

Critical Motivation Factors among Project Managers to Achieve Successful Project in Malaysian Construction Industry

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Abstract

Motivation is inspiration that moves behavior and guide individuals to achieve desired goals. Motivation is very important especially to the project managers to ensure the commitment and interest towards job as well as professionalism and disciplined. Therefore, research has been conducted to identify the critical motivation factors among project managers to achieve successful sustainability growth in Malaysian construction industry. This research was started out by reviewing literature from journals, books and web pages. Surveys using questionnaires forms were carried out to project managers from G7 contractors firms' in Klang Valley. Analysis using descriptive analysis reveals that the critical motivation factors are responsibility, manager competency, compensation or rewards and salary, employee development, appreciation and recognition, personal development, empowerment, interpersonal interaction, task, general working condition, mental and physical strength and ability of the project managers to use project management technique for process planning. This paper provides an insight for critical motivation factors among project managers from G7 contractors firm to successfully sustain the growth of construction industry. Although the research was carried out in Klang Valley, the results may be applicable to other states as well.

Keywords: Motivation, Project Manager, Construction Industry

1.0 Introduction

Motivation is defined as catalyst that can move individual behavior to perform tasks as directed and achieve desired goals. According to Seiler *et al.*, (2012), motivation is defined as an internal driver which enable individual's behavior to become more positive. The purpose of motivation is to achieve organization goal and improve employee's performance. Motivation play important roles to ensure the employees have good attitude and committed towards their jobs to secure the production of productive, indirectly, employees will become more disciplined and responsible. If the project managers are not motivated, their work performance will down and construction project may encounter problems. The project managers which are not motivated will cause lack of communication with other project teams and lack committed towards job. The project manager should have skill in planning, organizing, controlling and coordinating construction activities. Therefore, there is a main concern for an organization to increase the project manager's motivation (Adams and Ruiz Ulloa, 2003; Kim, 2006; Watson, 1994).

Zarina, A. *et al.*, (2014) highlighted that if project managers do not know the criteria that would influence their goals set from the inception phase, then the project will not be successful. The main reasons of project failures are lack of proper planning. Therefore, it is essential for project managers to have ability, competency, good interpersonal skills and also professionalism to achieve project success. The aim of this paper is to identify the critical motivation factors among project managers in Malaysian construction industry. This paper will focus to the project managers that work in G7 contractor's firms in Klang Valley. This paper focused to the project managers that experienced more than five years in the construction industry. The questionnaire survey will be carried out in order to achieve the objectives of this research.

2.0 Problem statement

According to Hass (2007) cited in Seiler *et al.*, (2012) cited highlighted, despite the development in project

management, 65% of today projects do not reach their objectives. Productivity surveys conducted by DeMarco and Lister (1999) amongst more than 500 IT project managers and team members find that the absence of motivation is the most frequent cause of a project failure. Motivation is a central factor in successful project management (McConnell, 1996; Sharp et al., 2007; Verma, 1996). Germann (2004) and Wiley (1997) emphasize that managers and employees who lack motivation perform poorly, even though they may have excellent technical and project management skills.

3.0 Definition of Motivation

“Motivation” is originating from the Latin word “movere” which defined to move. It is an internal driver that activates and directs individual behavior (Sansone and Harackiewicz, 2000). It drives an individual by needs or desires to achieve something for example to get promoted or recognition. Batemen and Snell (1999); German (2004); Snell (1999); Woodall *et. al.* (1997), stated that without motivation, the potential will not be achieved even if the person has a talent in a particular field. Boehm (1981) highlighted that motivation can reach project goals. While Dwivedula & Bredillet (2010) stated that motivation is a thruster to organization performance.

4.0 Project Management In Malaysian Construction Industry

Project management has evolved over the past couple decades as researchers and practitioners have attempted to classify the causes of project failure and the various factors that lead to project success. Current project management practices of organizations in the construction industry do not always ensure project success. Project success greatly depends on how the project has been managed and controlled. Zarina A., *et al.*, (2014) highlighted in order to sustain the successful project, project management practices have always been mentioned as planning, project implementation, cost, time and quality achievement.

Bourne and Walker (2004) emphasized that in most organizations, project managers are accountable for the successful delivery of complete projects. Increasingly, this success depends on project managers’ processing and utilizing skills and competencies that may initially appear contradictory.

Therefore, a successful project manager must demonstrate flexibility and competency in many area, hard and soft skills, introverted and reflective, extroverted and social behavior. Many of the initiatives for improving the practice and profession of project management have been focused on enhancing techniques and method associated with skills that included effective management of time, cost and scope.

