

## Unlocking employee potential through motivation workplace dynamics and incentives: A holistic approach to driving productivity

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**Abstract:** Modern workplaces have evolved so much that it requires a change in how companies think of employee motivation and productivity. The study aimed to finding out the association between employee motivation and incentive systems to formulate a model that will guide on how best overall organizational productivity could be boosted. It also offers insights based on research proven strategies for building the type of workplace that will motivate employees. The research used a quantitative approach with cross-sectional survey design. Three hundred and fifty individuals were surveyed from 10 organizations across a range of industries, organizational levels. Stratified random sampling approach was used to ensure that all age groups as well as different generational and working models were represented in sample across cultures. Structural equation modelling (SEM) by means of AMOS 26 was applied and an analysis of the results revealed some important paths for critical organisational variables. The findings found was motivation, with high relationships to the workplace environment ( $\beta = 0.42$ ), communication ( $\beta = 0.55$ ) and incentives ( $p < 0.05$ ). Workplace environment was empirically shown to have a positive but weak effect on productivity ( $\beta = 0.13$ ), and the strong relationship with communication ( $\beta = 0.80$ ). The proposed model shows a good fit in multiple indices: GFI (0.852), CFI (0.913), TLI (0.900) and RMSEA 90(74)], thereby validating the structure of the framework along with all its measured variables. These results suggest that organizations need to take a comprehensive view when looking at ways to motive and increase productivity of employees by being able understand the complex interrelations among work behaviors. This has operational implications for leaders and human resource professionals who seek a combined impact by aligning work designing, communication systems, incentive design structures and cultural integration strategies.

**Keywords:** Employee motivation, Human resource professional, Incentive systems, Organizational performance, Productivity, Structural equation modelling, Workplace dynamics.

### 1. Introduction

Businesses today are realizing the important function that motivated employees plays in helping their customers and making them more successful. In an increasingly competitive global marketplace and with the nature of work evolving rapidly, companies are under pressure to be creative in their efforts to harness every last ounce of productivity from their employees. Therefore, employee motivation has been an enduring subject of discussion in management and organizational psychology since its founding studies by Maslow, Herzberg and Vroom that have given great insight into what really drives people at work. In an era of rapidly evolving technology, changing generational attitudes and the recent rise in remote or hybrid work methods has become necessary to reassess conventional motivational theories.

This article attempts to conduct a meta-analysis of the recent research and practical knowledge on how we can unleash employee potential, that would account for various intricacies employed in today's work culture. The standard one-size-fits-all motivation does not work anymore. Organizations needed to think about how intrinsic and extrinsic motivators interact, the influence of workplace culture and team dynamics act as well as whether or not certain incentives worked out (Ibrahim & Abiddin, 2024).

This article aims to dissect all these elements in totality, thereby offering leaders and human resource specialists' tangible ways of creating environments that keep staff motivated while simultaneously driving long-term productivity, innovation as well job satisfaction. Subsequent parts will look in more detail at motivation, study real-life case studies and propose holistic strategies that increase productivity by utilizing newer avenues of engaging people which also cover some aspects of traditional and even older offbeat approaches (Abiddin, Ibrahim & Abdul Aziz, 2022).

These are the goals of this study, specifically:

1. To analyze the interrelationships between employee motivation, workplace dynamics, and various incentive systems in order to develop a comprehensive framework for enhancing productivity in modern organizational settings.
2. To provide evidence-based, actionable strategies for leaders and human resource professionals to create work environments that effectively motivate employees across different generations, work models, and cultural contexts, leading to sustained productivity and job satisfaction.

## 2. Literature Review

The study of employee motivation and its impact on productivity has been a cornerstone of organizational psychology and management research for decades. This literature review examines key theories, recent empirical studies, and emerging trends in the field, providing a foundation for our holistic approach to unlocking employee potential.

### 2.1. Foundational Theories of Motivation

The motivational literature is replete with classic works which are still relevant to our modern understanding. Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs suggests that people are driven by more complex motives, going from fundamental physiological needs up to self-actualisation. The theory has been extensively applied in workplace scenarios describing the spectrum of employee needs an organization should address to be able to develop motivation. The Herzberg Theory (1959), describes a two-factor model which suggests that there are certain factors in the workplace that cause job satisfaction while a separate set of factors causes dissatisfaction. The concepts of job design and employee engagement strategies have been largely driven by this dichotomy. Expectancy Theory started a cognitive movement by stating that motivation is a function of expectancy, instrumentality and valence. This theory stresses the need for clear-cut paths that link effort, performance and rewards in motivating employees (Vroom 1964).

