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The assessment of motivating system adopted in Arvato Services Polska Company

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**STUDIA I PRACE WYDZIAŁU NAUK EKONOMICZNYCH
I ZARZĄDZANIA NR 4**

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**THE ASSESSMENT OF MOTIVATING SYSTEM ADOPTED
IN ARVATO SERVICES POLSKA COMPANY**

Introduction

Human resources management is an extensive issue that plays a significant role in the development of a firm. It is particularly important to motivate employees in such a way so that a company could achieve all the objectives established.

The necessity to meet certain needs determines the way employees act, while a belief that particular behaviour will make one achieve his/her goal starts motivating mechanism. Hence, meeting individual needs should be integrated with reaching the objectives of a firm. This bilateral relation, its essence and consequences depend mainly on the management board of a firm whose main objective is to influence an employee in such a way so that his/her behaviour would aim at satisfying both his/her own needs as well as firm's needs.

Influencing the employees in appropriate way requires most of all the creation of a proper motivating system. That is why, this issue has been raised in the article. The paper is an attempt to assess motivating system developed in Arvato Services Polska Company. Therefore, theoretical aspects of the creation of motivating system has been presented at the beginning. Subsequently, chosen elements of motivating system adopted in Arvato Services Polska Company have been described in a synthetic way so that the objective laid down could be achieved.

Theoretical aspects of devising the motivating system

Motivation, as a factor that determines and enables one to take certain actions, combines work carried out by people and objectives established by organization. As far as human resources management is concerned, motivation is understood as the ability to create readiness of employees to take certain actions¹ (Gomółka, 2005).

Motivation is inextricably connected with job appraisal. If job appraisal is not made, there is no motivation. On the other hand, job appraisal system defines criteria for assessing the work carried out that are a basis for job appraisal, and results showing how the job appraisal system functions, shows the way motivating system functions as well² (Gomółka, 2005).

Devising both motivating system and making job appraisals is time-consuming as it includes the following issues: establishing the objective, choosing the criteria, methods and subjects examined, proper training received by people making appraisal and people assessed, stating how frequent appraisals are going to be made, and principles according to which appraisal is carried out. Before designing the system, one should take several things into account, e.g. the character of work assessed, firm's mission, objectives, and strategy, its size, competence, the authority of people who make an appraisal, and tradition (followed in a firm) according to which relations between a boss and an employee are regulated³ (Golnau, 2005).

It is necessary to look into objectives both from the perspective of employee and employer, and to establish them explicitly. The objective cannot be too easy or too difficult to attain as the appraisal given to an employee could be lowered or raised then⁴ (Szałkowski, 2000). According to McGregor, the system ought to satisfy three main objectives⁵ (Pocztowski, 1999):

¹ *Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi*, red. Z. Gomółka, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, Szczecin 2005, p. 103–104.

² *Ibidem*, p. 109.

³ *Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi*, red. W. Golnau, Wydawnictwo Naukowe CEDEWU, Warszawa 2005, p. 316.

⁴ *Wprowadzenie do zarządzania personelem*, pod redakcją A. Szałkowskiego, Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej w Krakowie, Kraków 2000, p. 96.

⁵ A. Pocztowski, *Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi*, IPiSS, 1999, nr 1–2 (4–5), p. 143.

- administrative (as personal policy should be shaped on the basis of the results of appraisal),
- information (as appraisals provide information on weak and strong points of employees),
- motivating (so that they would be an incentive to improve labour effectiveness and personal development).

Working out a set of criteria adjusted to the objectives of a firm, one should bear in mind that this set must possess certain features. Criteria must be relevant to a long-term job appraisal, but at the same time flexible and adjusted to changing objectives of an organization and appraisal, as well as the importance of a position. What is more, criteria ought to be explicit and laid down in a comprehensible way, identical for all the participants in the process of appraisal, as well as dependent on an employee, which implies that the appraisal includes only these situations on which an employee has an influence⁶ (Golnau, 2005). It is possible to divide all the criteria that may be adopted into four groups, namely⁷ (Pocztowski, 1999):

- Qualification criteria aim at measuring knowledge acquired in the course of education and career, and experiences necessary to carry out work connected with a particular position.
- Effectiveness criteria measure results obtained by an employee, team, or the entire organization.
- Behaviouristic criteria are used to assess the behaviours of employees or groups of employees that can be observed at work.
- Personality criteria are psychological characteristics of an employee crucial from the perspective of work carried out and position requirements.