Project Management Institute in Malaysia (PMI) defined the discipline of project management as the art of directing and coordinating human and material resources throughout the life of a project by using modern management technique to achieve predetermined objectives of scope, cost, time, and quality and participation satisfaction. Tan (1996) pointed out project management concept and techniques can be applied to any project ranging from simple task. Almost any project requires the application of art and science of project management.

5.0 Project Managers’ Roles In Malaysian Construction Industry

The project managers play an important role in construction industry to ensure a construction project running smoothly. The project managers need to ensure project management strategy is efficient from beginning to the end of project. They should have a high knowledge, soft skill and personal characteristic to achieve successful project management. According to Zarina *et. al.*, (2012), the project managers’ roles and performance become so importance and made the project manager a key player in construction industry. Most project managers in Malaysia come from the wide range of professional discipline and no one individual from single professional can claim to be the Top-Flight ‘ideal’ Project Manager (Tan, 1996).

According to Zarina *et. al.*, (2012) the roles of the project manager are to manage the project process, manage the people or workers, responsible managing the works such as assist with gathering business requirements, help design database management system, and also write some of the project documentation. Manage the project process and achieve objective is very importance to ensure the successful sustainable growth of projects. Other than that, managing the overall schedule to ensure work is assigned and completed on time and within budget quality.

While Goodwin R.S.C. (1993) suggested, project integration as one of the key functions of the project managers. The project integration as the process of ensuring that all elements of the project such as task, subsystems,

components, parts, organizational units, and people fit together in an integrated whole that functions according to plan.

The responsibility of project integration requires the project managers to perform three key tasks. Firstly, the project manager has to implement an effective planning and control system for all the project activities. Secondly, all communication links within and outside the project need to be established and maintained. Dias W.P.S. (1990) has emphasised this point by suggesting that the project manager's major role is to be "a good facilitator especially regarding the flow of information." Various researchers have also established that a very large proportion of the project managers' time, more than 70% according to Goodwin R.S.C. (1993) is spent communicating with people. Such communication activities normally include clarification of project team's role and responsibilities, collection and dissemination of information, conflict resolution and agreement negotiations. Finally, effective project integration requires the project manager to act quickly to resolve internal and external conflicts before they start to threaten project budget, scheduling and performance specification. According to Ogunlana *et al.*, (2002) in order to meet the project objectives, the project manager is dependent on other people to accomplish project tasks within the frame work of the project schedule, budget, and performance specification.

However, Walker, A. (1996) mentioned that project managers need to recognise the power configuration in project. They need to recognise that power has a potential for influencing over others outside the legitimate authority structure. If such influences are seen to be harmful to achieving project objectives, the project managers need to work out strategies to deal with them. At the same time the project managers needs to avoid becoming paranoid over power which is easily done when working in complex organisations.

6.0 The Critical Motivation Factors of The Project Managers

Various previous researchers revealed the critical motivation factors of the project managers in various discipline area. The critical motivation factors been reviewed are as follows;-

- a) Interpersonal interaction
- b) Task
- c) General working conditions
- d) Empowerment
- e) Personal development
- f) Compensation
- g) Employee development
- h) Manager competency
- i) Appreciation and recognition
- j) Responsibility

6.1. Interpersonal interaction

Ferratt and Short, (1986) cited in Seiler *et al.* (2012), Dwivedula. R and Bredillet C.N. (2010), Zamecnc R, (2014), Campion (1988) identified having the interpersonal interaction is an essential motivation factor for project managers. They need to establish a positive communication with all involved people and they need to interact with individuals with different interests and at different levels. In short, they have to be able to manage human interactions within the project team as well as within and outside the organization.

6.2. Task

Secondly, critical motivational factors identified by previous researchers are task or work goals. Cited by Seiler *et al.*, (2012), Gallstedt, (2003) highlighted that projects are often said to be motivating due to their process related motivational aspects of set terms and clear goals. Identified by Campion, (1988), Dwivedula. R. & Bredillet C.N. (2010), Seiler *et al.* (2012) and Palm K & Lindahl. M. (2015) the task has a motivational component. If the task is seen as importance, interesting and understandable, it can create a positive influence on project managers' motivation.

6.3. General working conditions

Emphasized by Tampoe and Thurloway, (1993), and Verma, (1996) various incidents such as valuable resources being taken away, design loops going in circles, or prioritizing other projects may change or influence project goals, project processes, or the project organisation, increase the level of stress, and have a negative impact on project managers' motivation. In addition, Seiler *et al.*, (2012) stated that positive general working conditions,

such as getting the necessary resources, adequate work place, or job security are seen as basic necessary requirements for high job performance and have a positive impact on project managers' motivation. Hence, this factor was a content related motivator, the project managers are motivated when their needs for good working conditions are fulfilled. This factor was found by Seiler *et. al.*, (2012), Rusu and Avasilcai (2014), Gallstedt, (2003), Pheng L.S. and Chuan Q.T. (2006) and Zamecnik. R. (2014).

