

ОБЩЕСТВЕНИ КОМУНИКАЦИИ И ИНФОРМАЦИОННИ НАУКИ **PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SCIENCES**

EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION – ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT SUCCESS FACTORS OF TODAY’S COMPANIES

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Abstract: *In addition to product quality, employee satisfaction, meaning contentment both with the job itself and with the work environment, is a quality measure of employer-employee relationship which has become of major importance for today’s companies. This report therefore examines the connection between psychological perception and employee satisfaction on the basis of a “target-actual comparison”. The analysed dimensions of perception focus on work environment, sense of justice, assessment of personal development, satisfaction with income and psychological well-being. Based on an employee survey within a service company in the telecommunications sector, it is shown that various dimensions of these perceptions explain employee satisfaction and that the same play a role both concurrently and independently. The results also illustrate the importance of management skills, which largely account for generating satisfaction. In addition, an employer should be able to identify satisfaction deficiency among his or her employees and counteract them with appropriate measures.*

Keywords: *employee satisfaction, incentives, motivation, content factors, context factors*

INTRODUCTION

Product quality, a strong brand, or the use of latest technology alone have long ceased to guarantee a company’s success in achieving a leading position on the market (Fischer 1991, 1). While many companies were able to define themselves for decades through the products they manufactured, circumstances have now changed drastically. Digital transformation, artificial intelligence and big data, as well as the increased competition arising from them, present companies with a situation of permanent change (Träger 2021, 1). The US scientist Lee Iacocca sums it up quite accurately: Ultimately, all economic processes can be reduced to three words: people, products and profit, in that order. People are increasingly becoming of top priority to companies. If you don’t have good personnel, you will hardly be able to compete with your products on the market and will generate little profit, if at all (Kuhl et al. 2010, 10). However, employees are a resource with a mind of their own and a will of their own. They cannot be unconditionally “purchased” or “replaced“ as “staff“ (Träger 2021, 1). It has long been known how difficult it is not only to recruit, manage and motivate good employees, but also to keep them permanently in a company, following the principle “retain the best“ (Maihöfner 2013, 1). Therefore, human resource management has been increasingly focusing its attention in recent years on ensuring that key employees remain in the company, since the prevailing ‘war for talents’, the increasing shortage of skilled workers, as well as demographic factors make it more necessary than ever to keep employees satisfied and thus bind them to an organization (Vom Hofe 2005, 1). Employee satisfaction has a strong impact on motivation. Satisfied employees are more committed, which in turn is reflected in a higher willingness to perform. In addition, satisfied employees are less likely to resign and more likely to remain loyal to their employer (Vogel 2017, 34). To get an idea of their personnel’s level of satisfaction and to identify the factors that influence it, many companies use regular employee surveys, on the basis of which they select suitable measures for promoting it. The goal of increasing satisfaction by improving working conditions, for example, is also reflected in the research: Numerous studies deal with the question of how the work environment can have a positive effect on employee satisfaction (Ganserer et al. 2021, 12). The most common effects are shown in Figure 1 below.

