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CHANGE MANAGEMENT ON EMPLOYEES' PERFORMANCE: A STUDY OF MTN NIGERIA IN AKWA IBOM STATE

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Abstract

This study examined change management on employees' performance: a study of MTN Nigeria in Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, the study investigated the effect of technological change on employees' performance of MTN Nigeria in Akwa Ibom State. The target population of (410) consisting of the entire staff of MTN Nigeria in Akwa Ibom. Therefore, sample size of (202) was derived from Taro Yamane formula. A simple random sampling technique was used and from the study, a total of 202 questionnaire was administered to the selected organizations, 64 questionnaire were lost while questionnaire retrieved was 138 with percentage ratio of 70.4% which formed the basis of the study. The data was analyzed using Z-test model to test the hypotheses of the study. The result revealed that technological change has a significant effect on employees' performance. Thus, the study concluded that change management has a positive effect on employees' performance of MTN Nigeria in Akwa Ibom State. The study therefore recommended that telecom companies in Nigeria are encouraged not only to adopt the appropriate technology but also always to respond to changes in technology and they are encouraged to adopt lesser layer in organizational hierarchy.

Keywords: *Change Management, Employees' Performance, Technological Change and Organizational Structure.*

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Change is what presses us out of our comfort zone and it is inevitable (Sidikova, 2011). Kitur (2015) is of the view that change comes in an organization in many forms: merger, acquisition, joint venture, new leadership, technology implementation, organizational restructuring, and change in products or regulatory compliance. The change may be planned years in advance or may be forced upon an organization because of a shift in the environment. Organizational change can be radical and alter the way an organization operates, or it may be incremental and slowly change the way things are done (Green, 2007). For change management to be successful and its impact positive, managers or supervisors in the organizations need to understand what motivates their team and enroll employee participation.

Fundamentally, organizational change emanates from two major sources such as the external and internal sources. The external sources could be as a result of improved technology, pressure from interest groups from outside the organization such as government or competitors in the industry. The internal source of change could be from individual such as shareholders, management, employees. Irrespective of the source, wherever change is obvious, the management is always faced with the question of how to respond to this change (Igwe, et al, 2014). In order to remain competitive, telecoms must be flexible to quickly react and adapt to external environment challenges. Due to the close interaction and relationship between employees and managers, there can be direct effects on a telecommunication performance when internal and external changes occur. Go and Pine (2005) state that rapid and unpredictable changes in customer attitudes and information technology makes the need to manage changes inevitable and that the ability to manage is the key to the long- term survival of telecommunication companies. Mullins (2009) also claims that factors such as uncertain economic and political conditions, changes in social attitudes, fierce competition, take over, acquisitions, technological developments and governmental interventions create an increasingly volatile environment for telecommunication industry and consequently they can only perform effectively through flexibility and responsiveness to change.

In order to compete globally, the MTN Nigeria has embraced change management factors such as culture, technology, leadership and structure which affect both employee and organizational performance. In on to remain competitive telecom industry has adopted leadership and organization structures known to every employee which add value to their performance, for instance customers value quality network. Also, leadership changes may influence employee performance. The leader as a person in charge or as a change agent can manage an organization or the process of organizational change more effectively and successfully if he/she is capable and competent (Asghar, 2010).

Change management on employees' performance concept grew out of the need to make some alterations within the organization in order to cope with the dynamic changes in the markets. Organizations are faced with threats of competition and changing employees needs which had to be met using different techniques and production models apart from the existing ones (Kotter, 2008). Change management on employees' performance can be reactive responding to changes in the macro environment, proactive in order to achieve the desired goal, continuous basis, or program by-program basis (Del Val & Fuentes, 2003).

Nowadays MTN companies witness dramatic changes at all levels (Tsekoa, 2002; Garber, 2013). There are many drivers for change in the telecommunication sector; caused by technological advancement, fierce competition that has risen drastically in the last years, and the need to develop new services in the telecommunication sector. Telecommunication organizations need razor-sharp reflexes to cope with the fast-changing technologies and management skills. Therefore, change management is a vital tool to be adopted by the telecommunication sector to maintain development and growth. It is based on this premise that this study examined change management on employees' performance: a study of MTN Nigeria in Akwa Ibom State.

Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian telecommunication industry is fast growing in the country and this is continuously necessitating dynamic changes in organizational activities relating to structuring customer handling and product portfolio. The managers of these firms in this industry are continually on each other's toes trying to outwit others by devising new strategies which changes and at the same time minimized the cost of change implementation. Going by the number of participating firms in the industry as at year 2001 when the sector was deregulated and the few existing ones by now, one could not but be baffled. The conclusion one can easily draw is that many of these firms that have gone under not effectively managed the change that occurred in the industry which eventually swept them off. The poor survival rate indicates a fundamental lack of a valid frame work of how to implement and manage organizational change. This indicates that there is much to change management that needs to be learnt. It is on the basis of unassuming changes in the telecommunication industry that this study is carried out to unveil the hidden facts of how technological change is affecting this industry. When change is not properly managed, there is the tendency it affects employee's performance negatively which may result in total closure of the organization as it happens to many of the firms in the industry, or loss of valued employees or failure to meet financial objectives of shareholders and may eventually degenerate into customers dissatisfaction who could easily move to other competitors thereby affecting the overall performance of the firm.

Also, no matter the degree and content of the change, its implementation can still pose large problems for organizations and their staff. To get people to accept and implement the new methods of doing things is not an easy task. Most change can disrupt group work. Resistance can seem irrational and develop without warning, interrupting any activity at any time. Survival of the organizations will depend on the ability to adapt to change and to the demands of its external environment. Commitment to the objectives and policies of the organization, people's cognitive limitations and then uncertainties and fears, may mean a reluctance to accept change. Organizations may also find it difficult to make short-term, rapid changes in resource allocation and the very complexity of environmental influences may itself hinder rapid change.

Basically, mass layoffs and mergers and acquisitions seem to produce a host of negative psychological responses in the surviving workforces. Layoff survivors, for example, tend to become more insecure about their jobs, less likely to innovate and take risks, less committed to their organization, and less trusting of top management (Johnson et al., 2003). Similar negative outcomes, including increased anxiety and anger at the loss of old identities, have been reported for employees in companies that have merged or been acquired (Seo & Hill, 2005). In other words, the stress can be overwhelming when an employee is also dealing with a mental health issue such as anxiety or depression. In some organizations, constant change is the norm which may contribute to poorer mental health for some employees. Ideally, employee performance has been on the rise as a result of improvement and adoption of change management by most organization. This is because the change management influences greatly on employees and therefore if proper change is adopted and implemented, it results in increased performance of employees. This is simply because in every change proposal, there are always forces for change and forces against change (Sidikova, 2011). These have constituted serious problems to the communication sector and such motivated the study into unraveling the need for change management towards achieving employee performance and business growth.

Objectives of the Study

The prime objective of this study is to examine change management on employees' performance: a study of MTN Nigeria in Akwa Ibom State. Other specific objectives are to:

i. investigated the effect of technological change on employees' performance of MTN Nigeria in Akwa Ibom State

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to aid the study

$H0_1$: Technological change has no significant effect on employees' performance of MTN Nigeria in Akwa Ibom State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Change Management

Change is one of the difficult challenges that organizations face these days. Robbins (2003) defines change as making things different. Change is everywhere, it is unavoidable and it needs successful handling to make organizations navigate successfully through it (Davidson, 2002). Raftery (2009) stated that undergoing a new change is the most difficult matter and it is questionable of success and it always has enemies whom are beneficiaries from the old system.

Korir, Mukotive, Loice and Kimeli (2012) define change management as the effective management of a business change such that executive leaders, managers and frontline employers work in concert to successfully implement the needed process, technology or organizational changes. While Moran and Brighton (2011) define change management as the process of continually renewing an organization direction, structure and capabilities to serve the ever-changing needs of external and internal customers.