In the literature of the subject, there are twelve important principles that are a basis of a job appraisal system, i.e. a principle of appropriateness, universality, regularity, continuity, consonance, uniformity, simplicity, openness, flexibility, confidentiality, usefulness, and division into stages. Establishing appropriate principles, that are going to be followed and applied, will allow for making the appraisal in an effective way.

⁶ *Zarządzanie...*, op.cit., p. 323.

⁷ A. Pocztowski, *Zarządzanie...*, op.cit., p. 150–151.

Apart from job appraisal sheet, appraisal conversation is also a tool used both to assess and motivate employees working in the firm under consideration. It is extremely difficult to make such a conversation in a professional way. This technique is characterized by three formulas, one of which is “tell and hear out” formula that enables employee to take a stance on the appraisal. Thanks to this bi-directional communication and dialogue between a person who is appraised and the one who makes the appraisal, it is plausible to think about measures that ought to be taken to achieve objectives established. As a result, both employer and employee identify with decisions made during conversation⁸ (Listwan, 2005).

Designing the job appraisal sheet consists of selecting and training people who will make the appraisal. Before the appraisal itself, training must be organized so that mistakes could be avoided and people could learn how to act in order to produce the results desired. Employees should also receive a feedback on the results they have achieved, on what they have done in a right and what in a bad way, what they ought to do, whether they should do certain things, and how they ought to change their behaviour. Furthermore, they should also be able to refer to the appraisal they were given⁹ (Szałkowski, 2000).

A person who makes the appraisal, regardless of who he/she is, should possess several important characteristics that include both non-verbal skills (eye contact, or non-verbal incentives such as nodding, facial expression, the use of a silence, open posture), and verbal skills (expressing one’s opinion, concentration, verbal incentives such as voice modulation, asking questions, and eliminating any obstacles and barriers)¹⁰ (Adamiec, Kożusznik, 2000).

Making the appraisal, one should stick to the following principle: assess behaviours, actions, their effectiveness, forms, and methods. Job appraisal can never be the assessment of a person or moral assessment. Honest appraisal ought to make an employee feel he/she is important, has been noticed and appreciated¹¹ (Adamiec, Kożusznik, 2000).

⁸ *Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi*, red. T. Listwan, Wydawnictwo C.H. Beck, Warszawa 2006, p. 223–224.

⁹ *Wprowadzenie...*, op.cit., p. 96–97.

¹⁰ M. Adamiec, B. Kożusznik, *Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi AKTOR – KREATOR – INSPIRATOR*, Wydawnictwo AKADE, Katowice 2000, p. 184–188.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 174 i 184.

Many tools have an effect on motivation that employees have. Three groups may be distinguished, namely¹² (*Zarządzanie...*, 2006):

- means of coercion based on fear and punishment,
- means of incentive in the form of material or non-material reward,
- means of persuasion that affect one's intellect and refer to inner motivation.

Employees are also motivated and appraised by means of one of solutions used and planned in the scope of human resources management called coaching. This solution is treated as a modern method for improving the management and specialists. Coaching is understood as helping and managing the development of abilities and competence of an individual in a particular field. It is carried out individually by a coach. It is extremely important to create the atmosphere of partnership, listen and ask questions, as well as trust each other.

The method, that have just been described, has been adopted by Arvato Services Polska Company.

Motivating system adopted in Arvato Services Polska

Arvato Services Polska Company is a member of international media concern Bertelsmann AG. The latter is a pioneer of services and outsourcing solutions in Poland in the scope of direct marketing and financial services. Arvato manages call center specializing in multilingual customer service provided on the phone¹³. Motivating system of this company adopted with reference to the Consultant to Foreign Customer Telephone Service (non-managerial position) will be used as an example.

Motivating system has been created in the firm for a particular purpose known to all the employees. Obviously, the objective is dual since on the one hand, the results obtained within the system are directed to employees appraised, and on the other hand, to people who make appraisals. The consultant receives a feedback on work carried out. He/she knows what has been done right and what should be improved. Employers find it important

¹² S. Borkowska, *Motywacja i motywowanie*, w: *Zarządzanie Zasobami Ludzkimi. Tworzenie kapitału ludzkiego organizacji*, pr. zbior. pod red. H. Króla, A. Ludwiczynskiego, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2006, p. 336–345.