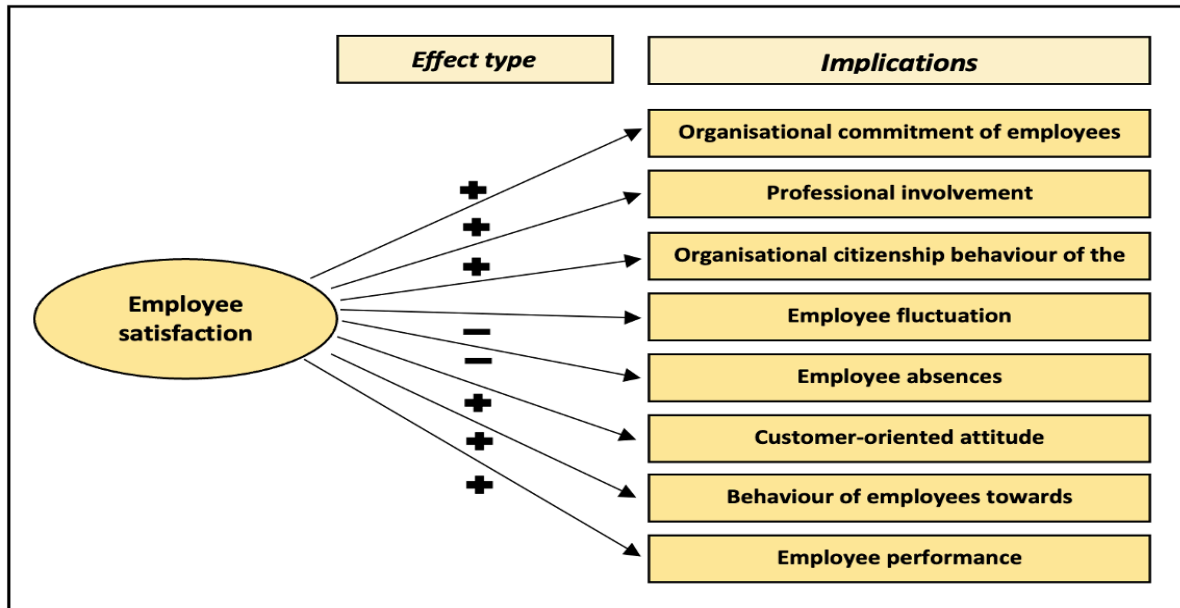


Fig. 1. Frequently studied effects of employee satisfaction

In academic literature, employee satisfaction is defined as **the interaction of one's own "attitude" in relation to the work environment, which results from a careful comparison between the expected work environment (target) and the actually perceived work environment (actual)** (Stock-Homburg 2012, 18). Various organizational aspects play a decisive role here:

- **Working conditions,**
- **Colleagues,**
- **Management culture,**
- **Work content,**
- **Remuneration,**
- **Promotion and development opportunities,**
- **Work-life balance.**

These factors can be weighed differently for each individual and vary depending on the industry, company size and corporate culture (Nerdinger et al. 2011, 396).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The analysis of the **research question**: *Which measures are effective from today's perspective to maintain or even increase employee satisfaction in the company* is carried out by implementing an employee survey within a telecommunications company. On the one hand, the "target level of satisfaction" (expectation) and on the other hand, the "actual level of satisfaction" (perception) are to be analyzed from the employees' point of view. The questionnaire catalogue consists of a total of 34 items, with 18 items being used specifically for measurement. A modified form of the *Scale for Recording Working Conditions* by Felfe & Liepmann and the *8-Item Model* by Fischer & Lück were used.

The survey was carried out between June 9 and June 16, 2018, using the survey tool *www.erhebung.de*. The sample of the survey consists of 89 subjects, which corresponds to a partial survey (the total amount of people in the company being 93). Due to the high return rate of 80 questionnaire sheets (90%), the author classified the results as representative of the entire company. To ensure the quality of the method, several preliminary studies (pre-tests) were conducted, which were evaluated using Microsoft Excel software and the graphics contained therein. Due to some limitations within the Microsoft Excel software, the main study was evaluated using the IBM SPSS Statistics evaluation software.

The course of the research was clearly structured in advance. All employees of the company were contacted by the management via email, containing the relevant survey link. In addition, all participants were informed again about the objectives and content, as well as the guaranteed anonymity of their answers before the survey began.

RESULTS

The following analysis was created on the basis of a five-level monopolar scale. The respective answers are ordinally scaled, which means that the characteristics can be ranked similarly to the school grading system 1 to 5. For a differentiated and precise evaluation, specific location parameters such as the arithmetic mean (average value) and the mode (closest value) were used (Wölfle 2014, 78). Due to the ordinal scaling of the items, the Spearman rank correlation coefficient was used to show relationships.

Taking the socio-demographic representation into account, it can be seen that the distribution in the respective regions is almost equal (see Table 1) with 41 employees participating in the North-East region and 39 in the East.

