

ADAPTATION OF EMPLOYEES IN THE ORGANIZATION AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN TERMS OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Human resource management ('HR') is an important area of strategic management in the organization focusing on everything that affects people at work, specifically – their recruitment, shaping, functioning, use, organizing and interconnecting their activities, results of work, work skills and work behaviour. One of the important features, which is a part of HR activities and those which are often insufficiently addressed by the management of organizations is an adaptation of employees. This article focuses on the importance of new employees' adaptation as well as adaptation process and the roles of those responsible for adaptation.

KEYWORDS: *human resource management, employees' adaptation, adaptation program*

1. Introduction

Before a job position is filled, considerable effort and time is invested in the process of recruitment, selection and final hiring of an employee. It is therefore essential that the company creates the conditions for the new employee so that he can get familiar with *work tasks, working conditions as well as with working and social environment*. If the process of orientation and adaptation is managed the period of getting familiar with the above can be faster and more effective and it can also influence the nature of employee relations at all levels, i.e. attitude to work, organization, supervisors or other

members of a workgroup. It can be concluded that this is a response to the importance of paying attention to orientation, adaptation and introduction of the new staff member to the organization. However, this process is far from straightforward and incorporates a number of barriers. It is the *lowest possible rate of costs* related to the selection and adaptation of the staff recruited that is at the forefront of management. The related costs are:

- the costs of obtaining alternate (new) employees;*
- the costs of their introduction to the company (training, etc.);*

– the costs associated with covering the vacancy unless this position has been filled;

– the costs of increased supervision of the new employee and correcting his mistakes;

– the difference between the value of the employee for the organization and costs per employee in the form of wage/salary and benefits for employees [1].

In addition to the above mentioned economic assessment relevant to the recruitment procedure and adaptation of employees, the important component of this process includes following factors:

1. *Increasing the loyalty of employees* – a dedicated employee is an employee who is identified within the organization, he wants to remain there and is ready to work hard in the best interest of the organization. The first step to accomplish this is to present the organization as one that is worth working for and keep strengthening this first impression during the first few weeks.

2. *Compliance with the psychological contract* – creates an implicit, unwritten beliefs and assumptions related to behaviour that are expected from employees and on the contrary what employees can expect from their employers. It concerns the *standards, values and attitudes*. Psychological contract forms the basis for work relationships. The system of introducing new employees in the organization can show what the organization expects when it comes to standards of behaviour and values that employee should share. Introduction, orientation and adaptation of the employee in the organization creates an opportunity to inform people about the rules and standards within the company in order to reduce the possibility of misunderstandings, although they cannot be completely excluded.

3. *Accelerating the progress in learning* – new employees need to learn. In order to achieve the desired level of their performance it is necessary to devote some time to their education. It is evident that the length and intensity of learning vary, but it

is important to ensure planned and systematic learning from the very first day in order to maximize the contribution of the new employee to the achievement of the organization objectives.

4. *Adaptation to social environment* – new employees adapt and find their correct attitude to work faster if the process of their socialization goes smoothly, i.e. adaptation to the new social environment. Social aspects of work such as relations with co-workers are very important for people.

2. Introduction of New Employees into the Organization and Adaptation Process

In the issue dealing with adaptation and introduction of new employees into the organization it is necessary to briefly clarify its areas, content and objectives.

– *Adaptation of employees (in literature also referred to as employee orientation) is carefully thought out program of adaptation and educational activities that is specific for every sort of job position, every workplace and every organization. These are created for new employees (or employees who are changing their positions within the organization) in order to facilitate and speed up the process of getting familiar with their new tasks, working conditions, working, social and cultural environment as well as with knowledge and skills so that their working performance could reach the required level as soon as possible* [2].

Adaptation can also be defined as “the process of helping new employees to handle their new job in order to become applicable and productive as soon as possible” [3].

Based on the knowledge from practical experience it can be concluded that majority of mainly small companies do not have a formal plan for work and social adaptation. Training and development program for new employees is a similar case. Nevertheless, the processing of the

key points of the adaptation program is important. These points can, for example, include information on:

- *organization (history, achievements, objectives),*
- *co-workers,*
- *organization culture (values, standards, attitudes),*
- *job description and requirements for successful job performance of a new employee [4].*

Adaptation (orientation) takes place both *formally* and *informally*. The first is one provided by HR department and immediate supervisor, the second one is a spontaneous process usually secured by colleagues.

Areas of adaptation and their contents tend to be focused on:

– *Organization-wide orientation* – is common to all employees within the organization, focuses on communicating general information, and is shared by all employees within the organization, regardless of the nature and content of their work

– *Departmental orientation* – related to an organizational unit or working group and its task is to provide the given organizational unit, working group or team with detailed and specific information

– *Job position orientation* – with the differentiated content according to the nature and duties of a particular job position.