¹³ <http://www.arvato.pl/>.

to monitor the results achieved by employees and the level of work in order to improve the quality of work whenever the need arises. System results constitute information thanks to which immediate reacting is possible that is helpful in solving the problems that arise. On this basis, professional methods of customer service have been worked out in such a way so that the requirements of customers could be met effectively and peacefully.

Motivating system applied in the firm under consideration is mainly the job appraisal sheet that is a main motivator in the firm. However, there are also many other elements that make up the complex system affecting various needs of employees by means of many tools. Because of the modest scope of the article, only chosen elements of this system will be discussed, namely job appraisal sheet that provides detailed information about the quality of work carried out.

Monthly appraisal of each consultant is made on the basis of job appraisal sheet. This appraisal is expressed in per cents, and the results of particular appraisals are open, just like criteria and objective. Information obtained allows for concluding that appraisals made by means of the sheet used in Arvato are systematic and common. Job appraisal sheet consists of criteria, selected and grouped carefully, thanks to which the sheet is simple, clear, easy to understand and use.

Flexibility is a crucial feature of the system as it has been adjusted to a particular situation and improved many times within the space of many years. The newest sheet has been in effect since 2007 and further alterations are going to be made in order to improve its effectiveness and influence attitudes that employees have toward work carried out.

Appraisal sheet consists of four parts, each of which has a certain influence on the final appraisal of a particular employee. The first part, which affects the result obtained to the greatest extent, is a factual appraisal of a consultant. Another two parts of the sheet, i.e. discipline and effectiveness of work, have the same percentage share in the final appraisal. The last part of the sheet (team cooperation) has the least significant influence (yet usually decisive) on whether an employee is going to achieve a sufficient result and receive a reward.

Each part of the sheet is created on the basis of various elements out of which average appraisal is calculated for each part. Needless to say, elements differ in the influence they have on the percent obtained in the particular part

of the appraisal sheet. Each of the aforementioned parts will be discussed in the present article.

Factual appraisal includes monitoring and test on factual knowledge. The former has a greater impact on the result obtained in this part of the sheet than the latter. It is carried out by Training and Quality department and every employee must be assessed by this department once a month. During monitoring a person, who gives the appraisal, uses sheet consisting of seven parts. Obviously, each of these parts makes up final appraisal (each having certain importance). At first, the beginning of a conversation is assessed, i.e. greeting the customer and signaling one's readiness to help. Subsequently, identifying the problem is examined, i.e. if a consultant listens actively and understands the situation presented by a customer. The third part is divided into knowledge and procedures. Here, the most crucial thing is to provide a customer with relevant information, find the right solutions, and follow all the principles established in the firm. Then, the attention is paid to the end of conversation, namely final impression that a consultant leaves a customer with, so if he/she has solved a problem effectively, whether he/she has represented the firm well, and if he/she has ended the conversation in a nice and professional way. Other extremely important aspects are as follows: the way in which a consultant carries on conversation, telephone savoir vivre, interpersonal skills, and most of all the way consultant acts in problematic and difficult situations. The appraisal includes knowledge of a language as it refers to foreign customer service. Finally, a person who makes the appraisal pays attention to the use of tools. It should be highlighted that the sheet has been discussed very briefly without mentioning all the elements that make up particular parts.

The system of monitoring and quality control known as Verint gives a possibility of carrying out professional monitoring and coaching. This system is used to record conversations not only with the use of sound but vision as well. It also aims at assessing the professionalism of consultants who make these conversations. Thanks to this system, a trainer can play, by means of the Internet browser, every conversation whenever and wherever he/she wants, and also keep trace of actions taken by a consultant. Later on the trainer may offer a consultant constructive advice during coaching. This system is an element of a strict control of quality. Furthermore, it improves one's professional skills¹⁴.

¹⁴ Ibidem.

On the other hand, test on factual knowledge, i.e. the second component of factual appraisal, is sent to every employee via e-mail, and its results are recorded in the system. This test makes one extend his/her factual knowledge with new information issued on the Intranet, and also reinforce knowledge acquired during training and working as a consultant to customer service.

The second part of the job appraisal sheet, i.e. work discipline, refers to lateness and prolonging the break that are similarly important, as well as absences which have smaller influence. In this part of the sheet, just as in the case of teamwork, negative per cent is obtained that have adverse influence on the final appraisal. The per cent obtained depends on how many times an employee has been late and how much the break has been extended. Needless to say, the more times an employee was late and the more the breaks were extended, the worse the result achieved by a particular consultant. Absences are understood as not excused absences, leaves at one's request, and sick notes. However, it should be emphasized that a particular employee does not participate in motivating system if he/she has been absent for longer than ten weekdays or longer than eleven weekdays because he/she has been on a leave. This part of the sheet motivates one to be punctual and plan his/her leave earlier.