Table 1. Cross-tabulation of socio-demographic distribution

	Employee distribution			Total
	< 1 year	1 - 3 years	> 3 years	
Regional distribution North-East (Berlin / BB)	12	13	16	41
East (Cottbus / Sachsen)	5	9	25	39
Total	17	22	41	80

At the same time, it can be seen that more than half of all respondents have been working for the company for far longer than 3 years. The result thus reflects current findings in the everyday life of employees. In the metropolitan region of the federal capital (Berlin), employees are much more willing to change employers, whereas employees in Saxony tend to strive for long-term cooperation and place particular value on a more familiar atmosphere.

As described at the beginning, employee satisfaction is a component of the target-actual comparison. Incentive factors (motivators) have a strong influence on employee satisfaction. The delta between the “expectation” (target state) and the “perception” (actual state) of the different motivators (incentives) must not deviate too much from one another. In order to form the basis for this cross-comparison, the motivating factors were first approached in order of their importance (see Table 2).

Table 2. Average mean value of incentive factors for employee satisfaction

Items Incentive factors for employee satisfaction	Incentive factors for employee satisfaction (target state)							Total
	Importance of work environment (in general)	Importance of work environment (in relation to co-workers)	Importance of work environment (in relation to superiors)	Importance of career advancement and promotion	Importance of further training and qualification opportunities	Importance of performance- related pay	Importance of the corporate image	
Mean value	1,29	1,28	1,46	1,54	1,53	1,74	1,64	1,50

Mean values were calculated to allow a closer examination and comparison of the individual items. The closer a mean value is to the value “1” (very important), the more important this aspect is for the employees. The following is the result analysis of the incentive factors for employee satisfaction (target state):

- **Work environment (in general, in relation to colleagues, in relation to superiors):** The overall result clearly shows that the first 3 components are of similar importance for the staff. For all 3 items, the mean value is very close to the value “1”, which means that a clear majority of respondents consider the work environment overall as “very important”.
- **Career advancement & training opportunities:** The situation in the two following items is similar. For the majority of the respondents, these two areas are also “very important”.
- **Pay & corporate image:** These two areas are somewhat less important compared to their predecessors. Nevertheless, they are still ranked mainly as “important”. At the same time, it can be seen that remuneration is not the highest incentive factor for motivation, as is often assumed. In comparison with the company’s public image, the value stands even lower.

In addition to the determination of the expected incentive factors (target state), an analysis of the perceived motivation factors (actual state) is required in the next step. In order to compare both incentive constructs, care was taken that the items and their hypotheses relate to each other analogously (see Table 3).

Table 3. Average mean value of general employee satisfaction

Items general employee satisfaction	General Employee (actual state)											Total
	Content factors (intrinsic)						Context factors (extrinsic)					
	Work gives me the opportunity to take on responsibility.	Work gives me the opportunity to use my own abilities.	I am happy with the opportunities for advancement.	My work is not valued enough.	I really enjoy my work.	I would choose the same company again.	I get far too little money.	I am happy with the working environment.	I am satisfied with the structural processes.	I am satisfied with how superiors praise and criticise.	There is too much sales pressure.	
Mean values	1,84	1,95	2,64	3,05	1,80	1,99	3,40	1,89	2,60	2,29	2,98	2,40

Context factors (extrinsic) address experiences that are connected to the work environment, i.e. extrinsic to the work – outside of the activity. Content factors (motivators) are predominantly intrinsic aspects, i.e. factors inherent in the work (Rosenstiel 2015, 79). The results of general employee satisfaction (actual state) are shown below:

- **Responsibility & skills:** The first two items clearly show that employees are “satisfied” with the various nature of the work tasks they are asked to perform.
- **Promotion opportunities:** With a mean value of $\chi = 2.64$, the staff are more neutral about their personal promotion opportunities, which should be considered unsatisfactory.
- **Recognition:** This area is characterized by the group of undecided “neither / nor”. In addition,

the result is negative as the majority of the staff are rather dissatisfied. The company should also act in this area.

- **Work satisfaction & company re-election:** These two items again clearly show that employees enjoy their work and would “surely” choose the same company again.
- **Remuneration:** With a mean value of $\chi = 3.40$, the trend is also negative. Measures should be taken here immediately.
- **Work environment & process structure:** The area of the work environment reflects a clear level of satisfaction. The structural processes, on the other hand, tend towards a neutral, less than optimal view.
- **Management & work pressure:** One of the most important elements is how employees perceive their superiors. This area can still be rated as satisfactory with a value of $\chi = 2.29$. In contrast, the sense of work pressure is perceived as too high with a value of $\chi = 2.98$.

