Making suggestion system work

BY RAFAEL ISLAM

IN order to improve quality and productivity, employee involvement in the workplace has been getting increasing attention from the management. Some of the ways in which employee suggestions are being used are: a company-wide programme, team-work, brainstorming, and employee suggestion systems. This article will discuss only employee suggestion systems.

Suggestion systems are a vehicle through which employees can channel their ideas for work place improvements. More precisely, suggestion systems are the collection of processes used to solicit, collect, evaluate, adapt, or turn down suggestions. The objective of a suggestion system is to tap employees' innovative ideas.

Andrew R. Marx states: "Everything mankind has and will have in the future will not be the result of a man's imagination but of people's ideas...some of the more progressive companies in the history of modern management realized the potential value of their employees' ideas. The improvements in the general functioning of their organizations. They have realized that idea power is the most tremendous human force in the world."

Suggestion systems are a way of making sure employees' suggestions are heard. The system works by placing suggestions in an appropriate location. Employees should be encouraged to give their suggestions. Usually, a suggestion system solicits two types of suggestions: "tangible" suggestions that will increase the organization's profitability by eliminating all types of waste. On the other hand, "intangible" suggestions do not directly relate to profitability, they usually relate to items such as working conditions, employee safety, public relations, internal communication, etc.

Step 5: Evaluating suggestions. Training should be provided to the committe members regarding how to evaluate the suggestions. All suggestions are to be evaluated following a structured approach. The following criteria are usually used:

- Efficiency - How much benefit will the suggestion bring to the company?
- Feasibility - Is it possible to implement the suggestion?
- Effectiveness - How much money has been saved by others using the idea?
- Innovation - Is the suggestion original and not already in use elsewhere?

Sponsoring suggestion competition.

Step 6: Rewarding employees. To encourage employees to provide more and more suggestions, reward and recognition system must be in place. Employees, whose suggestions are implemented, must be rewarded adequately. Reward need not be only monetary; it could be as simple as recognition. Even modest praise will go a long way towards making employees feel appreciated.

4. In 1988, the US government saved $268 million as a result of the suggestion system.

5. Perhaps the most visible example of an employee suggestion system is the National Association of Suggestion System. In 1989, the Chicago-based non-profit organization surveyed its 96,904 members. The companies that had received 900+ suggestions were considered "beneficial and because of those suggestions the companies had been able to save $268 million. The companies paid $184 million to the employees as tokens of appreciation.

Tips for successful suggestion system:

- Start with a small group of employees.
- Provide clear instructions and guidelines.
- Encourage participation and feedback.
- Celebrate successes and acknowledge efforts.

The key to success is to create a culture where employees feel valued and appreciated for their contributions. By implementing a suggestion system, companies can improve efficiency, increase productivity, and boost employee morale.

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