#### 2.1.1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

According to Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs theory, the motivation behind every human action is essentially a progressive attainment of more complex needs. The theory states that there are five levels of needs, arranged in a hierarchy and only the lowest level would be able to motivate someone as they progress on their path up the pyramid. From the bottom to top, they are physiological (e.g. food, water, rest), safety (e.g. security and stability), love/belongingness (relationships/social connections), esteem (e.g. prestige or a feeling of accomplishment), self-actualization (enabling one's full potential). This view of a stepwise manner that Maslow (1954) was advocating with basic needs coming first before individuals progressing towards higher-order ones basically helps define human motivation.

The application of Maslow's theory to work in the workplace has been extensive giving common sense tools utilized by Business Management content writers a model language for understanding, addressing and discussing human motivations. This approach implies that to motivate well, organizations need to address the full range of employee needs going from basic (survival) to complex (creativity). Emphasizing that employees are on a spectrum in the hierarchy and likely to move ranks multiple times, organizations may design more targeted, yet flexible motivational approaches.

The significance for employee productivity of Maslow's hierarchy ensuring that organizations meet employees' basic needs of job security, safety and fair wages empowers employees to better focus on their more advanced human needs which are the direction determinants behind driving productivity

and employee engagement at work. For example, team-building activities can meet social needs by creating a sense of “tribe,” and opportunity for skills development and advancement satisfies esteem needs to strive towards self-actualization. As employees move up the hierarchy, they tend to experience changes in their motivators from basic job security on toward growth, achievement and self-actualization. As a result, organizations that are able to understand and promote this path can establish work environments where employees become self-motivated to reach higher standards of performance suggesting substantial improvement in both overall productivity and innovation.

### *2.1.2. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory*

The Two-Factor Theory of Herzberg (1959): The Motivation-Hygiene theory which separates job satisfaction and motivation into two categories. That is, Herzberg's (1959) Two-Factor Theory of job satisfaction or Motivation-Hygiene theory identifies two distinct sets of factors that affect employee work attitudes giving a more detailed view of how motivation and levels can be influenced by different types or sources etc. One of the categories, named "hygiene factors", includes amenities in job environment which if non-existent or poor quality can result in dissatisfaction. The factors include salary, job security, working condition and company policies (Herzberg et al., 1959). The second category was that of the motivators, which were related to intrinsic aspects: what makes people satisfied and motivated by work.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory also provides an important consideration about the non-mutual nature of these two factor categories and hence their respective impact on employee attitudes and behavior. In the 1968 publication by Herzberg, it is suggested that hygiene factors only serve to avoid dissatisfaction but not create satisfaction or motivation. This means that giving them a fair salary and job security can prevent dissatisfaction to an extent but these are unlikely going to motivate or cause higher motivation and satisfaction. Organizations can truly motivate employees and achieve fulfillment in their work, when the emphasis is on increasing motivators. Although it is traditional to consider satisfaction and dissatisfaction as opposites on a single continuum, this new view suggests that they are controlled by the reciprocally but somewhat independently varying factors. Organizations should create ways to increase motivation other than just hygiene factors in order to boost productivity. And while a fair pay check and the comfort of job security provide good base camp, they may not do much to raise employee performance or trigger their discretionary effort for long. These may include creating mechanisms for ongoing feedback and recognition, assigning challenging work that creates a sense of accomplishment and establishing defined trajectories for career progression and skill enhancement. In this new model employees are not just content with their work, but actively engaged and motivated by it which will vastly improve both the individual productivity of each worker as well in turn greatly increase organisational effectiveness.

### *2.1.3. Vroom's Expectancy Theory*

In 1964, Vroom published Expectancy Theory presenting the first cognitive model of motivation that stated what determined individual motivation as a function of three specific factors. Expectancy Theory was one of the first to introduce a cognitive approach to motivation with three different determinants: expectancy, instrumentality and valence. Expectancy is the belief that if we try and do something then it will lead to some kind of performance. Instrumentality is the value on which an individual believes that with good performance there comes a likely reward. Valence is the value attached to an anticipated outcome by the individual. This multiplicative relationship means that, if any of these factors is absent (i.e., equals zero), the person will not be motivated to perform the task. According to Vroom, his theory provides a model for understanding how decision making is affected when persons must choose between alternatives.

