

Research on the Incentive Mechanism of Front-line Employees of Hyatt Regency Dongguan Songshan Lake

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to set up a reasonable and effective incentive mechanism to mobilize the enthusiasm of the hotel's front-line employees and stimulate their enthusiasm for work. To solve the current problems such as insufficient incentive concept and weak incentive mechanism, it can reduce the high turnover rate of personnel in the hotel industry, stabilize the workforce, and improve employee loyalty. This research takes the Hyatt Regency Hotel Dongguan Songshan Lake where one of the authors works as the research object and discusses the existing problems in the hotel employees' incentive mechanism from four aspects: employee compensation and benefits, employee promotion, training incentives, and spiritual incentives, and proposes the corresponding improvement measures. The findings of this study have reference value for improving the incentive mechanism and the hotel's human resource management level in this case, and for other hotels to improve employee ownership and reduce staff turnover.

KEYWORDS: Incentives; Hotel Management; Human Resources; Front-line Employees

I. INTRODUCTION

The number of hotels is constantly growing, and the competition is becoming increasingly fierce (Laškarin, 2013; Linsheng & Pan(2009). With the rapid development of the hotel industry, each hotel grasps the opportunity and the market share. Most of them focus on market development, while ignoring incentives for employees, which seriously dampens their enthusiasm for work and damages service quality and will seriously, in the long run, affect the far-reaching development of the hotel industry. To achieve good development, we should pay more

attention to talents and build a complete incentive mechanism with our own resources (Du, 2011; Yu, 2020).

The current incentive mechanisms refer to or replicate the incentive mechanisms of other successful peers and have been around for a long time. In recent years, the hotel industry has been affected by the COVID-19 epidemic and its performance has plummeted, making it impossible to retain talents (Ozdemir, Dogru, Kizildag, Mody & Suess, 2021; Yacoub & ElHajjar, 2021; Yu, Lee, Popa & Madera, 2021). Therefore, this study aims at understanding the employee incentive mechanism, explore the existing limitations of the study, and propose improvement measures so as to improve the incentive mechanism of hotel staff.

The aim of this study is to achieve the following:

- (1) Understand the employee incentive mechanism in this case, the current situation of incentives in terms of compensation and benefits, employee promotion, training incentives, and spiritual incentives.
- (2) Discuss the existing problems in compensation and benefits, employee promotion, training incentives and spiritual incentives and put forward possible countermeasures.
- (3) It is expected that the findings of this research can be used as a reference for the adjustment and incentive mechanism of hotel human resources management.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on Incentive Mechanism

In the research on the theory of incentive mechanism, the achievements of developed countries are earlier and more (Tan & Leewongcharoen, 2005; Chiu, 2007), and the incentive mechanism is also practically applied in

human resources management. Research on incentive mechanisms has the ability to draw on and integrate, first Maslow (1943, 1954)'s hierarchy of needs theory, and as this theory has greater repercussions on enterprise management, reinforcement theory, expectation theory, fairness theory and two-factor theory are also learning from each other. For example, Adams (1963; 1965)'s equity theory of motivation, which is based on continuous reference, integration and innovation, believes that the sense of fairness is the premise for employees to truly achieve the incentive effect and takes it as the core issue of research. The study on incentive mechanism is closely related to the needs of human beings. There are Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, expectation theory, fairness theory, two-factor theory and reinforcement theory, etc. that study human needs and put forward corresponding incentive measures. Through comprehensive incentive methods, various needs of individuals can be considered comprehensively, and the hotel human resources management department can formulate an effective incentive mechanism on the basis of integrating various incentive theories, so as to achieve the purpose of effective incentives.

