Goal setting and Performance

Human Resources & Work Performance · https://psyasia.com/kb/goal-setting-and-performance/

Job performance is an important part in the survival of organizations. There are several factors which can affect performance at work, and goal setting is one of them. Usually goals are set to be specific measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bounded (SMART). Setting SMART goals is said to influence performance, and setting conscious goals has shown to affect action (performance).

Several factors within the goal have to be considered when discussing performance. For example, the difficulty of a task is related to performance. Atikinson (1958 cited in Locke, 2002) found that if a task was set to be moderately difficult (to complete), then the person displayed a very high level of effort. If the task was too difficult or easy, then the person displayed a low level of effort. However, Locke (2002) stated that the most difficult goals produce a high level of effort and performance. Performance decreased only when a limit of ability was reached.

Setting specific goals which are difficult has shown to result in higher performance levels compared with simply than telling someone to ‘do their best.’ Telling someone to ‘do their best’ allows for a wide range of performance levels which are considered acceptable. However, setting specific goals allows for a certain level of performance to be met and reduces the uncertainty levels in performance of what needs to be done. Consideration also has to be brought to the difficulty of the task. Even though some tasks are specific, they might be very difficult, which can also impact on performance. Several other factors such as commitment towards a goal, feedback and complexity of a task have to also be considered.

In relation to what is mentioned in this article, in order to increase employee performance, employers might want to consider setting specific targets for individuals (for example, selling 50 products in 2 weeks), rather than telling them do their best (for example, try to do your best in selling products). Of course, whilst the focus of this brief article has been on goal-setting, other factors, such as personality, perceived control, environmental stressors and so forth will impact upon employee performance. It is a matter of ensuring that management does the right thing in each of these related areas (rather than just one of them) which will enhance performance at work. Performance

can be assessed by way of effective performance appraisal systems which are based on thorough job analysis. PsyAsia offers training and consulting in both Performance Appraisal (360 and traditional) as well as job analysis.

Reference

Locke, EA (2002). Building a Practically Useful Theory of Goal Setting and Task Motivation: A 35-Year Odyssey. The American psychologist, 57 (9), p. 705.