Expectancy Theory emphasizes the need for a direct association between effort, performance and rewards to motivate employees. Implying that motivation is not just determined by how much effort or reward we get, but what the relationship between these two elements are in our eyes. This view moves us from a theory of motivation that is one size fits all, to the recognition of human beings as unique and considers differences in perceptions and values. In this example, an employee who believes that more

effort will not lead to higher performance (low expectancy) or values the incentives being offered very little (low valence) is unlikely to be motivated regardless of how attractive rewards may first appear.

Vroom's Theory has powerful and practical implications for organizational productivity. This helps in improvement of productivity through well answers boxes between efforts, performance and rewards on the basis that- This requires some very significant strategies. The first step companies can take is to make employees feel that they are capable of enhancing their performance, i.e., expectancy. This may include offering the resources, coaching and back-up support to enable employees achieve maximum potential in those roles. Second, good behavior is instrumentalized– it must be clear to people that high performance leads to rewards. Orgs create transparent systems where people know what they are working towards (instrumentality). Creating transparent performance measures or enforcing consistent rewards policies, for example. Taking a step further, organisations should attempt to ascertain what individual employees' value most in terms of outcomes (valence) and pay them accordingly. This could mean providing a choice between various incentives or rewards acknowledging that certain people may be driven by different things. Organizations can align these three elements expectancy, instrumentality and valence to develop a stimulating environment that drives productivity and performance across their workforce.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg's Two Factor-Theory, and Vroom's Expectancy Theory were published decades ago but still shape the way we understand motivation and productivity today. While these different models have varying levels of empirical support, they all are rooted in foundational theories which have given us a strong foundation for understanding the nuanced landscape of human motivation at work. Modern organizational psychology has shifted away from viewing any one theory to have sole explanatory power, and rightfully so; in reality the phenomenon of employee motivation is staggeringly complex when examined within various contexts and among varied populations. Consequently, different theories are often combined in modern research to construct more inclusive patterns for the comprehension and increased motivation of personnel (Latham & Pinder, 2005). The combination of these ideas has produced new theories and frameworks that draw from (and extend) earlier work.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), by Deci and Ryan (2000) combines aspects of Maslow's work along with the two-factor theory but introduced new areas. According to SDT intrinsic motivation is based on three inborn needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness. The theory argues that the more these needs are met, the more a person is likely to be intrinsically motivated and hence gain in performance as well as mental health. Goal-Setting Theory (Locke & Latham, 2002) too adds to Vroom's Expectancy Consistency by expounding on the motivational power of high and specified goals. Specifically, the theory states that if people are given clear and difficult specific goals, many of them will find these to be very motivating so long as they have accepted an appropriate level of commitment or task difficulty (e.g., While the classic theories still accessible to employees today just scratch the surface, these modern theories are necessary for companies in adapting those foundational concepts from earlier work.

In reality, organizations are becoming more hybrid and addressing extrinsic as well intrinsic motivators because they have understood that different individual can be drive differently in different time (Pink, 2009). A more integrated model, based on classical and traditional theories yet customized to the present-day job reality has immense appeal as this comprehensive approach toward motivation could help advance worker productivity at today's organisational contexts. For instance, an organisation could implement certain aspects of the Herzberg theory by offering a salary (a hygiene factor) together with challenging tasks and projects to inspire employee's motivators. For example, they could use the insights from Vroom's theory on motivation by making performance more clearly contingent upon valued outcomes and utilize principles from SDT such as encouraging a sense of autonomy and competence among employees (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Organizations that hierarchically integrate these diverse theoretical perspectives should be able to design motivational strategies that are not only more nuanced, but also cater for the varied needs and interests of their workforce which could potentially boost employee engagement, satisfaction as well as productivity.