Burnes (2004) like many others scholars asserted that change is an ever-present feature of organizational life, both at the operational and strategic level. Due to its importance, change management is becoming imperative and needs appropriate managerial skills and strategy. For firms to survive, succeed and remain competitive in today's highly volatile and continuously evolving business environment, they must be able to successfully manage the change which is as a matter of fact a necessity. Even though there has not been consensus as to the framework for organizational change management, there seem to be an agreement on two important issues One, there is a consensus that change, being triggered by internal or external factors, comes in all shapes, forms and sizes. Davidson (2002) explains that change refers to an important difference in what was before, it can include doing work in new ways, using new tools or systems, using new reporting structures, new roles in the job, producing new products or introducing new services, following new managerial procedures, merging, reorganizing or other unrest and change in job location or markets. Therefore, change management is taking a proactive approach about how the change is treated within an organization. Furthermore, Allena et al. (2007) emphasized that change management is not a process that stands alone for designing a business solution but it is about realizing human reactions and anticipating the best strategy to deal with these reactions. Change management makes it easier for organizations to achieve success in meeting demand and face internal and external challenges (Bashir & Afzal, 2011). Organizational change is affected by outside challenges that cause internal instability (Mou, 2013). The external changes from the marketplace can include loss of market share, competitors' acceleration in creating new offers, lower prices, and new business opportunities for growth. O'Neill (2012) states five driving forces that affect organizational change: A high degree of talent needed to solve problem in "high level activities", "mobile technology", the need of innovation, and distributed work that relates to the evolution toward less centralized organizational structures, location and work practices, and sustainability. Tang and Gao (2012) mentioned that to get confidence from employees you must respect them.

Other aspects to building trust with employees are that one must share information with them as much as possible. The researcher noticed that change reinforcement was not taken into account in the current change management practices. The researcher observed that there are no rewards and no recognition after change implementation to those who committed to the change. In addition, there is no celebration of the early success. This is related to the fact that top management and change leaders were not informed about the importance of change reinforcement in the continuity of this change. The absence of change reinforcement leads to difficulties in involving individuals in the change.

Employees' Performance

Employee performance is vital for the success of every organization and profitability in this dynamic environment. Nowadays organization requires such type of employees who contribute more than their job scope and far from goals expectations. Most of the organizations managing with contemporary challenges put more emphasis on employee performance.

According to some authors, service firms like the telecom sector invest more on their work force to maintain long term relationship with them and to increase their performance along with job satisfaction. Downsizing, mergers, innovations and restructuring of the organizations usually decrease employees' performance. In additions to that, task, quantity and quality, changing location and time constraints radically affect the work life of employees. Nowadays, many companies are facing current challenges and need to put more concentration on increasing employees' performance. Hence, to connect in valuable performance, managers need to let employees have more power to design their jobs and roles. Thus, employees will find their jobs more fit between employees' needs, skills and values. The deficiencies of employee performance will be overcome by effective leadership, communication, motivation, employee development, tolerance to change, procedural justice, and organizational culture. Some of the following effects may occur on employees' performance due to an organizational change (Georges, 2015).

Mental Stress: Organization change, particularly when the changes are broad in reach and several changes occur simultaneously, it results to increased stress-related prescriptions by employees. There may be many causes for increased stress levels, including perceived injustices or unfairness, lack of timely communication by management or fear of future changes.

Loss of loyalty: Many companies look to salaries and benefits as the first places to cut back when looking to make changes that involve cost-saving. When this happens, it is inevitable that some employees will leave the company to seek employment elsewhere. The employees that remain, whether they stay voluntarily or because they could not find employment elsewhere, are often resentful. Motivation decreases, taking job performance along with it. Employees lose their company loyalty and may even become angry enough to purposefully sabotage the company.

Increased time away from work: When organizational changes are announced, particularly when there is downsizing involved, employees generally divide into one of two groups: those who will attempt to control their fate and those who want to get out before the changes occur. The group taking control will usually dig in, increase their productivity, hit their deadlines and do everything they can to shine in front of their managers hoping they will sail through the changes with their job intact. The remaining employees cope with the changes by avoiding them. You may see these employees taking longer lunch hours, coming in later and leaving earlier or simply not coming into the office at all. Whether they are looking for new jobs or simply avoiding the office, expect to see an increase in employee sick days while you carry out the organizational changes.