The role of the incentive mechanism in hotel management, the existing problems in the current incentive mechanism of the hotel, and the solutions to the existing problems in the incentive mechanism are proposed. Its main points are as follows: (1) Research on the role of incentive mechanism in hotel management: Incentive mechanism is an important factor to improve employee job satisfaction and job concentration (McCausland, Pouliakas & Theodossiou, 2005; Ding, Borbon & Deng, 2022). Hotels should pay attention to the construction of incentive mechanism oriented by job satisfaction and job concentration (Zhang & Xie, 2020). In addition, employee job satisfaction can not only affect employees' work performance and work concentration in work situations, but also is the premise for the transformation of hotel incentives to employees' work concentration. Hotels need to emphasize the construction of the hotel incentive mechanism aimed at improving employees' job satisfaction (Davidescu, Apostu, Paul & Casuneanu, 2020; Ding, Borbon & Deng, 2022) so as to improve the long-term initiative of employees (Zhang & Xie, 2020). (2) Research on the existing problems in the current incentive mechanism of the hotel: after studying the research results of many experts, the authors concluded that most of the hotels have the following problems when building the incentive mechanism of the hotel, such as the compensation system of hotel employees, their performance

appraisal system, and the promotion channels, etc. (Li, 2016). (3) Research on measures to optimize the hotel incentive mechanism: many domestic scholars such as You (2005), Zhou (2010), Pu and Li (2011) have made a summary, mainly involving the following aspects: research on salary incentives, honor incentives, and spiritual incentives, such as formulating employee promotion policies, employee training systems, and providing good welfare benefits.

Incentive Mechanism and Resource Conservation Theory

Resource conservation theory holds that people always tend to protect or preserve the various resources they have and try to avoid any threat that may cause resource depletion (Wen & Hou, 2018). Hobfoll (1989) defines resources as "objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued by the individual or that serve as a means for attainment of these objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies". The primacy of resource protection is that individuals' awareness of self-generated resources is more important than acquiring redundant resources. When individuals face resource loss, they will give priority to taking countermeasures to protect formal resources and not continue to lose them (Hobfoll, 2011a; 2011b). When individuals face resource loss, they will prioritize countermeasures to protect formal resources from continued loss. Subordination of resource acquisition while acquiring excess resources is not as important as protecting basic formal resources, having more resources reduces the risk of losing other resources, and resources themselves can create opportunities for acquiring other resources. (Wen & Hou, 2018).

Incentive Mechanism and Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction reflects employees' attitudes and behaviors toward work, is a result of employees' perception of work, and is also the result of comparing employees' actual work with their expected work (Rifai, 2005; Moorman, Niehoff & Organ, 1993). In general, when the employee's evaluation of the actual work is lower than expected, the employee will feel unfair, resulting in negative work evaluation (Lundgren, Anderson & Thompson, 2004); and when the employee's evaluation of the actual work is higher than expected, s/he will have a higher job satisfaction (Yan & Jin, 2014). Job satisfaction reflects the satisfaction of employees' individual needs and job expectations in the actual work and is influenced and determined by a variety of factors (Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli & Lynch, 1997). The incentive mechanism of the hotel

is an important factor affecting the employee's job satisfaction.

The motivator implements factors closely related to the work content through the incentive mechanism to promote the job satisfaction of the motivated worker. The improvement of such factors will make employee feel satisfied with their job, and the lack of such factors will make employees feel dissatisfied.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

The research object of this study is the Hyatt Regency Hotel where one of the authors works, and it is easy to obtain first-hand information through observation and interviews with the relevant personnel who formulate and implement the incentive mechanism in this case.

Research Objects

Hyatt Regency Hotel hires Hyatt International Hotel Management Group to manage on its behalf, and its management concepts and methods also draw lessons from foreign five-star hotels. It is a well-known five-star hotel in China and overseas. In terms of service positioning, the hotel is a business-oriented resort hotel located in Songshan Lake District, Dongguan City, Guangdong Province, China. On its left, there is the beautiful misty and rainy Songhu Lake, and on its right is the Administrative Office Center of the Songshan Lake Management Committee. Geographically, Hyatt Regency Hotel Dongguan Songshan Lake is close to Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Hong Kong. With its unique geographical advantages, coupled with the fresh and beautiful

natural environment, it is a rare business and leisure destination in the Pearl River Delta. The hotel is positioned as a business resort hotel, which is committed to providing high-quality and personalized services for areas, such as administrative business, science and technology education, vacation tourism, industry, modern logistics, and culture, etc.