## 2.2. Contemporary Perspectives on Workplace Motivation

Subsequent research has expanded on these original theories, both theoretically and by accounting for the nuances of today's work landscapes. Pink (2009) in theoretic work on intrinsic motivation cites autonomy, mastery and purpose are key engagement drivers for the knowledge worker. Gallup (2022) conducted multiple empirical studies correlating employee engagement with organizational performance and results have reflected positively on productivity, profitability and customer satisfaction. Their findings drive the point home further, showing that when it comes to engagement, continuous feedback and acknowledgement are key.

Workplace dynamics have received growing attention in motivational research. Edmondson (1999) suggested that team psychological safety has been associated with more product performance and innovation than physical equipment of team members, emphasizing the need for creating an interpersonal risky environment conducive to. Back in 2016 Google's Project Aristotle reinforced the above findings showing that psychological safety was not just important for team effectiveness, but it actually was a factor which determined who worked together well on teams. The study also suggests that inclusive leadership behaviors and open communication mediums are important to increase the motivation level of a team, leading them to be more productive.

The effectiveness of different incentive systems still needs more research: Although many traditional extrinsic reward systems (e.g., bonuses, promotions) continue to be used by organizations as a means of engaging and retaining employees, recent insights from Deloitte research in 2019 indicates how businesses too are beginning to lean on more holistic rewards packages which account for non-financial incentives like flexible work arrangements or the provision of learning opportunities. Among the empirical studies, Deci and Ryan (2000) identified a variety of researches which classified intrinsic motivation outperforming performance in quality rather than such extrinsic incentives that are more likely to positively correlated with quantity. Such a nuanced understanding requires that motivation be balanced, both intrinsic and extrinsic.

As the workforce demographics evolve, it is important to appreciate generational motivational differences. This includes work-life balance; social impact and learning which particularly with Millennials and Gen Z employees (Deloitte, 2021). This change requires a flexible and personalized employee motivation. The COVID-19 pandemic has expedited the move to remote and hybrid working, integrating distinct challenges as well as making new opportunities for motivating the workforce. Remote workers can have higher job satisfaction but they also experience different motivational problems like work-life balance and social connection. Though this lens gives us a good theory to navigate how motivation works but at the same time latest research suggest we need a more contextual and integrated framework which factor for various complexities arising out as by-product of organizational ecosystem, demographic profile in modern workplace and changing ways of working (Talha & Abiddin, 2024). With this theory as a base, we are able that set up the blueprint to further unlock employee potential on where organisational context is at today.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Participants

The target population consisted of employees working across various organizational levels and sectors. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure adequate representation across different generations, work models (traditional, hybrid, and remote), and cultural contexts. The final sample comprised 350 participants from 10 organizations, representing diverse industry sectors. The sampling process ensured representation of different demographic groups, job levels, and work arrangements to enhance the generalizability of findings.



### 3.2. Procedure

The data collection process encompassed a systematic approach beginning with initial pilot testing of the instrument on a small sample, followed by the distribution of online surveys through organizational channels, implementation of follow-up reminders to ensure adequate response rates, thorough data cleaning and validation procedures, and finally, the application of quality control measures to ensure response integrity.

### 3.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis with IBM SPSS Statistics 26 and AMOS 26. The analysis was conducted in stages. A series of Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to explore the bivariate links between these dimensions: anxiety, anger, depression and stress. We carried out multiple regression analysis to explore the most powerful predictors of anxiety amidst other psychological constructs. We used structural equation modelling (SEM) to evaluate a theoretical model based on the interrelations of these four constructs. Multiple fit indices were examined for the model validity, including chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ), Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA).

## 4. Results and Discussions

### 4.1. Structural Equation Modelling Analysis (SEM)

To answer the objective 1 of the research, the findings from the analysis has been analysed:

*Objective 1: 1. To analyze the interrelationships between employee motivation, workplace dynamics, and various incentive systems in order to develop a comprehensive framework for enhancing productivity in modern organizational settings.*

Based on Figure 1. Motivation, workplace environment and communication have a positive influence on incentives; in addition, it is also observed that these factors are highly significant to explain the productivity. The model yields acceptable goodness of fit, as depicted by various fitness indices: GFI (0.852), CFI (0.913), TLI (0.900) NFI 91(970) and RFT90(.851). RMSEA = 0.074, within acceptable limits indicating reasonable model fit to the population data.

