but also the so-called "hidden" costs, since they do not manifest themselves or only with a time lag. This may be, for example, the destabilizing effect of an employee's departure on the entire team. According to Savall and Zardet [16], these "hidden costs" range from 9,000

to 45,000 euros per person per year. Therefore, the problem of retaining employees is very high, especially when the economic crisis makes the organization more fragile.

Discussion

The analysis of our data shows that the loyalty of human resources remains an urgent problem in the conditions of the economic crisis. Several reasons are put forward, including the need for a long-term vision necessary for good human resource management.

As part of the work on the article, the authors studied the statistical data of research and expert centers. [17;18;19] The survey data served as the basis for the formation of scientific conclusions.

Thanks to the first reason for loyalty mentioned by respondents, preparation for economic recovery, we see that the organizations that took part in our survey are well aware that the loyalty of human resources requires a certain medium- and long-term vision. Thus, they guarantee that they will be able to return to normal in the event of a favorable turn in the economy. This concern is consistent with the recommendations of researchers such as Chaminade or Paillé regarding the "planning" of the loyalty process.

Interviews also show that employee loyalty is associated with improving the efficiency of the company and maintaining competitive advantages. Respondents defend the idea that the loyalty of personnel allows you to retain skills at the expense of competition.

Another reason for loyalty in times of economic crisis — loyalty and customer satisfaction — is particularly emphasized in certain professions: staff loyalty is linked to the loyalty of other key partners of the company, such as customers. Experts point out that "the stability of employees is likely to lead to improved products, increased value provided to the consumer, and the level of customer loyalty," which strengthens the trust of various partners, such as, of course, customers, but also suppliers, shareholders or government agencies. Here we discover the importance of consistency between the internal image and the external image of the company. Then the company will be able to retain the partners necessary for its survival and even success.

Employee loyalty provides sufficient time for employee training. This confirms the economic problem of loyalty, which is referred to by Chaminade, who recalls that a return on investment in training and Gpec is possible only with a relatively stable workforce. This economic aspect also leads to optimization of personnel management costs, even in times of crisis, by preserving skills and reducing hidden costs, such as recruitment costs in case of departure or reducing social dysfunctions (absenteeism, voluntary breaks, strikes). This behavior, associated with low engagement and low satisfaction, is expensive, but it is difficult to assess. Loyalty efforts should reduce these social dysfunctions by limiting stress at work, the main cause of psychosocial risks. In fact, the "disappointed" mentioned, for example, by the head of the organization, may suffer from a harmful working environment. In addition to deplorable working conditions, clumsy efforts to retain employees can also create or exacerbate social dysfunction.

Finally, our results show that in addition to reducing social dysfunctions, the loyalty of human resources, first of all, allows you to re-mobilize employees. Behind the term "remobilization" we can define the organizational meaning of Allen and Meyer [20]. This reason for loyalty is especially referred to by organizations that have been strongly influenced by the crisis. Indeed,

it seems that employee loyalty allows a company to survive, which needs to increase the level of organizational engagement, which has become low after the serious impact of the economic crisis and, in particular, job cuts within the framework of social plans. Employees expect support from the company and may consider these departures as a violation of a psychological contract, since the company does not comply with what they consider to be the duty of protection, while they themselves have fulfilled their obligations by participating in their work. Aware of the possible deterioration of the social climate, organizations that have been most strongly affected by the crisis, especially emphasize the need for loyalty to re-mobilise their staff. "The companies that best overcome crises are those that have developed the engagement of their employees." Companies are all the more eager to restore a high level of organizational involvement of their employees, since the impact of the crisis has become more severe.

The line manager plays an important role in the preservation of human resources. Our results emphasize that the loyalty process is largely managed by managers. Chaminade et al. [21] remind of the importance of managers' participation in human resource management in order to guarantee better organizational efficiency. However, the loyalty process is often implied in the usual HR practices that meet other main goals. Training can, for example, in addition to acquiring skills, which is its main goal, contribute to increasing job satisfaction and organizational engagement and, consequently, strengthen loyalty.

Finally, our results confirm the work that advocates the personalization of personnel management practices, in particular, for employee retention, emphasizing the lack of a standard loyalty method. Respondents insist that a loyalty strategy based, among other things, on training, job recognition, benefits in kind or a career plan should be adapted to each specific case.

Our results coincide with the results of the Cegos survey of 2009 [22], which shows that one of the priorities of HR is to identify and retain talent, potential and high potential. The people who are influenced by loyalty efforts are mostly people with high potential and key people. Guerfel-Henda and Guilbert advise targeting successful or promising people. The key people in the company are not always the most effective people, but first of all those who have the necessary skills and which the organization wants to preserve. The HR Director admits that loyalty is about "good managers and good leaders." If a manager is a key person, it is because as a "marginal secant" he draws his power from his organizational position located at the junction of several systems of actions. HR managers sometimes seem to be prisoners of the ideas of French society, who value diplomas and responsible positions, while some unmanageable employees can also be "key people". In this case, there is a risk of developing a sense of injustice, which can further exacerbate the frustration of other categories of employees who will not benefit from these loyalty measures and who, in their opinion, will be treated with preferences. Research shows, for example, that the perception of organizational injustice contributes to psychosocial risks.

Finally, interviews show that representatives of Generation Y are particularly concerned about the loyalty process. Respondents confirm the results of the management literature, in which the relationships at work of generation Y are described as special. However, we must remain cautious about this result, since it is difficult to understand whether this is really the result of the attitude of generation Y, which will not behave the same as its elders at the same age, or whether the observed reactions are due to the age or career stage of the person. Respondents may also be influenced by stereotypes about Generation Y, widely disseminated in the mass press.