Life changes: Some organizational changes require major restructuring, resulting in sweeping life changes for many employees. Typical changes that negatively impact a portion of the employees are salary cuts, loss of benefits, downgrading in job position, job loss or relocation to another city, state or country. These can be devastating changes to employees, particularly those who are supporting families. The best way to handle these changes while keeping the morale up of the remaining or unaffected employees is by communicating with all the employees every step of the way and treating the affected employees with fairness and compassion.

Theoretical Framework

Contingency Theory

Contingency theory is a behavioral theory that claims that there is no single best way to design organizational structure. The proponent of the contingency theory was Joan Wood (1956) who argued that technologies directly determine organizational attributes such as span of control, centralization of authority, and the formalization of rules and procedures to be followed by employees. The theory found that there are many variations in organization structure associated with differences in manufacturing techniques which bring considerable change to employees‟ performance. Contingent theory is based upon various constraints in an organization. The constraints may include the size of the organization, how to adapt to its environment, differences among resources and operations activities, managerial assumptions about employees' strategies.

In this study, the contingent variable is focused on and anchored on managerial assumptions about change on employees and the performance as a constraint variable. This approach to the study of organizational behavior in which explanations are given as to how contingent factors such as technology, culture and the external environment influence the employees and functions of organizations for meaningful changes clearly shows that for performance-based results employees must be fully engaged. The assumption underlying contingency theory is that no single type of organizational structure is equally applicable to all organizations. Rather, organizational effectiveness is dependent on a fit or match between the type of technology, environmental volatility, the size of the organization in terms of human capital, the features of the organizational structure and its information system.

Contingency theory identifies each contingency factor of which the structure under consideration is dependent upon (Donaldson, 1996). Task uncertainty is the most studied contingency factor. The factor is a focal point since it involves employees for meaningful change to be realized. Pennings (1992) argues if the organization is concerned with a lot of uncertain tasks than the organization is less centralized and instead more richly joined structures are necessary in order to generate and communicate the larger amount of knowledge and communication to employees' remarkable performance. In contrast if an organization is very certain about their tasks, the tasks get more centralized. Another contingency factor is size.

Empirical Review

Technological Change and Employees' Performance

Wanza and Nkuraru (2016) assessed the effects change management on the performance of employees a case of University of Eldoret, Kenya. The study adopted a case study research design. The target population was 403 employees. A sample size of 121 employees was selected using simple random sampling technique. Primary data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules. Analysis was done using descriptive statistics and presented using graphs and tables. The study found that structural changes and organizational leadership influenced university employees' performance positively. The study further revealed that technological changes have a great impact on employees' performance due to the rapid technological changes that the world is rapidly adjusting that eases employee's work load and to increase efficiency and effectiveness at work place. A strong organizational culture creates synergy and momentum that encourages teamwork and enhances employee performance. The study concluded that structural changes, leadership, technology and organizational culture influence the performance of employees positively.

Okeke, Oboreh, Nebolisa, Esione and Ojukwu (2019) examined change management and organizational performance in manufacturing companies in Anambra State, Nigeria. Relevant conceptual, theoretical and empirical literatures were reviewed. This study was anchored on organizational change and Lewin`s Three Step Model. Descriptive survey design was adopted, and primary data was employed. The population for the study was 286 employees working at the selected manufacturing companies in Anambra State. The entire population was used as the sample size for this study. The major instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire. Content Validity was adopted, and the test-retest method was used to test reliability of the research instrument. The study found that technological changes have a positive significant effect on organizational performance in manufacturing companies. Change management strategies have a positive significant effect on organizational performance in manufacturing companies in Anambra State. Leadership changes have a positive significant influence on organizational performance in manufacturing companies in Anambra State. The study concluded that change management has a positive significant effect on organizational performance in manufacturing companies in Anambra state.