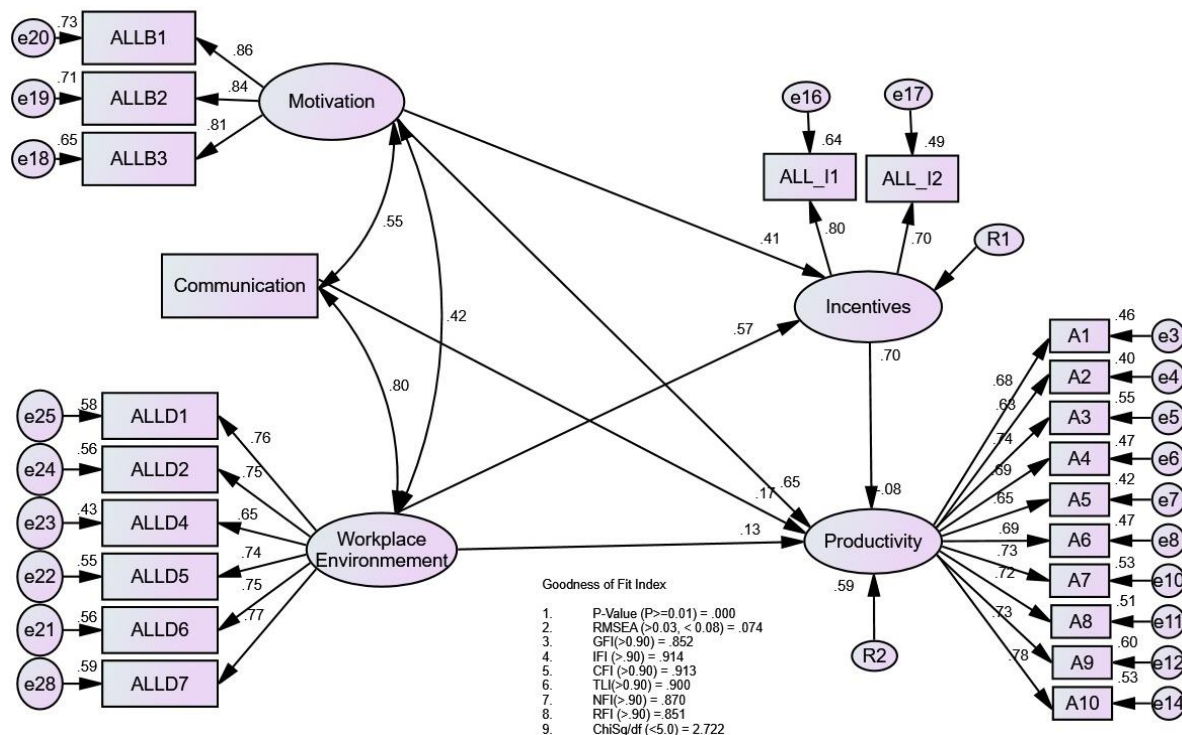


Figure 1.

## Structural model.

The results demonstrate that motivation is a significant predictor of many organizational outcomes. Motivation shows direct and positive impact on incentive ( $t = 10.827$ ,  $\beta, 0.41$ ) meanwhile also have a strong impact too in work environment ( $t = 15.897$ ; The most notable relationship between any two indicators of engagement is that with motivation and communication ( $\beta = 0.55$ ): increased levels of employee motivations are associated to an enhanced set up for good internal communication practices within the company. The measurement model for motivation shows high factor loadings of the indicators (ALLB1 = 0.86, ALLB2 = -0.84, ALLB3 = 0.8) that confirm strong construct validity.

The model explains a substantial portion of variance in productivity, as indicated by the multiple squared correlations and the overall structure of relationships. The findings suggest that organizational productivity is influenced through both direct and indirect pathways, with motivation playing a central role in driving various organizational processes that ultimately affect productivity.