Because it is not possible to absorb all the information associated with adaptation at once it is necessary to have a *timetable*.

Introduction of new employees into the organization has *four basic objectives*:

- *to overcome the unknown,*
- *to quickly create a positive attitude of employees to the organization, stabilization,*
- *to achieve the required performance in the shortest possible time,*
- *to reduce turnover of employees [5].*

The above objectives can also include use of talents and innovative ideas of new employees.

3. Working and Social Adaptation and Its Basic Components

As explained above, adaptation of new employees focuses on *two* main areas. The first one is *working adaptation*, the content of which depends on the particular conditions of the job for which the employee is recruited and on his readiness to work. The working adaptation concentrates on *initial training* of new employees which forms the working skills of an employee according to the elaborated description and specification of the job position. The second is *social adjustment or adaptation*, which leads to integrating the employee into the team, builds social status and establishes good interpersonal relationships. The results of many studies show that the problem of social adaptation is usually more complex than working adaptation.

Adaptation process is not a straightforward process, but consists of several phases. The first stage is *an anticipatory socialization and a decision for the job*. Job-seekers come into contact with the organization for the first time in a process of *recruitment and selection* of employees. From the job-seekers' point of view this stage depends on his previous experience which reflects their values and attitudes (for example the value of education for the job position, the importance of profession in one's life – 'I work to live' or 'I live to work') and on expectations in the view of the job tasks and behaviour requested by the organization. On the other hand, the decision about accepting the work position is supposed to be made in this stage. During the decision-making process a job-seeker has to rely on the information about the potential work position, possibilities of career growth, etc. Based on various information, expectations from the organization, but also on the organization reputation, the applicant considers all the advantages and disadvantages and decides on the basis of uncertainty.

The second phase occurs immediately after *joining the organization when the employee is confronted with its own expectations and reality*. The first days in the new working position are marked by great uncertainty and can bring different, pleasant but also unpleasant surprises associated with *emotional burden*. These surprises arise from:

- little realistic information during recruitment procedure of employees;
- conscious and unconscious expectations from one's own personality;
- unexpected working conditions and one's own emotional response;
- mismatch between personal goals and objectives of the organization;
- culture shock, etc.

Before taking up employment both organization and a job-seeker tend to misinterpret information in more or less positive way. However, if there are a lot surprises after taking up employment, disappointment from reality occurs. This does not happen to new employees only, but also to experienced staff, especially if a new workplace is too different from the old one. A huge disappointment in the confrontation stage can lead to quitting the job or to a progressive dissociation from happening in the organization. Based on the practical experience disappointment among university graduates was most frequent. It arose from low level of participation in important decisions of their superiors, the absence of programs for career growth within organization and insufficient involvement of their own thinking during work performance because of the small responsibility. Realistic information policy helps to handle the confrontational phase already before taking up employment by providing a broader range of input information about the organization, products, services, tasks, organizational practices and values of the organization.

The third phase represents a period of development of individual strategies to

cope with the problems of adaptation. It concerns the *professional and social integration*, which means incorporation and integration of the new employee into the organization.

The employee needs to create his own way of fulfilling the work tasks in the new work position and building relationships with colleagues and competitors in order to reach recognition within his new working place. To achieve this, following is necessary:

- to get familiar with the work tasks, not only with professional content, but also with the related responsibilities and the scope of competence. The greater the space for individual activity, the more difficult it is to get familiar with the new situation. It is also very difficult when formal structures provide little orientation
- to produce results,
- to understand the standards and values of the organization so that the employee is able to adapt sufficiently to culture of the organization and could act effectively.

4. Responsibility for Adaptation of New Employees

Adaptation of new employees takes place as planned *formal process* provided by *HR department and immediate supervisor*, but also *informally* as a spontaneous process provided by co-workers. Its result should be practical familiarity with the workplace of the organizational unit to which the employee is functionally assigned, with staffing of the workplace and in particular with his major work tasks. The most important factor of the successful adaptation is an *individual support* for the new employee by the persons responsible for adaptation, especially *direct supervisor and work group* as well as *specialists of the management of HR department* and eventually an employee in charge of adaptation of the employee (*mentor*):

– *Immediate superior* is involved in the employee's adaptation mainly within the relevant organizational unit and workplace of the employee, he provides support to the employee, solves any problems during his adaptation and controls and evaluates the process.

– *HR professionals* incorporate the concept of adaptability of workers, create adaptation plans for each category of work positions and in cooperation with the immediate supervisor of the employee they specify plans for adaptation for a particular employee.