The delta of both constructs in the target-actual comparison of $\chi = 0.90$ can be considered as still acceptable. As a result, the company in the survey is already on the right track in terms of employee satisfaction. Nevertheless, some areas should be improved immediately with targeted measures in order to make survival in today’s competitive business world possible and to prevent the emergence of any negative effects (see Figure 1).

In view of the **research question** outlined at the beginning, this analysis also shows that companies today have many possibilities to increase their employees’ motivation and satisfaction with targeted incentive concepts. The size of the organisation and its financial resources are of particular importance.

CONCLUSION

The success of a company is essentially due to the performance of its employees. This performance behaviour is considered as the result of respective working conditions (Volk 2004, 1). Therefore, the fundamental question of the present research work, namely the effect and importance of the most important influencing factors in employee satisfaction, is in the focus of many companies. The *content factors* (intrinsic motivators) emerge as the most important components. As a result, the non-material incentives prove to be those that are gaining on importance among employees. In contrast, the financial incentive aspects and the context factors (extrinsic motivators) have a smaller influence on satisfaction in a company. Nevertheless, the material incentive parameters must not be neglected and require constant evaluation.

In summary, some measures and recommendations for action are presented below, which help increase employee satisfaction and employee loyalty in the long term. It follows from there that the construct of satisfaction is the basic prerequisite for sustainable employee loyalty (Maihöfner 2013, 22):

1. Conducting regular employee surveys,
2. Promoting intrinsic motivators (content factors), i.e. factors inherent in the work (performance, recognition, responsibility, career and development opportunities),
3. Avoiding extrinsic dissatisfaction parameters (context factors), that is to say those related to work environment (payment, status assignments, relationship with colleagues and superiors, leadership behaviour, company image/policy),
4. Interaction management (interplay) of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators,
5. Promotion and development of non-material incentive systems (leadership behaviour, personnel development),
6. Strategic and appropriate use of material incentive systems (e.g. additional payment options for individual performance).

Finally, it should be noted that the empirical study and its results were largely supported by the theoretical concepts of the literature on the subject. It is ultimately the internal factors and incentives that are responsible for a lasting and sustainable development of job satisfaction. External incentives, on the other hand, form the framework of work activity but should only be used to a lesser extent, since they are more cost intensive and the incentive effect is only temporary. In this sense, the main goal of human resource management should be to promote intrinsic motivators which in turn would create a bond with

the organization and maintain the corresponding satisfaction of employees.

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УДОВЛЕТВОРЕНОСТТА НА СЛУЖИТЕЛИТЕ – ЕДИН ОТ НАЙ-ВАЖНИТЕ ФАКТОРИ ЗА УСПЕХ НА СЪВРЕМЕННИТЕ КОМПАНИИ

Резюме: В допълнение към качеството на продукта, удовлетвореността на служителите от тяхната работа и работна среда е качествен показател за отношенията между работодател и служител, който е в центъра на вниманието на съвременните компании. Ето защо в настоящия доклад се анализира връзката между психологическите състояния на преживяванията и удовлетвореността на служителите въз основа на „сравнението цел – производителност“. Измеренията на анализирани състояния на преживяване се фокусират върху работната среда, възприятията за справедливост, оценките за личностно развитие, удовлетвореността от доходите и психологическото благополучие. Въз основа на проучване на служителите в компания за услуги в сектора на телекомуникациите е показано, че различни измерения на състоянията на преживяване обясняват удовлетвореността на служителите и че тези измерения играят едновременно и независима роля. Резултатите също така подчертават значението на качеството на ръководството, което в голяма степен е отговорно за генерирането на удовлетвореност. Освен това работодателят трябва да е в състояние да идентифицира дефицитите на удовлетвореност сред своите служители и да предприеме подходящи мерки за противодействие.

Ключови думи: удовлетвореност на служителите, стимули, мотивация, фактори на съдържанието, фактори на контекста

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