

Personnel satisfaction survey and strategic direction of personnel capacity building in state statistics bodies of the Republic of Belarus

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David Packard, founder of the Hewlett Packard company, when asked “What is a key to success?” answered “People”.

Personnel are the most important resource of a company and a factor of its success. People who work in a company, apart from knowledge, expertise, professional skills, have a power of their desires and motives, their character and personality as a whole. Personnel management, without using modern methods of surveying, may lead to results contrary to the expectations of the management.

One of the most efficient HR-technologies is questionnaire survey, the use of which allows for the identification of the staff satisfaction with work environment, corporate image, moral and psychological climate in the team, perspectives for career advancement and training. This technology is widely used in statistical offices of many countries.

Taking into account the experience of our colleagues from other countries, the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus made a decision to carry out a personnel satisfaction survey in 2012. The questionnaire was developed using the experience of Eurostat, statistical offices of Lithuania, Bulgaria, Hungary in conducting such surveys; such factors as specific character of the activity of the National Statistical Committee, mentality, intelligibility and clarity of questions asked were taken into account.

The survey was carried out at the three levels since a three-level system of state statistics bodies has been established in the Republic of Belarus.

3d level – district

Statistics divisions in districts and towns (districts of Minsk City) (included in the structure of chief statistical departments of regions and Minsk City).

Main objective: interaction with respondents.

2nd level – regional

Territorial bodies of state statistics – chief statistical departments of the regions and Minsk City.

Main objective: processing, summarising and accumulation of statistical data (information) on the basis of statistical methodology.

1st level – country

National authority of public administration in the field of state statistics – National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus.

Main objective: development of scientifically grounded statistical methodology and its improvement in compliance with national and international statistical standards.

Each employee of the state statistics bodies had an opportunity to participate on a voluntary basis in the survey which was anonymous. The confidentiality of information provided was guaranteed to participants. Questionnaires were processed in the central statistical office, and its summarized results were presented at the meeting of the board on annual performance results in February 2012.

The questionnaire consisted of four question modules:

1. Work satisfaction
2. Work environment
3. Image of Belstat
4. Change of the place of work

The survey participation rate was 90% of the government employees of the system of Belstat.

As shown on the slide, respondents at the country level were less active, while respondents at the district level were more active.

1. **Work satisfaction**

Satisfaction with work is closely connected with the staff loyalty, commitment of workers to their organization, their wish to make maximum effort in its interests, to share its values and goals.

Studying the level of satisfaction, we get the information on the level of attachment of the personnel to their organization, and the information on HR risks.

In the first module of questions of the section, “Scope of work”, the majority (64%) are absolutely satisfied with the clarity of tasks and goals set. However, it should be noted that at the country level absolute satisfaction tasks and goals set was expressed by only 27% of workers; at the regional level – 69%. This fact indicates that the more creative approach and analytical thinking the work requires, the lower is the satisfaction with the set tasks and goals, although each specialist must independently define “the threshold” for achievements in this or that substantive area.

Forty-five percent of respondents are partially satisfied with work results, while 49% are absolutely satisfied. Partial satisfaction with work results can be regarded as the aspiration of workers to improve the professional skills required for higher-quality performance of job responsibilities.

Efficient planning and control of business career means that from the moment of acceptance for employment a specialist should know not only his or her perspectives, but also what indicators he or she should achieve professionally and personally in order to expect job promotion. A larger part of employees strive for career advancement, therefore limitations in career opportunities may lead to a strongly expressed dissatisfaction, or even aggression in the behaviour.

In general, the proportion of government employees in state statistics who were absolutely satisfied with the conditions for professional development was 47.5%, 33.5% were partially satisfied, 12% were insufficiently satisfied, and 4.5% were absolutely dissatisfied.

An important indicator is satisfaction with work conditions which include everything connected with ecology and ergonomics of workplace, i.e. availability and convenient location of technical facilities, office facilities, light, heating, furniture. The requirements of necessary rules and regulations regarding the appearance and behaviour are also included here.

It should be mentioned that respondents are to a greater extent satisfied with technical equipment of the workplace that with such work conditions as office, lighting conditions, heating and furniture. It is probably explained by higher requirements to technical facilities. Certainly, without the equipment of workplaces with technical facilities, modern automated access to the required information it would be impossible to achieve quality of statistical products and efficient performance of the set tasks.

Absolute majority of respondents are satisfied with the applied requirements of the rules and regulations related to the appearance and behaviour (97%). It justifies the appropriateness of the adoption of Rules of professional ethics of government employees in state statistics bodies which represent a body of norms specifying the requirements to the behaviour of government employees in state statistics when performing official tasks.

In the module "Personal work" the majority of respondents (85%) practically agreed that the work becomes more complex and its volumes are growing increasingly. This can be explained. Taking into account up-to-date requirements, more complex tasks are set each day before the state statistics, and these tasks should be solved at a highly professional level.

As a positive aspect, it should be noted that about 99% of government employees try to improve the quality of performance, and 80% can do more work than required. In order

to increase the effectiveness of the work process and the use of personnel capacity, work process should be improved.