Research Instruments

Participation observation method: One of the authors conducted field research on Hyatt Regency Hotel during her internship. She learned about the incentive mechanism of the hotel through participatory observation, professional training, and text analysis of the incentive system, which are conducive to the development of this research topic.

Interview method: This study refers to the research content related to the incentive mechanism of You (2005), Zhou(2010), Pu and Li (2011) and other scholars. The interview questions include four major items, such as employee compensation and benefits, employee promotion, training incentives, and spiritual incentives, and the incentive details in the implementation are summarized into conceptual items, and then compiled by two supervisors and three managers assisted in revising the content of the questionnaire items. Based on this structure, the outline of the interview questions was developed to conduct in-depth interviews with 3 managers from various departments and 12 employees of the hotel in an unstructured manner. The interviewees are listed in table 1 below:

Table 1 The interviewees list Table 1. Interviewees

Title	Front office(f)	Catering department(c)	Market sales(m)
Manager(M)	Division/ 1Person	Deputy /1Person	Division /1Person
Code	MF1	MC1	MM1
Employee(E)	4Persons	4Persons	4Persons
Code	EF1~EF4	EC1~EC4	EM1~EM4

Employee: Regular employees 4 Persons, Trainees 8 Persons

IV. ANALYSIS OF PROBLEMS AND REASONS EXISTING IN HOTEL INCENTIVE MECHANISM

Symptoms of Enterprise Salary System

First, the salary level is not in harmony with the overall needs of employees, which is manifested in that the employees' wages are far lower than their overall needs. If one has been working in a hotel for three years, s/he is already considered as an old employee (EF1). As far as the front office of the hotel is concerned, the monthly salary of the front desk employee after deducting social security and other miscellaneous expenses, it will only remain about 3,000 yuan, which is completely insufficient for a new first tier city like Dongguan (EF2, EF3). In addition, hotel employees also face great work pressure. A serious loss of personnel is a common problem in the hotel industry around the world (Poulston, 2008; Chung & D'Annunzio-Green, 2018). Except for some part-timers and interns in winter and summer vacation hotels, they are usually facing staff shortage (MF1). Most of the time, an employee may hold multiple positions, and even need to support other departments or sister hotels. The workload of employees is quite large. When a large gap exists between the sacrifices made and the payment received, it is easy to cause job dissatisfaction among employees (EF1~EF4). In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the hotel gradually keeps cutting labor costs in the hotel industry to thrive and survive through the COVID-19 pandemic. Although a bonus commission plan was proposed, it could not be implemented (MC1).

Second, the salary structure is unreasonable. The salary structure currently implemented by Hyatt Regency Hotel is "base salary + performance commission". Base salary is the main part of the entire salary structure, accounting for about 80% or even higher proportion, and plays a leading role in the salary structure (MM1). However, the incentive effect of the performance commission, which is designed to motivate employees, is indeed minimal,

Job promotion has always been an extremely important incentive method (Cappelli, 1998; Fadillah & Ismail, 2018), but the current job promotion system makes it difficult to exert the incentive effect. Although the hotel advocates "caring for everyone and let them show their true self through perfection", it is inevitable that they should be ranked by seniority when it comes to job promotion. If the promotion mechanism of relative cronyism is not broken in one day, it will be difficult for employees to be pragmatic and conscientious.

and there is no big difference in the salary obtained by doing a little more or doing a little less (EF1, EF4, EC1, EC4, EM1, EM3). This kind of salary structure is difficult to stimulate the enthusiasm and initiative of employees, and even leads to employees' slackness and loss, which is not conducive to the development of hotels in the long-term (MM1, MC1, MF1).

The Promotion Channels Are Relatively Crowded

As it stands, Hyatt Regency Hotel lacks a promotion mechanism. According to the human resource management theory, it is not only the salary package that can retain employees, but also a promotion mechanism that employees can see in the future (Kwenin, Muathe, & Nzulwa, 2013). On the one hand, the incentive mechanism of the hotel must meet the material requirements of employees. On the other hand, it should create certain conditions for the spiritual needs of employees. From the beginning of the employee's induction and training, the human resources administrator will describe their future career development, which is probably "ordinary employee, foreman, assistant manager, department manager" (MC1).

