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THE ROLE OF CROSS-TRAINING IN REDUCING THE LEVEL OF LABOR TURN OVER APPLIED STUDY ON SOME HOTELS IN TRIPOLI - LIBYA

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Abstract

Cross-Training is an effective training technology which results in employee motivation and problem-solving. A good cross-training plan can encourage employees to learn more about all sides of the business and is able to jump in to help anytime, anywhere when other departments need to be supported. The tourism industry is a labor-intensive service industry dependent for survival and competitive advantage on the availability of good quality personnel to deliver, operate and manage the tourist product. Cross-training is presented as a learning opportunity whose main purpose is to build employee motivation, reduce turnover and increase productivity for industries. The interaction between tourist and tourism industry personnel is an integral part of the total tourist experience. Generally speaking, hospitality industry has one of the highest levels of skill shortages and Libya is no exception. This paper focuses on skills relating to cross training in hotels industry. The paper considers the key arguments from Libya's perspective in the context of hotels industry regarding cross training and its effect on labor turnover. Three hotels have been selected for the study by distributing and collecting questionnaire on 91 employees. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. Both hypothesis of the study were tested. The first one indicated that there is a negative relationship between the level of per capita income and labor turnover and the other one tested if cross training has an effect on labor turnover rates. The effect of employee's income on labor turnover has been tested, in order to find out if employees' income is the only factor effects labor turnover, or cross training is another factor which has its effect on labor turnover too. Labor turnover average in selected hotels illustrated. Justifications of labor turnover will be tested and solutions for reducing labor turn over will be presented.

Keywords: cross-training, labor turnover, hotels, employees' income, Libya.

JEL Classification: L83

Introduction

Libya has an extensive and varied range of tourism resources that are spread widely throughout the country. These include attractive natural features and many different landscapes of the vast Libyan desert, human achievements in the form of buildings, town, art history as well as modern man-made attractions etc. These unique attractions need the

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provision of additional facilities to improve the presentation and interpretation at the major sites as well as leisure facilities to improve visitor comfort (WTO, 1998). All hotels, beach resorts and restaurants should be staffed with skilled managers and technical services personnel to be more familiar with customers' needs and wants, help them to handle their enquiries and complaints as well as to meet an international standard of skills that cross training brings (Abuharris, 2005).

Training is planned effort to provide employees with specific skills to perform their present jobs. Effective training can increase business income, make employees confident to perform their professional skills successfully and take their responsibilities efficiently for industries. Poor, inappropriate, or inadequate training can be a source of frustration for everyone involved. Cross training is a method of training in which employees are assigned to different jobs to expand their skills base and to learn more various parts of the organization (Hsin, James and Marc, 2005).

Simply speaking, cross training involves moving trainees from one job to another. For example, housekeeping can cross-train in front office and vice-versa; front office in marketing, sales, public relations, food & beverage, banquets, security; marketing & Sales in front office, food & beverage, purchasing; food & beverage service in the culinary department and vice versa. Moving human resources in different departments and vice versa. It can benefit workers since cross training is the chance for entry-level workers to learn a new skill and see how work is performed in many different jobs. In addition, it could be potential to lead to a promotion.

Employees are considered an important input for the production and delivery of services. Understanding what motivates employees would play an important role in gaining competitive advantage. This is also a well known fact that motivation is an essential element in attaining quality (Juran, 1992: 4).

1. Turnover - A serious labor problem

Turnover can be defined as each time a position is vacated, either voluntarily or involuntarily, a new employee must to be hired and trained. The replacement cycle is known as Turnover (Woods, 2002).

Typically speaking, it takes about a year for a new manager to become fully productive. Table no. 1 shows the number of labor turnover in the hotels which entered the study. Due to the circumstances the country has been through during the new revolution hotels opening hours were not stable, in addition to low rooms rate, the researcher decided to collect the information listed in Table no. 1 during the years 2009, 2010.

If employees are not satisfied, they will not perform to expected norms. Workplace dissatisfaction and poor performance usually lead to high employee turnover in the hotel industry (Lam et al, 2001). Balta (2006) reported that in order to reduce labor turnover and retain productive employees, management has to improve working conditions and keep the employees properly motivated. Cross training is considered as motivated element may help to reduce labor turnover and increase employees loyalty.