METHODOLOGY

In order to attain the earlier stated objectives, a survey was carried out on MTN Nigeria in Akwa Ibom State. The whole population of all the MTN offices is 410. However, Taro Yamane formula was used to determine the sample size of 202. Thus, a total of 202 questionnaire was allotted to the staff in the study' which served as the respondent of this study. A stratified sampling approach was used in this study. This approach was used due to the fact it gives the respondents equal chance of being selected. The independent variable (change management) was measured in terms of technological change and organizational structure. The test-retest reliability was used to test the internal consistency of the research instrument and the instruments were deemed to be reliable with a Cronbach alpha value of 0.947 and 0.959 respectively. The dependent variable (employees' performance) was measured with a set of 8 items. The reliability of the items for employee's performance gave a Cronbach value of 0.963. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from, 5 - "Strongly Agreed", 4- "Agreed", 3 - "Undecided", 2 - "Disagreed" and 1 - "Strongly Disagree". Z-test model was used in analyzing the earlier state hypotheses via the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) model 22. Out of the 202 questionnaire distributed to respondent, only 138 (70.4%) copies were retuned and formed the basis of the study. The hypotheses test is undertaken at a 95% confidence interval implying a 0.05 level of significance

Data Presentation

Investigate the effect of technological change on employees' performance of MTN Nigeria in Akwa Ibom State

Options	SA	A	UN	SD	D	TOTAL	MEAN
Telecom management adopts modern technology and work in changing its operations to be digitalized	67	43	12	11	5	570	4.1
Technological systems used are consistent with the new and most advanced method of choice and supply	62	46	9	12	9	554	4.0
There has been great improvement in the hiring and recruitment processes due to adaptation to technological change	67	39	15	9	8	562	4.1
Technological change management can improve employees' performance and productivity	72	42	9	8	7	578	4.2

Source: *Field Survey, 2024*

Decision Rule

Where P < 0.05 = Reject the null hypotheses
Where P > 0.05 = Accept the null hypotheses

Table above showed the effect of technological change on employees' performance of MTN Nigeria in Akwa Ibom State. Majority of the respondents strongly agree that technological change management can improve employees' performance and productivity (x= 4.2), Telecom management adopts modern technology and work in changing its operations to be digitalized (x= 4.1), There has been great improvement in the hiring and recruitment processes due to adaptation to technological change (x = 4.1) and Technological systems used are consistent with the new and most advanced method of choice and supply (x=4.0).

$H0_1$: Technological change has no significant effect on employees' performance of MTN Nigeria in Akwa Ibom State

Z-Test on Technological change and employees' performance

One sample Z test

Z- statistic	P-value	Sample Mean
2.28142	0.02745	0.04275

Source: *Field Survey, 2024*

The result from the Z-test showed the effect of technological change on employees' performance of MTN Nigeria in Akwa Ibom State. The value of the Z-statistic was 2.28142 which is greater than 1.96 benchmark for acceptance level for z test. The sample mean is 0.04275 which is larger than the population size, with p-value of 0.02745 <.05 significance level. Therefore, the study rejects the null hypothesis and accepts the alternative hypothesis which states that technological change has a significant effect on employees' performance of MTN Nigeria in Akwa Ibom State. Majority of the respondents strongly agree that technological change management can improve employees' performance and productivity, telecom management adopts modern technology and work in changing its operations to be digitalized, there has been great improvement in the hiring and recruitment processes due to adaptation to technological change and Technological systems used are consistent with the new and most advanced method of choice and supply. The study of Wanza and Nkuraru (2016) found that structural changes and organizational leadership influenced university employees' performance positively. The study further revealed that technological changes have a great impact on employees' performance due to the rapid technological changes that the world is rapidly adjusting that eases employee's work load and to increase efficiency and effectiveness at work place. A strong organizational culture creates synergy and momentum that encourages teamwork and enhances employee performance. The study concluded that structural changes, leadership, technology and organizational culture influence the performance of employees positively.

CONCLUSION

Adoption of change management affects employees' performance in various dimensions. This study sought to investigate the influence of change management on employee performance. Change management was measured in terms technology, organizational structure, roles and responsibilities and leadership. Technology and organizational structure have a positive effect on employees' performance. Technology enhances quality service delivery to telecom customers and once a strong organizational structure is built, it will gain a momentum of its own and will help to allow people to feel valued and express themselves freely. The excitement and energy will end up being a positive influence that affects employee performance positively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

i. Organizations should develop clear and comprehensive communication policies that ensure timely and transparent dissemination of information related to changes.

ii. Firms should implement policies that mandate the involvement of key stakeholders, including employees, in the change management process.

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