Ideals are always good. According to the saying in human training, if you work hard for several years, you can always make it to the Department Manager. But the fact is that the hotel staff organization is bloated, and there are many middle and senior leaders. Even if the ordinary employees at the grassroots level are qualified to be promoted to middle-level managers, there is no vacant position (MM1). This has created a situation in which ordinary employees are difficult to promote and the promotion pipeline is crowded (EF1 and MC1). The organizational Structure of Hyatt Regency Hotel's Front Office is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Organizational structure of hyatt regency hotel's front office

Lack of Training Incentive Mechanism

The hotel's training incentive mechanism attaches great importance to the significance of learning to employees' personal careers (Watson, Maxwell & Farquharson, 2007). It not only emphasizes personal learning, but also emphasizes organizational learning, thereby greatly promoting the overall improvement of employees' comprehensive quality. Through professional training, hotel staff's professional skills and self-quality are continuously improved, and at the same time, they also greatly motivate staff and mobilize their work enthusiasm to a great extent. However,

the author found during the internship that Hyatt Regency Hotel did not establish an effective training incentive mechanism. But the 16 interviewed front-line employees responded unanimously: "When entering the hotel, they were forced to take up the post without receiving any training. The training that should have been received before joining the hotel was even more than half a year after joining the job.

The intern's observations and her own experience are not unique. Interns are an important source of high-quality talents in the hotel, but Hyatt Regency Hotel does not attach any importance to their training. Not only does the induction training lag behind, but also there is a lack of perfect training system for subsequent promotion (EC1, EC2). In addition, the training process mostly adopts the means of one-way indoctrination (MM1), and there is no relevant assessment to test the training effect after the training (EF3, EC13, EM1, EM4). In addition, most of the training process adopts the means of one-way instillation (MM1), and there is no relevant test or assessment after the training to check the training effect (EF3, EC13, EM1, EM4).

To sum up, the hotel's training has an obvious lag, which is reflected in the number of trainees and training coping style, which leads to many employees not being trained in time. This kind of lag training and learning can not only fail to improve the quality of employees, but also cannot motivate employees. Therefore, the training and incentive mechanism will lose its original significance.

Ignoring the Role of Long-term Incentives

The development of the hotel is mixed with the hard work and sweat of every employee. Therefore, the development of employees is also the development of the hotel, which needs the attention of the hotel. Only when the hotel cares about the development of each employee can it inspire the employees to do their best for the hotel (Harrington & Akehurst, 1996; Kuo, 2009; Jiang & Wen, 2020). In contrast, the incentive mechanism of Hyatt Regency Hotel is more inclined to daily incentives and immediate incentives, ignoring long-term incentives (EF4, EC2, EC4, EM3). The specific performance of employees is not timely feedback, timely cash rewards, on-the-spot recognition, verbal praise, frequent evaluation, etc. There are incentives, but the effect is not lasting, and it is difficult for employees to bring lasting vitality to the long-term development of the hotel (MC1) (Sheng & Gu, 2018; Agarwal, 2021). Although the hotel has a pyramid incentive plan, the road from the bottom to the top is very congested. In terms of the promotion mechanism, the long-term incentive measures that originally played a positive incentives role have become negative incentives, causing the dissatisfaction of the grassroots employees and needing to make some adjustments (MM1). In addition, in the hotel's incentive mechanism, managers ignored long-term incentives resulting in fewer long-term incentives and insufficient long-term incentives to effectively motivate (Bresnen & Marshall, 2000; Amabile & Kramer, 2011). The hotel's existing incentive mechanism has not been able to motivate employees for a long time. The reason is that it does not take into consideration the particularity of the hotel industry and the peculiarity of the frontline hotel staff.