– *Mentor* or patron pays increased attention to the employee during the adaptation, advises him, trains him in the work performance and helps him with adaptation in the social environment.

Mentoring has three essential functions:

– *model function* (ways of mentor's behaviour are watched and partially copied)

– psychosocial support (acceptance and appreciation, counselling in problematic situations, friendly treatment),

– *career function* (challenging tasks and visibility of performance, introduction to the organizational micro policy, support for promoting staff, etc.) [6].

Colleagues, working group or team, which the new employee is assigned in, have a significant role in the adaptation process of the new employees. Bringing the new employee together with the working group is happening in the mutual process of adaptation of the new employee to the workgroup (assimilation) and adaptation of the workgroup to the new employee (accommodation). Co-workers may meet *the needs of social recognition and contacts* of the new employee. The stronger the cohesion of the working group and the closer the group acts externally, the more important it is that at least the influential members of the working group meet the new employees already in the selection process. This helps to prevent conflicts on

the basis of mutual antipathy and on the other hand it lays the foundation for a successful future relationship between workers and colleagues. With a new employee the positions of power and roles in the group are changing too. The unpleasant situations can occur due to excessive effort of a new member to fit in with the team. A new employee may be trying to succeed by searching for ways how to make things better or in a different way and needs to be useful. New worker experiences beginners' enthusiasm, he is very motivated and wants to be recognised within the group. However, this effort may be perceived negatively by permanent members of the working group, because they are used to their stereotypes – the procedures and changes are usually always associated with resistance. It is good to be aware of these facts in order to avoid unnecessary conflicts and misunderstandings.

5. Adaptation Program, Its Meaning and Content

Adaptation programs are developed especially in larger organizations. These programs contain a summary of formalized measures to promote professional and social integration of new employees in the organization. There is no universal rule for establishment the adaptation program and its implementation. Its final form depends primarily on the following factors:

– *demands of the job, scope of decision-making, control, etc.;*

– *the status of the job to which the employee is appointed in the hierarchy of the organization;*

– *the length of the adaptation process* is adjusted according to these factors.

Adaptation program should include, for example:

– adaptation plan,

– first interview with recruited employee,

– assignment of the employee to a particular position,

- initial trainings which are mainly aimed at familiarizing the staff with the organization's background and its tasks,
- provision of information pack,
- introduction of the employee with the working group,
- studying and mastering the general legal regulations and health and safety training,
- other qualification measures: training, participation in training programs, specialized theoretical knowledge development in his own department and with associated departments,
- compliance with specific job tasks,
- final evaluation of adaptation, etc.

An important part of the adaptation program is the information provided to the employee in the process of adaptation. For new employees it is quite difficult to absorb and memorize a lot of information at once in such a short time. Therefore it is recommended to prepare so called *information pack* for employees, in which employees can always find the necessary information. Information pack (or manual) is a set of written materials for the new employees, which in general shall introduce the organization, its structure and policies, working conditions, remuneration principles and the provision of employee benefits, etc. The structure of complex information pack includes *information about the organization*, for example: its structure, objectives, history, disciplinary rules, safety rules, organizational and work schedules of the company, etc.

Next there is *employee related information*, such as: information about material stimulation, working conditions, work regime, performance appraisal, staff training and career growth, etc.). Information about the workplace should be an inseparable part of the information package. This includes: description of work, its purpose and importance for the organization, its purpose and links to additional jobs, job description, and

information about the specific targets of particular workplace and work tasks and the like. It is important not to put too much information, because new staff may feel overwhelmed with all the information. Therefore, it is better to divide the data into more time units.

Human adaptation to the job in the new organization is not always a simple process. It is usually accompanied by many feelings in which a new employee raises questions to himself, such as *whether he can handle the task, whether the work team will accept him, what the career growth opportunities are*, etc. The answers to these and other questions are closely related to communication between the employee and his immediate superior from the very first day. Therefore good communication skills are required from managers, human resources managers, specialists for training and adaptation processes. *'Communication skills are part of social competence, good communication with people resolves conflicts* [7]. In this case it helps to eliminate many barriers that might encounter during the adaptation process of new employees.

6. Conclusion

Despite the fact that the adaptation of new employees stands between the human resources selection and staff development much less attention is devoted to it than to other human resources management, both in theory as well as in practice. However, controlled adaptation of employees contributes to the shortening of the period during which the employee does not reach the standard performance and is poorly orientated in the new working and social environment. It helps employees to develop a positive attitude towards work and organization and motivate them to work. Adaptation program is the first stabilization as well as educational measure by which an organization can contribute to the satisfaction of a new employee and to their engaged work behaviour.

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