Table no. 1: labor turnover average in the hotels entered the study

Hotel Name	Job title	Number of employees	Labor turnover (2009)	Labor turnover (2010)
Alwadan (Foreign)	Front office	14	3	7
	Cook	28	4	6
	Water	36	8	10
	Kitchen Cleaner	16	3	4
	Roommate	42	14	12
	Maintenances	14	0	0
	Security	24	4	0
	Porter	5	2	3
	Accountant	8	1	0
	Manager	5	4	5
Babalbahar (Public)	Front office	15	0	1
	Cook	25	8	2
	Water	63	21	7
	Kitchen cleaner	21	3	3
	Roommate	41	7	3
	Maintenances	30	2	0
	Security	34	4	0
	Porter	6	0	0
	Accountant	18	0	0
	Manager	6	1	0
Alfsoal alarbia (Private)	Front office	5	3	3
	Cook	2	1	1
	Water	2	0	0
	Kitchen cleaners	2	1	1
	Roommate	5	5	5
	Maintenances	1	0	0
	Security	3	3	3
	Porter	1	0	0
	Accountant	1	0	0
Manager	1	0	0	

Source: field study using face to face interview

Turnover is a big labor problem that hospitality managers must cope with. According to the National Restaurant Association, median turnover for the restaurant industry is between 90 percent and 130 percent annually, depending on the type of restaurant. One hotel operator reports that most departing employees are room attendants, food service, and bus help, and nearly half of them leaving during the first two weeks of employment. One result of this high turnover rate is that many hotel and restaurant employees are not well trained or experienced enough to provide the quality of service customers expect (Angelo and Vladimir, 1998). Also, the 1997 American Hotel and Lodging Function survey on turnover, the largest study of this kind ever conducted, found that employee turnover in the lodging industry was about 50.4 percent annually overall. Turnover varies by region, by segment,

and by company, but the lodging industry turnover rate is about five times the average of all industries in the United States (Woods, 2002).

2. The Importance of Cross Training

There is no doubt that trained employees have higher productivity than new employees do. For example, trained employees could serve more tables and sell more items than do trainees. Studies found that it takes about three months for a new employee to reach the level of productivity of a trained employee (Angelo and Vladimir, 1998). According to Hinkin (1995), approximately 68 percentage of money is spent on the salaries of training personnel. A research conducted by the American Society for Training and Development showed that employer-provided training is on the rise in terms of the amount of money invested and the percentage of employees being trained. Today, 37 percentage of hospitality companies' list training is as a line item in budget (Woods, 2002).

The principles of effective training dictate that training needs to be tailored to suit individual needs. If these principles are followed and understood the following benefits can be obtained which may result in reducing labor turnover (Hsin, James and Marc, 2005): Minimize learning costs; Improve individual, team and corporate performance in terms of output, quality, speed and overall productivity; Improve operational flexibility by extending the range of skills possessed by employees (multi skilling); Attract high quality employees by offering them learning and development opportunities increasing their levels of competence and enhancing their skills thus enabling them to obtain more job satisfaction to gain higher rewards and to progress within the organization; Increase the commitment of employees by encouraging them to identify with the mission and objectives of the organization; Help to manage change by increasing understanding of the reasons for change and providing people with the knowledge and skills they need to adjust to new situations; Help develop a positive culture in the organization, one for example that is orientated towards performance improvement; Provide higher levels of service to customers (Hsin, James and Marc, 2005).

The effect of management training at the top filters can be downward throughout the entire organization where well trained staffs build stronger teams of employees, in turn leading to better financial results.

3. Types of Cross-Training

Cross training can be used in almost any position in almost any industry. For instance, He cross trained some of his design engineers to go on field installation trips and get first hand knowledge of how their designs worked, or didn't work, in the field. He emphasized, "Cross training is good for managers, because it provides more flexibility in managing the work force to get the job done. However, done right, cross training is good for the employees too. It lets them learn new skills, makes them more valuable, and can combat worker boredom." Cross training brings an effective and efficient effect for the entire organization where well-trained staff builds up stronger teams of employees, in turn leading to better financial results.

Cross training is divided into three types on the basis of the depth of information provided. The three types of cross training are positional clarification, positional modeling, and positional rotation.

- **Positional Clarification**

Positional clarification is a form of awareness training aimed at providing employees with general knowledge of each worker's general position and associated responsibilities. The end result is knowledge about the overall department's structure or architecture and knowledge about the general responsibilities of each worker's respective role and the general requirements of the department. Training methods for positional clarification include discuss, lecture, and demonstration (Cannon, Janis and Salas, 1998).

- **Positional Modeling**

Positional Modeling is a training procedure in which the duties of each employee are discussed and observed. The emphasis is on direct observations, so positional modeling provides details beyond what is learned in positional clarification. Positional modeling provides detail information involving the general dynamics of the department, knowledge about each worker's duties, and an understanding of how those duties relate to and affect those of the other employees. This method, behavior observation has been used successfully to teach concrete behavior such as how to operate equipment, assemble a machine, and perform a surgical procedure (Cannon, Janis and Salas, 1998).