V. STUDY ON THE STRATEGY OF IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF HOTEL EMPLOYEES' INCENTIVE MECHANISM

The organizational structure of Hyatt Regency Hotel employees' incentive mechanism effectiveness improvement strategy is shown in figure 2.



Figure 2. Organization chart of employees' incentive mechanism effectiveness improvement strategy

Reform the Employees' Compensation System

At present, the remuneration system of Hyatt Regency Hotel has major weaknesses: the employee remuneration has not been rationalized, and the remuneration system has yet to be improved (MF1). To improve the effectiveness of the incentive mechanism and mobilize employees' enthusiasm for work, the key is to optimize the compensation system and enhance employees' sense of security and belonging to the hotel (MM1) (Ding, Borbon & Deng, 2022). As far as the current situation is concerned, Hyatt Regency Hotel implements a "post grade salary system" (MM1). The base salary is the main body of the system. The basic salary accounts for 80% or more of the total salary, while the performance commission only accounts for 20% or less of the total salary (MM1). This kind of salary structure can easily lead to employees' slackness, laziness, and even passive slackness, which cannot effectively motivate employees.

If the salary structure is reformed, the proportion of fixed salary is reduced, and the proportion of performance commission is increased, so that the ratio of fixed salary and variable salary becomes 60%: 40% can form a progressive corporate culture, stimulate employees' work enthusiasm and efficiency (Schraeder, Tears & Jordan, 2005; Sundaray, 2011). Appropriately adjusting the ratio of fixed salary and variable salary, which not only takes into account the security of salary for employees' life, but also can effectively mobilize employees' enthusiasm.

Improve Employees' Promotion System

An employee's loyalty to a hotel often depends on the hotel's benefits and promotion standards (Ottenbacher, Shaw & Lockwood, 2006; Mokaya, Musau, Wagoki & Karanja, 2013; Ineson, Benke & László, 2013). Because no employee is willing to stay in the same hotel for a few years or even a dozen years and stagnate in the original position and salary, this is extremely unfair to an employee who has worked for the hotel for many years (MF1, MM1). Therefore, many hotels have set up their promotion system, that is, employees who meet certain conditions can be promoted or raised (Yang, Wan & Fu, 2012, Tang & Tang, 2012), which is determined by their usual work performance (MF1, MC1). To remain fair and rational, incentives must be employee-centric focus. In view of the fact that the middle-level personnel in most departments of Hyatt Regency Hotel are basically saturated, for employees who meet the promotion conditions but cannot be promoted, cross-department or cross-hotel

promotion can be adopted, so that employees can maintain their vision of future career development in the hotel. At the same time, after the promotion system is formulated, it should be implemented for a long time to maintain its continuity and stability.

Establish A Multi-Channel Training Incentive Mechanism

The human resources department should go deep into the basic units of the hotel to understand the work conditions of the employees, think about the personal characteristics and development vision of the employees, and explore the vocational training methods that the employees love (Madjar, Oldham & Pratt, 2002; Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2006). In terms of training methods, work exchange meetings, regular training courses, free online education resources, expert guidance, etc. can be adopted to realize the combination of online and offline training, internal training, and professional team training so as to activate the work of employees' working ideas to improve the professional standards of employees (MF1). Establish an internal training team, integrate the hotel's existing human resources, create "excellent employees" in various positions, and conduct one-to-many teaching of business skills in terms of training time, timely training, regular training, and appropriate flexible training (MC1). For new employees, more attention should be paid to timely training, and only qualified employees can be employed (MM1). In addition, it is necessary to insist on regular training and constantly update the knowledge reserve of employees, so that employees can always maintain a positive and progressive learning state (Labaree, 1997; Aronowitz & Giroux, 2003). Training content, in addition to the training of work content in terms of "life skills", we can combine the actual situation of the hotel to carry out cooking competitions, bartending competitions, job skills competitions, etc. (EC3, EC4) to stimulate employees' desire to learn, let them really participate in the training and improve their overall quality.