6.4. Empowerment

According to Seiler *et. al.* (2012) and Palm. K. & Lindahl. M. (2015) empowerment is one of the central motivators for project managers. The project managers' daily practice is often associated with inadequate resources, unclear objectives, lack of upper management support and changing priorities. In order to deal with all the pressures and problems possibly arising during a project, the ability to influence or make decisions and exercise leadership is importance for project managers' motivation. This factors included content related aspects for example desire to influence decisions in order to be able to achieve goals, as well as process related aspects for example being in charge or empowerment.

Walker, A. (1996) stated that people who feel powerless do not respond well in the organisational setting, do not provide the level of effectiveness required and often have negative effect on the achievement of organisational goals. To overcome the negative effects of powerlessness a positive policy of empowerment is necessary. The benefits of empowerment are claimed to be that it motivates people to face greater challenges that they would if they felt powerless. People are likely to accept higher performance goals and hence leaders are able to put such challenges before subordinates with a reasonable expectation that they will respond. People will be motivated to persist in the face of difficulties due to their increased level of confidence in their own abilities to influence events.

6.5. Personal development or career development

Seiler *et. al.* (2012), Rusu. G. And Avasilcai. S. (2014), Mader.N *et. al.* (2012), Zamecnik. R. (2014), Palm. K. and Lindahl. M. (2015) found in their findings that having learning opportunities in project work is an importance factor for employees to take over responsibilities in projects. Huemann (2010), found that the opportunity to offer learning opportunities through project work is a competitive advantage for organizations to attract employees. In addition, Turner *et al.* (2008) stated that project managers' work has to be linked to their career development, and that it has to help them to achieve their career goals. As such, this factor related to opportunities for further education, promotion, career advancement, professional experience, and personal growth.

6.6. Compensation

Previous researcher found that compensation factor which includes materialistic and non materialistic rewards as well as wages, has consistently been shown to have an impact on employee's motivation. The assumption is that a certain degree of compensation is importance for project managers' motivation as recognition for their willingness to perform under such challenging conditions. This factor was found by Seiler *et. al.* (2012), Dwivedula. R. And Bredillet C.N. (2010), Rusu. G. And Avasilcai. S. (2014), Hamid Tohidi and Mohammad Mehdi Jabbari (2012) and Zamecnik. R. (2014).

6.7. Employee development

Dwivedula. R. & Bredillet C.N. (2010) revealed from their research that employee development such as intrinsic motivation, job design, participative decision making, social learning theory and self management theory give impact to the employees' motivation. Employee development relates to the satisfaction of the esteem needs of the project workers. Further, the organizations create a sense of ownership towards the project among the team members by providing opportunities for their professional development.

6.8. Manager competency

According to Rusu. G. & Avasilcai. S. (2014) a competent project manager is vital to project success, and several studies have highlighted critical skills (Avots, 1969; Belassi and Tukel, 1996; Crawford, 2000; Sayles and Chandler, 1971) as one of project managers' motivation factor. Working closely with a range of other professionals, project managers organize, plan, schedule, and control the work and are responsible for getting the project completed within established time and cost limitations (Sears *et al.*, 2008).

6.9. Appreciation and recognition

According to Riley S. (2005) when the employee receives the acknowledgement they deserve for a job well done, the satisfaction will increase. If the employees work is overlooked or criticized it will have the opposite effect. This was supported by previous researcher; Rusu & Avasilcai (2014), Zamecnik. R. (2014) and Campion (1988), recognition it is important for employees to have a positive feedback from their colleagues and managers.

6.10. Responsibility

Rusu. G. And Avasilcai. S. (2014) and Zamecnik. R. (2014) emphasized that responsibility involves the degree of freedom an employee has to make their own decisions and implement their own ideas. The more liberty to take on that responsibility the more inclined the employee may be to work harder on the project, and be more satisfied with the result.

7.0 Methodology of the research

In order to achieve the objectives, the research has been conducted through several phases namely literature review, pilot research, survey, analysis and conclusion. A literature review was conducted encompassing all the various means available to obtain the widest range of the relevant information from books, articles and the internet related to the motivation factors among project managers.

Questionnaires were designed to assist in the survey to 108 companies out of 152 G7 contractors firms in Klang Valley, Malaysia listed in Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) website which were selected due to their past localized scenario. To improve the content and reliability, the questionnaires were piloted to eight (8) senior lecturers from Faculty of Architecture, Planning and Surveying (FSPU) Universiti Teknologi MARA, Perak. Based on these responses, minor modifications were made to instrument items to improve clarity and comprehension. Members of the pilot research assessed the content, style, format and clarity of the questions and after adjustment and corrections final questionnaires were derived.