- **Positional Rotation**

Positional rotation provides employees with a working knowledge of each worker's specific tasks and how those tasks interact through direct, hand-on practice. The method is similar to job rotation in that workers gain first-hand knowledge and experience in the specific tasks of other departments. The goal is for employees to gain improved understanding of the interaction between departments and to develop different perspectives of tasks. Ideally, employees can be trained in those tasks that demand cooperation and high interdependencies among departments (Cannon, Janis and Salas, 1998).

Varies Cross Training involves in Varies industries. Position rotation involves moving trainees from one job to another. This training method is widely used in training hospitality managers (Woods, 2002). Many of whom spend a certain number of weeks in each job before assuming their managerial duties. An advantage of position rotation is that trainees can see how work is performed in many different jobs. Trainees also get to know the employees in each position involved in their position.

4. Methodology

Participants for this study were employees of three different hotels: Bab albahair Hotel (five stars/ public) Four season Hotel (four stars/ private), Alwadan Hotel (five stars/ foreign investment). Those hotels have been identified as well-known in Tripoli. A self-administered questionnaire was constructed to obtain the required data. The preparation of the questionnaire began with a review of literature. The relevant literature, survey instruments used by past studies, and information derived from the particular hotel's human resources manager and the academia provided the basis for developing the questionnaire. The insight drawn from the analysis of the pilot study that took place in the first phase of

the research was also taken into account. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part of the questionnaire contained questions relating to socio-demographic data about the participants. The second part was designed to gather information about the role of cross training in reducing labor turnover at the above mentioned hotels. Ten factors were listed in the questionnaire to find out about the employees point of view regarding cross training and its effect on labor turnover. An ordinal scale of 1 = No 2 = Not Sure, and 3= Yes was used in this part of the questionnaire.

• Procedure

Before commencing the application of the questionnaires, contact was made with senior personal of the hotels and permission granted for the researcher to visit the hotel and distribute the questionnaires. First, a pilot test was undertaken to ensure that the wordings of the questionnaire were clear. The main study was conducted during two weeks in May, 2013. The target population of the study was full time employees who worked in these particular hotels during the data collection period. The questionnaires were distributed among them. A convenience sampling approach was employed and (91) questionnaires were distributed to the employees who inclined to take the questionnaires. All questionnaires were completed and upon completion were returned to researcher. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data.

• Data analysis and findings

Hypothesis of the study tested using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) as follows:

Hypothesis (1) : There is a negative relationship between the level of per capita income and labor turnover.

Table no. 2: Shows the relationship between the level of monthly income and labor turnover

Labor turnover	Level of monthly income		
-0.568(**)	1	Pearson Correlation	level of monthly income
0.000		Sig. (2-tailed)	
91	91	N	
1	-0.568(**)	Pearson Correlation	labor turnover
	0.000	Sig. (2-tailed)	
91	91	N	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: field study

Table no. 2 shows that the value of the correlation coefficient is -0.568 which suggest that there is a negative relationship between the level of monthly income and labor turnover, The value of statistical significance is 0.000 which It refers to the significant relationship.

To test hypothesis (2) the following scale has been used:

Table no. 3.a: The length of the scale cells

The direction of opinion	Mean
No	1 – 1.66
Not Sure	1.67 – 2.33
Yes	2.34 - 3

Hypothesis(2) : Cross training has an effect on labor turnover rates.

Table no. 3.b: Statistical Description for Cross-Training and labor turnover pivots

Questions	Yes		Not Sure		No		Mean	Std. Deviation	direction of opinion
	Percent %	Frequency	Percent %	Frequency	Percent %	Frequency			
Received training on the practice of other works in the field of specialty in addition to my current.	51.6	47	20.9	19	27.5	25	2.24	0.86	Not Sure
You exercise more than a specialized function in the field during my time in hotel.	38.5	35	31.9	29	29.7	27	2.09	0.83	Not Sure
Training on more than one function in the field of specialty will provide you with additional information and gives you the opportunity to become a future leader.	42.9	39	33	30	24.2	22	2.19	0.80	Not Sure
Training on more than one function in the field of specialty gives you self-confidence.	63.7	58	25.3	23	11	10	2.53	0.69	yes
Training on a variety of functions and practice in the field of specialty eliminates job boredom .	50.5	46	33	30	16.5	15	2.34	0.75	yes
Training on a variety of functions and practice in the field of specialty raise the level of loyalty for the hotel.	61.5	56	27.5	25	11	10	2.53	0.69	yes
Training on a variety of functions and practice in the field of specialty gives you the skills and abilities to work any job in the field of specialty.	65.9	60	24.2	22	9.9	9	2.56	0.67	yes