Labour effectiveness includes two quantities, namely AHT and productivity, both of which have the same effect on the appraisal in this part of the sheet. AHT stands for average handling time and is calculated by dividing the sum of time that all the conversations last by the number of these conversations. The result is obtained in seconds. The desired result, which ought to be achieved, and brackets, for which a particular consultant gets a certain per cent, are updated and made known every month. Productivity (given in per cent) is a number of calls received compared to the time spent on logging. What should be highlighted here is attention that the firm pays to employee's interest and concern for the result to be as fair as possible and not harmful to anyone. This fact is expressed by adding a particular percent of time during which a consultant has taken part in the training, talked with employer or carried out other tasks connected with his/her job and extra duties into the time spent on talking with customers. This addition increases the productivity of employee considerably and at the same time encourages him/her to perform extra duties. Both quantities aim at motivating an employee to make conversations in as effective way as possible, when all the remaining consultants are busy with talking, so

that the time customers devote to wait for connection is shortened. As far as all the consultants working in a particular language line are concerned, average productivity amounts to 70 per cent and this is an extremely satisfactory result.

The last part of the sheet, namely team cooperation, includes behaviour in the operation room and cooperation. Appraisal is made in accordance with the rules, employee's flexibility, involvement or the lack of group responsibility. These factors motivate one to keep the operation room clean and behave politely or to be interested in the future of the firm and participate in new projects.

Arvato Company has not established any standards or thresholds so that employees are not segregated and do not feel hurt by such a division. On the other hand, it is accepted that a consultant, who has achieved a result greater than 80 per cent, is considered a very good employee. Results that employees have achieved since 2007, so since a new job appraisal was introduced, is shown on Fig. 1.

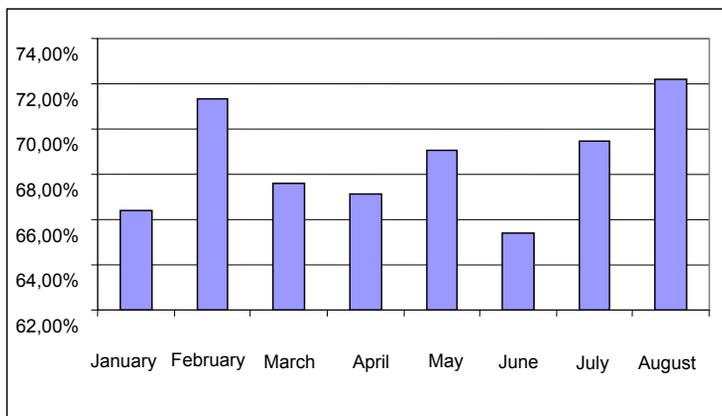


Fig. 1. Average appraisal achieved by employees working in a particular language line in eight consecutive months in 2007

Source: own calculations based on data collected from Arvato Services Polska Company.

Figure 1 shows an average appraisal achieved by Arvato Company employees working in a language line that has been selected in eight successive months in 2007. As could be noticed, average appraisal was subject to

considerable fluctuations from 67 per cent to c.a. 74 per cent. At the same time, no clear tendency can be observed as the average increases and then decreases. These differences result not only from appraisals themselves but also from a great fluctuation of employees. If the number of people employed is great, the average automatically decreases as it is hardly possible that new employees are given as high appraisals as people occupying the position of Senior Consultant.

Arvato Company is still developing and runs new projects so employees have a chance to be promoted both vertically and horizontally, and new employees, who will be trained to perform their duties, are sought. This process, just as any other, takes time. To wit, a new position was created (Customer Service Specialists) in September 2007 and offered to these employees who achieved results above the average in a long-term perspective.