In summary, the findings of the structural equation model directly link to the research objective, which was to examine the inter-relationships between employee motivation, workplace dynamics and incentive systems in improving productivity, outlining a robust and complex framework of organizational inter-relationships. The findings of the model show significant paths between a few of the major variables, with motivation being at the core and exhibiting the strongest relationships with the workplace environment, communication and incentives. In order to present these relationships in an integrated framework, it is clear that each aspect of workplace dynamics indicated significant mediators as the workplace environment and communication played a crucial role in moderating the relationships between motivation and productivity. The incentive system also plays a crucial role in the organizational inter-relationship, as it has direct effects on motivation and productivity, while the workplace environment impacts productivity directly. The strong indices of this model are corroborated by strong factor loadings, with all factors having the loading of between 0.64 to 0.86, signifying against the research objective. This statistical validation against the research objective supports the identification of the linkages between the variables and the ability to quantify their importance in the organizational productivity framework, and this forms a solid foundation for establishing the required interventions to improve workplace productivity through motivated employees, balanced workplace dynamics, and structured incentives.

#### 4.2. Evidence-Based Strategies for Employee Motivation and Productivity

To answer the objective 2 of the research, the findings from the analysis has been analysed:

*Objective 2: To provide evidence-based, actionable strategies for leaders and human resource professionals to create work environments that effectively motivate employees across different generations, work models, and cultural contexts, leading to sustained productivity and job satisfaction.*

The structural equation model identified the pathways by which interventions can impact employee motivation and productivity for a variety of strategies working together (Aziz & Abiddin, 2024). At the structure level, creating product work environments has a positive direct impact on productivity ( $\beta = 0.13$ ). From the physical to virtual workplace infrastructure, remote working and collaborative spaces. The relationship of motivation with communication ( $\beta = 0.55$ ) was strong in this model, and these environmental factors are directly associated to strategies for improving motivation. It is about organisations institutionalising recognition, development and performance feedback all supported by clear goal setting frameworks and leadership programmes (Abiddin, 2007).

These findings corroborate the importance of incentive systems and recalibrate our balanced view on motivation ( $\beta = 0.41$ ), indicating that a holistic reward strategy may be necessary to correct for this imbalance. Some of which are designing fair financial reward schemes, some performance-based incentives and perhaps even creating team rewards. Beta values of 0.80, which underscores the considerable influence that workplace environment has on communication and engagement strategies needing to come together as one. To combat this, organizations should provide two-way feedback channels where employees can freely speak up or inquire; transparent organizational communication

that is unambiguous and truthful when it comes to change initiatives; use collaboration tools for effective team interaction balancing between cross generational communications as well cultural sensitivity.

A wide range of productivity enhancement policies prove to be necessary outcomes from these connected strategies, which are underpinned by many pathways in the model. Work-life solutions and resource optimization strategies should be counterweighted against performance monitoring systems, quality improvement processes and efficiency metrics. The high factor loadings of the model across productivity indicators (all  $>0.64$ ) indicate that a comprehensive improvement in performance requires both objective and subjective measures.

The findings also suggest the importance of including cross-generational and cultural considerations in organizational strategy. These attributes are not mechanically measured in the model, but underlie strong relations between workplace environment, communication and productivity. They do so through age-diverse team management practices, technology adaptation support, mentorship programs and inclusive workplaces (Ogbodoakum, Ayub & Abiddin, 2022). The culture and generational factors should be included into the larger on-boarding organization support through a framework to encompass strategies that are institution-wide with high factor loadings for workplace environment indicators (0.65–0.77), guiding the cultural integration along those complementary needs, such as training programs by company in global communications protocols or product development initiatives suitable to specific country market conditions.

## 5. Conclusions

The research provides insight into the multifaceted interrelationship among employee motivation, work dynamics, communication and incentive systems in promoting organisation productivity. The results of the study suggest that motivation acts as a primary mechanism for engaging in work, affecting children when they interact with their environment or communication systems and respond to incentives. Organizations have to accept these ingredients are part of a whole, not separate components, meaning any improvement in productivity will demand an integrated strategy across several organizational layers at the same time. The study clearly demonstrates that supportive work environments and good communications can dramatically improve motivation at work, which translates to increased productivity.

These results carry important practical implications that orient organizations about what exactly contributes to workplace effectiveness and employee engagement. These learnings are powerful and should help leaders and human resource professionals develop a sophisticated game plan that combines elements related to workplace design, communication systems, incentive structures, cultural integration approaches. This research provides useful direction to support sustainable performance improvements for organizations as they adjust with shifting work dynamics including remote work, changing workforce demographics, and evolving employee expectations. Taking a more holistic approach towards fostering employee's motivation and managing the workplace can help to create higher functioning, less fragile system that work better for both the individuals in it and the company as whole.

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