Training on a variety of functions and practice in the field of specialty prolongs the period of your stay in the hotel you work for.	52.7	48	31.9	29	15.4	14	2.37	0.74	yes
Training on a variety of functions and practice in the field of specialization encourages you to accept the delegation of authority.	41.8	38	30.8	28	27.5	25	2.14	0.82	Not Sure
Training on a variety of functions and practice in the field of specialty helps you work places where there is a shortage to help colleagues in exceptional circumstances.	73.6	67	18.7	17	7.7	7	2.66	0.62	yes
Training on a variety of functions and practice in the field of specialization reduces thinking about moving to other institutions give better salaries and incentives.	45.1	41	19.8	18	35.2	32	2.10	0.90	Not Sure
Total							2.34	Yes	

Source: field study

Table no. 3.b shows that the mean value of the Cross-Training and labor turnover pivots is 2.34 which is Moving towards accepting of the research sample on the relationship between Cross-Training and labor turnover, In other words, for training in the area of specialization impact on the survival of workers in the workplace and do not search for jobs in other places.

Table no. 3.c: Cross tabulation between Level of Income and Training on a variety of functions and practice in the field of specialty prolongs the period of the hotel you stay to work

		Training on a variety of functions and practice in the field of specialty prolongs the period of the hotel you stay to work			Total
		No	Not Sure	Yes	
Level of Income	Less than 300 L.D	Frequency	0	0	2
		Percent %	0	0	100
	300 D.L - Less than 600 L.D	Frequency	2	9	14
		Percent %	8	36	56
	600 D.L - Less than 900 L.D	Frequency	9	13	24
		Percent %	19.6	28.3	52.2
Greater than 900 L.D	Frequency	3	7	8	
	Percent %	16.7	38.9	44.4	
Total	Frequency	14	29	48	
	Percent %	15.4	31.9	52.7	

Source: field study

Table no. 3.c Shows that all members of the research sample which the level of income is less than 300 L.D and another members they had a different levels of income answered that Training on a variety of functions and practice in the field of specialty prolongs the period of work in the hotel, This means that Income is not the main reason for the reduction of labor turnover but also Training in the area of specialization is considered a major cause of the reduction of labor turnover.

Table no. 3.d: Cross tabulation between Level of Income and Training on a variety of functions and practice in the field of specialization reduces thinking about moving to other institutions give better salaries and incentives.

		Training on a variety of functions and practice in the field of specialization reduces thinking about moving to other institutions give better salaries and incentives.			Total	
		No	Not Sure	Yes		
Level of Income	Less than 300 L.D	Frequency	0	1	1	2
		Percent %	0	50	50	100
	300 D.L - Less than 600 L.D	Frequency	9	4	12	25
		Percent %	36	16	48	100
	600 D.L - Less than 900 L.D	Frequency	18	8	20	46
		Percent %	39.1	17.4	43.5	100
	Greater than 900 L.D	Frequency	5	5	8	18
		Percent %	27.8	27.8	44.4	100
Total		Frequency	32	18	41	91
		Percent %	35.2	19.8	45.1	100

Source: field study

The results in Table no. 3.d also emphasizes not high salary and incentives are the only reason that contribute to the reduction of labor turnover but training on a variety of functions and practice in the field of specialization reduces thinking about moving to other institutions give better salaries and incentives, where the highest rates were for approval of all respondents for all income groups.

Conclusion

Training is often seen as a way to facilitate change, but it must be recognized that training affects everyone in an organization directly or indirectly. If well done, increased profits, promotions, and new jobs may result. If poorly conducted, there can be many negative effects, such as loss of credibility with employees, decreased performance, and increased conflict. In today's hospitality industries are seeking to minimize their training expensive by relying more on colleges and universities to prepare students for careers in the industry. For accounting purpose, training is viewed as an expensive, but it should also be viewed as an investment in the future of an organization if employees are retained and continue to develop their knowledge and abilities.

A long discussion with senior staff and managers has been made to find out the most major reasons of labor turnover in the hotels included in the study. The first reason was competitive hotels in the area, as a new private and foreign investment hotels has been emerged, employees started to move to these hotels where they have been offered better

salaries. The second reason was related to changing job environment by moving to other organizations, such as oil companies where they also offered higher salaries and better working conditions. This may confirm that, employees always look for better incentives. However, from the above findings, cross training may play a role in increasing employees knowledge, competent, capability, self confidence and moral. This may has an effect on the employees' loyalty towards their organizations which may result in reducing labor turnover and make employees feel and touch the high care and attention of the organization towards them.

As the findings results shows, it can be seen that employees income is not the only factor which may effect on labor turn over. Also, cross training is another factor which has its effect on labor turnover in hotels. In order to mitigate labor turn over in hotels industry. Both income and cross training should be carefully considered. This will result in achieving both the organization and the individual objectives.

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