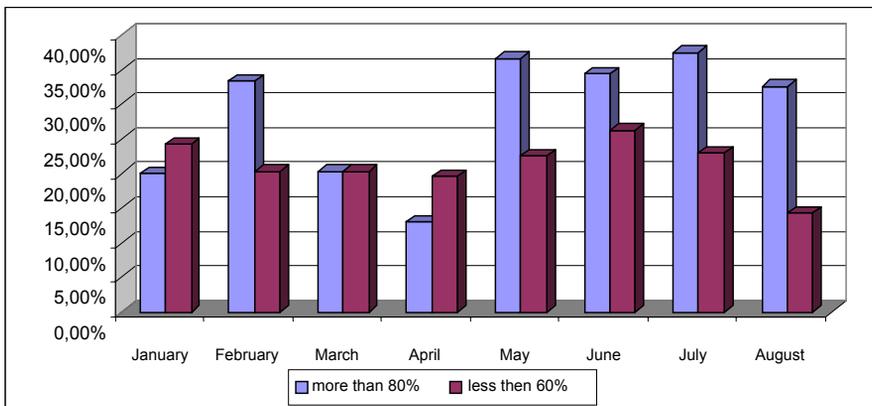


Fig. 2. The comparison between the percentage of consultants who achieved result greater than 80 per cent and consultants who achieved result smaller than 60 per cent in eight consecutive months in 2007

Source: own calculations based on data collected from Arvato Services Polska Company.

Figure 2 showed the comparison between the percentage of consultants who achieved a result greater than 80 per cent and the percentage of consultants who obtained less than 60 per cent. Taking August into account, c.a. 31 per cent of consultants under examination achieved more than 80 percent in motivating system, whereas c.a. 13 percent obtained less than 60 per cent. It turns out that

in the majority of cases, the percentage of employees who achieved the desired result is larger than the proportion of workers whose result ought to be improved. The percentage of consultants, who achieved a result greater than 80 per cent, exceeded 30 per cent in five out of eight months analyzed. Only in January, March, and April the number of employees, who obtained less than 60 per cent, was the same or greater than the number of consultants considered very good workers.

Figure 3 shows a difference between results achieved in the first and second quarters of 2007. As can easily be noticed, there are employees who are given very good as well as very bad appraisals. Data presented on Chart 3 confirm information about the fluctuation of workers. In the second quarter of 2007 (compared to the first quarter of 2007) the number of consultants working in a language line, that had been selected, decreased significantly. Appraisals given in quarters under consideration did not differ considerably, yet it should be emphasized that the average appraisal of all the employees examined was lower in the first quarter (compared to the second quarter) and increased from 64.62 percent to 68.66 percent.

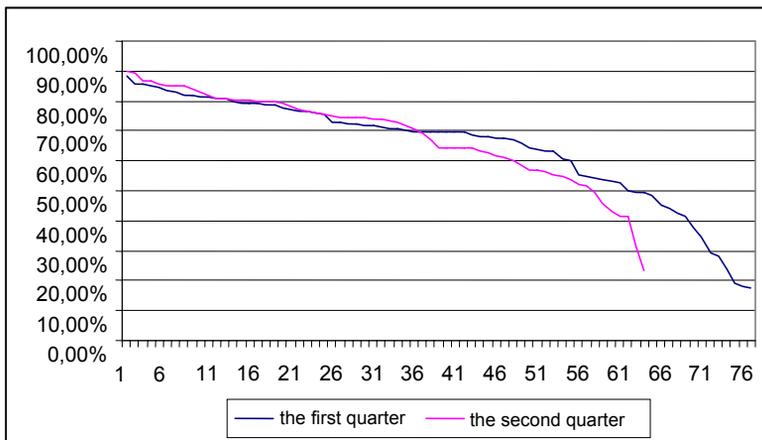


Fig. 3. Results obtained by consultants with respect to motivating system in the first and second quarters of 2007

Source: own calculations based on data collected from Arvato Services Polska Company.

Six persons who achieved the best results in the motivating system are distinguished every month. These employees receive material rewards depending on the place they have taken. On the basis of monthly results, a quarterly and semi-annual appraisals are made. Here, two employees are rewarded. A consultant, who achieved the best result in the motivating system, is awarded once a year. Rewards are financial (and not non-cash, like in the past). Result for a particular period is an average of monthly results. Hence, employee knows that he/she has worked for a long time to get his/her reward, that he/she deserves it, and that rewards are not given to randomly chosen people but to the ones who have kept high results for a long time.

As far as Arvato Company is concerned, appraisal conversation is also used as a motivating tool. Such a conversation is always made when a contract is going to be prolonged. The following aspects are taken into account during appraisal conversation:

- absences,
- exceeding the break,
- AHT,
- Monitoring,
- commentary bearing on the merits of the matter, i.e. the opinion held by Training and Quality department including information on knowledge of a foreign language, procedures, the way conversation is made, factual knowledge,
- coordinator's commentary, i.e. a general appraisal of a particular employee made by employer. Here, interpersonal skills that a consultant has, relations with co-workers, and personal characteristics are referred to.