Conclusion

Compared to the management literature, our results provide a better understanding of how loyalty is achieved in times of crisis. They emphasize the reasons why loyalty remains relevant during this period of severe economic downturn, contrary to the popular belief that the task of companies is rather to encourage their employees to leave. The issue of loyalty is not ignored in short-term emergencies and is sometimes even considered a priority. The remobilization of employees even acts as the main reason for loyalty in organizations that have been most strongly affected by the crisis.

In the long term and to prepare for economic recovery, organizations realize the importance of retaining their personnel, mainly high-potential and key people, for their survival in a competitive market. This way they can maintain their skills, as well as increase the satisfaction and loyalty of their customers. Then the relationship between the loyalty of human resources and the effectiveness of the organization becomes clearer: loyalty ensures better company performance, maintaining competitive advantages, better quality of personnel management by optimizing personnel management costs and reducing social dysfunction. The remobilization of employees is particularly important in organizations that have been most affected by the crisis. As for the loyalty process, respondents emphasize the important role of the line manager, the often implicit nature of the process and the absence of a "standard method" of loyalty.

Our exploratory research obviously has limitations, primarily in terms of generalizing the results. In fact, the study should be expanded to be able to confirm the results on a more homogeneous and larger sample. In-depth case studies will also allow you to analyze in detail the situation and specific problems of each company in order to put the loyalty measures taken into their context. Secondly, a longitudinal study would be a useful addition to complete the materials of this article, especially with the participation of stakeholders other than managers or HR staff. Thirdly, in any study of this type, it is difficult to exclude the influence of "social desirability" on the responses of survey participants. Despite our desire for more information and our requests for clarification, HR managers may have been inclined to justify their policies and present the image they wanted to create, while ignoring the real problems and real suffering in their organization.

Having shown that the loyalty of human resources remains relevant even in times of crisis, this preliminary study confirms the temporal aspect mentioned by Paillé [24], as well as the necessary stability and durability of loyalty relationships. An analysis of our results reminds us that employee loyalty should be managed with a certain continuity, despite differences in the economic context. By offering long-term employment relationships to its employees, an organization can also take advantage of the chance to become a preferred employer and present itself as a reliable partner that the HR department can count on. These rare relationships are especially attractive in times of crisis, doubt and rejection of the welfare state.

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Экономикалық дағдарыс жағдайында қызметкерлерді басқару ерекшеліктері

Аңдатпа. Адам ресурстарын басқаруда (HR) адалдық маңызды мәселелердің бірі, сондықтан көптеген ұйымдар үшін бұл өзекті проблема. Бақыланбайтын жұмыстан қырымкерлердің кетуі компаниялар үшін ауыр зардаптарға әкелуі мүмкін әрі бұл әсіресе дағдарыс кезінде өткір қойылады. Адалдық шараларын енгізу жұмысқа қатысты ұсыныстар көп болған кезде және қызметкерлер балама позицияны оңай таба алатын кезде маңызды. Зерттеудің мақсаты - адалдық құралдарын дағдарыстың алдын алу мен реттеу механизмі ретінде пайдалануды қарастыру. Ол үшін келесі әдістер қолданылды: салыстырмалы және статистикалық талдау, зерттеуге формальды-логикалық, функционалдық және процестік тәсіл, сондай-ақ құжаттама мен ақпараттық материалдарды зерттеу әдістері, SWOT-талдау және т. б. зерттеу нәтижелері: ұзақ мерзімді болашақта және экономиканы қалпына келтіруге дайындалу үшін ұйымдар негізінен жоғары әлеуетті қызметкерлерді қазіргідей нарықтық бәсекелестік жағдайда сақтап қалуға мүдделі. Осылайша, олар өздерінің жұмыс өнімділігін бұзбай, қызметкерлердің қанағаттануы мен адалдығын арттыра алады. Сонда адами ресурстардың нәтижесі мен ұйымның тиімділігі арасындағы байланыс айқынырақ болады: адалдық компания жұмысының өнімділігін қамтамасыз етеді, бәсекелестік артықшылықтарды сақтайды. Қызметкерлерді басқару шығындарын оңтайландырып, әлеуметтік дисфункцияны азайту арқылы басқару сапасын арттырады.

Түйін сөздер: менеджмент, дағдарыс, адами ресурстар, адалдық, тиімділік.

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Особенности управления персоналом в условиях экономического кризиса

Аннотация. В управлении человеческими ресурсами (HR) лояльность является важным вопросом и, следовательно, «серьезной проблемой» для многих организаций. Неконтролируемая текучесть кадров может иметь серьезные последствия для компаний. Эта проблема особенно остро стоит во время кризиса. Внедрение мер лояльности особенно актуально, когда поступает много предложений о работе, и сотрудники могут легко найти альтернативную должность. Целью исследования является изучение использования инструмента лояльности как механизма предотвращения и регулирования кризисных ситуаций. Для этого были использованы методы: сравнительный и статистический анализ, формально-логический, функциональный и процессный подход к исследованию, а также методы изучения документации и информационных материалов, SWOT-анализ и др. Результаты исследования: в долгосрочной перспективе и для подготовки к восстановлению экономики организации осознают важность сохранения своего персонала, в основном высокопотенциальных и ключевых сотрудников, для своего выживания на конкурентном рынке. Таким образом, они могут поддерживать свои навыки, а также повышать удовлетворенность и лояльность своих сотрудников. Тогда взаимосвязь между лояльностью человеческих ресурсов и эффективностью организации становится более ясной: лояльность обеспечивает лучшую работу компании, сохранение конкурентных преимуществ, повышение качества управления персоналом за счет оптимизации затрат на управление персоналом и снижения социальной дисфункции.

Ключевые слова: менеджмент, кризис, человеческие ресурсы, лояльность, эффективность.

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