It was important to learn the opinion of respondents regarding training, which is one of the current directions of HR policy of Belstat today. What is not less important is that 93.5% of respondents try to develop also out of work, although only 53.5% agree that to perform their professional tasks they need additional knowledge in specific area. The most frequent answers to the suggestion to list subject-matter areas where additional knowledge is needed to improve performance, were as follows:

- Modern information technology and accounting;
- Foreign languages;
- Knowledge in various statistical domains;
- Documentation management;
- Law;
- Psychology.

Opinions of respondents regarding the impetus for professional development are also contradictory: 7% think they have no impetus for the development at their work; 20% partially agree with this; 30% do not completely agree; and 39% absolutely disagree.

The most acceptable forms of skills upgrading were chosen as follows:

- courses
- seminars
- self-education

The majority of respondents are motivated to participate in training and acquire new knowledge to better perform their tasks (76%), to self-improve (63.5%), and to advance in their career (27%).

2. Work environment

The improvement of efficiency in HR management are closely connected with personnel motivation and moral and psychological climate in the team.

For the majority of employees the relations with direct manager are important. They expect not only a definite money reward, but also attention to their personality. Inapproachability of a manager or mutual misunderstanding between the management and workers may substantially decrease the efficiency of corporate performance.

The issue of work evaluation is also important because the results of such evaluation form the basis for the financial incentive scheme. Partiality, errors of judgment and injustice in applying the incentive scheme break the loyalty and motivation of workers, which slows down the development of the corporate culture and may cause contradictions and conflict situations.

The majority of respondents who participated in the survey think that internal disputes in a team can be settled via a dialogue (92%) and that they perceive support from colleagues in their unit (95%).

Eighty-eight percent of respondents agreed that “the management welcomes initiative”, and 89% agreed that their “work results, professionalism and development are valued by the management”.

Unequal distribution of work responsibilities among employees, misunderstanding on the part of management and lack of feedback cause dissatisfaction and lower motivation. The survey results showed that, in the opinion of majority respondents, the work is distributed evenly and the attitude to employees is equal (57% absolutely agree, 27.5% partially agree, 11% do not completely agree, and 4% absolutely disagree).

It is important to note that 90% of respondents are convinced that moral encouragement is an impetus to work. Consequently, managers at all levels were recommended to use motivation methods in the form of moral encouragement more actively.

Implementation of innovation has a positive influence on the corporate image and effectiveness of task solving. As a rule, workers have a dubious feeling about innovation, especially at the initial stage of implementation. But when the personnel are actively involved in the process of change at all its stages, it is possible to gain workers' support and reduce resistance. This method allows for the creation of an atmosphere where people feel themselves “originators” of change, i.e. the ideas are coming not from the top-down, not from the outside, but from inside of the team.

In the opinion of the majority of respondents (75%) innovation is introduced in state statistics bodies.

3. Image of Belstat

Corporate image is a factor of confidence in the company. Image depends on every worker. If the workers perceive bad attitude towards them, then such discontent will affect their attitude to work one way or another, which will break the positive corporate image.

The survey results show that in the opinion of 90% of respondents the state statistics bodies are developing in the right direction; 89% think that Belstat does everything possible to achieve the maximum quality of statistical products; and 83.5% are satisfied with the reputation of state statistics bodies as employees.

4. Change of the place of work

The aim of the last module of questions in the questionnaire is to identify the reasons why employees thought about the change of the place of work.

According to the survey results, the majority of respondents indicated that they had not considered the possibility to leave their organization lately. However, in the central statistical office such possibility was considered by 57% of respondents. The main reasons were financial factor and insufficient opportunity for career development.

Ten percent of participants to the survey would like to change their place of work within the organization. Financial factor and transfer to another organizational unit, to another position were among the main reasons.

Some decisions were made on the basis of the survey results:

- to continue to improve the personnel motivation scheme in state statistics bodies laying a special emphasis on the methods of moral and financial incentives;

- to organise training of employees in the most in-demand areas of knowledge identified during the survey;

- managers should make a more wide use of the “team work” methods to involve personnel in the task solving, and to inform workers on the results of their work using a feedback.

I would also like to say a few words about the strategic direction of personnel capacity building in state statistics bodies of the Republic of Belarus.

In February 2012 the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus approved the Strategy for the Development of State Statistics of the Republic of Belarus for the period until 2015. The aim of the Strategy is to create prerequisites for further development of state statistics and to a maximum extent meeting the information needs of the community for consistent, reliable, relevant and timely statistical data (information) on the economic, demographic, social and environmental situation in the Republic of Belarus.

To achieve this goal, the Strategy includes seven main directions, one of which is personnel capacity building. The implementation of this direction would allow for the introduction of effective methods of HR management and for the upgrading of staff training in statistics, management, information and communication technology, foreign languages.

The direction includes such measures as annual analysis of qualitative staff composition in a monitoring mode taking into account impacts of external environment on the requirements to the personnel in statistics; establishment of the system of continuous multi-level professional education and training, including learning of foreign languages; introduction into practice of psychological testing of candidates to managerial positions; working with young employees; creation of integrated information database on personnel and organizational staff structure; improvement of personnel evaluation in the form of computer testing combined with the interview methods; questionnaire survey of personnel satisfaction in a monitoring mode.

To resume, it should be noted that a balanced and dynamic combination of all methods and forms of human resource management would allow for the formation in state statistics bodies of a highly professional personnel capacity with the sufficient knowledge of international standards, statistical methodologies and modern information technology.