Appraisal conversation is always made in the presence of another person, a kind of witness. At the beginning, employee is asked to appraise himself/herself and comment on the firm and relations found in it. He/she can also express any negative feelings experienced while working.

The article is going to refer to another important feature of Arvato Company, namely coaching. This method is not directly included in the motivating system yet it is a crucial element motivating consultants to improve the quality of work they carry out. Every consultant is asked to participate in coaching conversation every six or eight months. Needless to say, newly employed participate in coaching more often than people who have been

employed in the firm for a long time so that the quality of conversations they make could reach level desired by the firm. In this case, the conversation with a person who makes the appraisal begins with listening to particular conversations made by consultant appraised. Subsequently, employee appraises himself/herself and listens to remarks, not only critical ones, that the coach makes with respect to work carried out by this employee. During the conversation, a protocol from coaching is drawn up. It includes information about knowledge of a language, factual knowledge, knowledge of procedures, the way employee holds conversation or attends a difficult customer. The fact worth emphasizing is that the protocol includes goals achieved since last coaching (if it is another one in which employee participates) and goals that are supposed to be attained in the future. It is also very important that both sides, i.e. coach and consultant, sign the protocol. The entire process motivates employees to make efforts to improve the quality of conversations and informs them directly about what is good and what ought to be improved.

It should be highlighted that both individuals who fill in appraisal sheets, and coaches are prepared thoroughly. They participate in training and make use of principles and procedures for making appraisals and conversations.

Motivating system is used not only to reward the best workers. Such a system ought to include elements allowing for maintaining work discipline in the firm. Such means are called negative motivators, yet they have to be used in certain situations. A firm, which has worked out methods of prevention, may feel secure, just as Arvato Company that has devised such means although they are rarely or even never used. If a consultant violates procedures and this fact has been noticed, the first stage is warning and disciplinary conversation that usually brings about the desired effect. If no improvement in employee's behaviour is noticed, disciplinary conversation is held that becomes outdated after six months (if everything goes right) or so called List of Objectives is compiled for a particular employee. As the name suggests, this list contains objectives that an employee is supposed to achieve if he/she wants to keep his/her job. In the end, symbolic punishment may be used, i.e. reprimands and admonitions. However, such means have been used in Arvato Company only occasionally. If a consultant does not meet these objectives and disciplinary conversations do not help, such an employee may even be dismissed. The awareness of the fact that such system exists is usually enough for employees to achieve the best and not the worst results.

Conclusion

What one should bear in mind is the fact that motivating system plays a significant role in the entire process of human capital management in a firm. Effective system provides all the employees with information about objectives, procedure, dates and criteria followed in appraisal sheet the use of which help workers become better, and provides the firm with information used in shaping personal policy. Motivating system adopted in Arvato Services Polska Company is such an effective system.

The choice of criteria, used to appraise employees in Arvato Services Polska Company, results from objectives that are supposed to be reached by means of the appraisal. Criteria employed in the appraisal show areas important to the management of a firm and at the same time indicate what values are cherished in a firm. Working out the set of criteria is difficult and has a profound influence on the quality and effectiveness of the entire process of appraisal. Criteria adopted in the appraisal sheet used in Arvato Company are adjusted to the specificity of activity and support constant development of employees and therefore the entire company.

The conformity of motivating system (so appraisal system as well) to main principles allows for describing this system as ethical, fair, and objective. During conversations, issues relating to work are the first ones to be raised. Subsequently, issues connected with faults and virtues are referred to. What is more, employee is asked to appraise himself/herself and has a possibility of making critical remarks.

Arvato Company uses not only means of incentive but also means of coercion that, once combined, make up a varied system influencing various needs which employees have. It is obvious that every human being has a different value system, and the multitude of tools allows for reaching a greater part of these individuals by means of a praise or reprimand.

The main objective of motivating system adopted in the firm discussed, i.e. aspiring to constantly develop the quality of services provided, has been achieved beyond any doubt. At the same time, it is a source of feedback received by consultants, and encourages employees to perform their duties in a more reliable way. Furthermore, its results are used to award bonuses to employees and promote them.

All the aforementioned aspects allow for recognizing that motivating system applied in Arvato Services Polska Company is good. This system is flexible and adjusted to constant changes, which is its great advantage.

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