The questionnaires form was structured in two (2) sections:-

- a) Section A: General information of the respondent and demographic data
- b) Section B: The motivation factors among project managers in Malaysia construction industry.

Section B purposely designs to determine the motivation factors among project managers in Malaysian construction industry. The questionnaires were mailed, faxed and emailed to the companies identified earlier. The process of sending questionnaires took almost 2 months to administer including phone calls to all of the companies to ensure the delivery of the questionnaires and only project managers with vast experience on project management exercise of high scale projects were only responded. A total of 42.56% of the selected companies were responded within the time frame was collected and then descriptive analysis was provided using the Statistical Packaging for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. The low response rate is because of the unwillingness of the project managers to involve in the survey conducted.

8.0 Discussion and Findings

The main findings presented below are based on the questionnaire surveys primarily related to section B. The critical motivation factors were listed and the respondents were asked to indicate according to Likert Scale 1 to 5 where 1 showed strongly disagree, 2, disagree, 3, undecided, 4, agree, 5, strongly agree. As shown in Table 1, the survey revealed that the critical motivation factors among project managers in G7 contractors’ firm in Klang Valley are responsibility, manager competency, compensation or rewards and salary, employee development, appreciation and recognition, personal development or career development, empowerment, interpersonal interaction or interpersonal relationship, task or work objectivity and general working condition or working environment. Those factors are similar to the previous researchers’ findings. In this research, the respondents were asked to state other critical motivation factors. Finding shows that 30% of them stated that mental and physical strength is also a critical motivation factors for successful project management. In addition, 20% of the respondents stated that the ability of the project managers to use project management technique for process planning such as Critical Path Method programmed to define critical and non critical tasks with the goal of preventing time frame problems and process bottlenecks. While another 50% of the respondents were not responded.

Table 1: Critical Motivation Factors

Critical Motivation Factors	Mean Score
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Responsibility	4.67
Manager Competency	4.63
Interpersonal Interaction Or Interpersonal Relationship	4.39
Employee Development	4.48
Appreciation And Recognition	4.45
Personal Development Or Career Development	4.46
Empowerment	4.43
Task Or Work Objectivity	4.37
Compensation or Rewards And Salary	4.52
General Working Condition Or Working Environment	4.33

As shown in Table 2, the most critical motivation factors among project managers in Malaysia construction industry is responsibility (Mean=4.67, Standard Deviation=0.47). It also can be classified as strongly agree by referring to Likert scale. The second highest ranked critical motivation factors was the manager competency (Mean=4.63, Standard Deviation=0.49). The third highest of critical motivation factors was compensation or rewards and salary (Mean=4.52, Standard Deviation=0.51). The fourth highest ranked was employee development (Mean=4.48, Standard Deviation=0.51) and then followed by appreciation and recognition factors, personal development or career development (Mean=4.46, Standard Deviation=0.50), empowerment factor (Mean=4.43, Standard Deviation=0.50), interpersonal interaction or interpersonal relationship factor (Mean=4.39, Standard Deviation=0.49) and task or work objectivity (Mean=4.37, Standard Deviation=0.49). The lowest ranked motivation factor was general working condition (Mean=4.33, Standard Deviation=0.47).

Table 2: Critical Motivation Factors Ranked According to Mean Score

Critical Motivation Factors	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Rank
Responsibility	4.67	0.47	1
Manager Competency	4.63	0.49	2
Compensation or Rewards And Salary	4.52	0.51	3
Employee Development	4.48	0.51	4
Appreciation And Recognition	4.45	0.50	5
Personal Development or Career Development	4.46	0.50	6
Empowerment	4.43	0.50	7
Interpersonal Interaction or Interpersonal Relationship	4.39	0.49	8
Task or Work Objectivity	4.37	0.49	9
General Working Condition or Working Environment	4.33	0.47	10

9.0 Conclusion

The results of this research determine that responsibility, manager competency, compensation or rewards and salary, employee development, appreciation and recognition, personal development or career development, empowerment, interpersonal interaction or interpersonal relationship, task or work objectivity and general working condition or working environment are critical motivation factors for project managers in G7 contractors' firms in Klang Valley. However, another two (2) factors are also revealed during research been conducted which are mental and physical strength and the ability of the project managers to use project management technique for process planning such as Critical Path Method programmed to define critical and non critical tasks. These two (2) factors should take into consideration by the employers to increase their motivation towards achieving successful project management. Due to low rates of response, this research should be expanded to more involvement of project managers especially to other states of Malaysia. However, the implication of the research is, it helps the employers to increase the motivation among project managers as their responsibility to achieve successful project management.

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