Build an Incentive Mechanism Combining Material and Spirit

According to its own characteristics, the hotel formulates the incentive mechanism in line with the actual situation. Incentive measures cannot be singled out. Building an incentive mechanism that combines material and spiritual incentives is the focus of the work of the human resources department (Robinson, 2001; Zhao & Du, 2012; Liu, 2014). For employees with outstanding work ability, it is recommended to give timely feedback

and praise in public (Fry & Nisiewicz, 2013; Chalofsky, 2003). In addition to appropriate material rewards, employees with outstanding performance can also be given spiritual praise through the Honor Roll (MM1). The incentive mechanism should be flexible and try to ensure that every employee can be motivated, so as to improve their enthusiasm for work and better complete their own work (Herzberg, 2008; Herzberg, 2010; Sandhya & Kumar, 2011). All in all, if the hotel wants to improve its internal employee incentive mechanism, it must adhere to a principle - the combination of material and spiritual incentives to ensure the effectiveness of the incentive mechanism for employees in various departments. Different departments and employees have different demands and expectations (Karunaratne & Jayawardena, 2010; Bish & Becker, 2016). For example, room cleaners pay more attention to material incentives, while colleagues at the reception desk in the lobby are more inclined to have platforms to exercise and improve themselves (MF1).

VI. CONCLUSION

Incentive mechanism is a complex system engineering, which needs to comprehensively consider the internal and external factors of the hotel. On the one hand, the incentive mechanism should be based on the actual situation of the hotel and combined with the needs of hotel employees (Tang & Tang, 2012; Zhao, 2016). On the other hand, the incentive mechanism should comprehensively consider the changes in the external environment, such as the welfare benefits of the employees in the industry, etc. The incentive mechanism plays an important role in hotel management and is an important part of hotel management that cannot be ignored (Torres & Kline, 2006; Kim & Lee, 2013). It is particularly important to build a rational and effective incentive mechanism. Hotel management and human resources management departments need to pay attention to employees' incentives (Maroudas, Kyriakidou & Vacharis, 2008; He, Mao, Morrison & Coca-Stefaniak, 2020). In addition, continuously strengthen the cultural construction of the hotel, create a competitive and positive working atmosphere, stimulate employees' enthusiasm, and promote the optimization of human resources. Using incentives to generate high efficiency is also to use incentives to generate cohesion (Ingram & Roberts, 2000). Through research and analysis, this paper draws the following conclusions:

It is concluded that the Hyatt Regency Hotel has some deficiencies in the incentive

mechanism. Through interviews with employees in various departments of the hotel, the study found that the hotel's salary system is irrational, the promotion system is imperfect, the training system is weak, and long-term incentives are weakened.

Put forward suggestions on how to effectively build an incentive mechanism for hotels. Based on the hotel survey, combined with the actual situation of each department, the following suggestions are put forward in view of its existing problems: continuously improve the salary system and promotion system, establish a training incentive mechanism, pay attention to both material and spiritual incentives, and constantly update the incentives mechanisms, which provide ideas for the future improvement of the hotel.

This paper addresses some of the limitations and recommendations for future research worth highlighting as follows:

First, this study analyzes the structural characteristics of incentive management and incentive mechanism based on case study, and then conducts an empirical analysis of the hotels' incentive mechanism. Therefore, the implementation form and improvement measures of the incentive mechanism in this paper are only proposed for the problem of Hyatt Regency Hotel and should not be generalized in the contexts of other hotels.

Second, from the perspective of research objectives, this paper aims at solving problems encountered by Hyatt Regency Hotel in Dongguan, China. Therefore, the study suggests the improvement of the human resources management system as well as the efficient implementation of the incentive mechanism due to the large number of payment transactions.

Third, the sample source only randomly selected four employees from different departments. The applicability of the research findings to other employees in the same industry needs to be further tested. Future research should develop to assess the following aspects: First, expand the scope of research, improve the theoretical model for building incentive mechanisms, and enhance the applicability of the incentive mechanism for hotel employees; second, analyze the role of spiritual incentives on the incentive mechanism. While pursuing material incentives, we must also play the role of spiritual incentives. It is best to integrate the two for overall research and constantly explore the research methods.

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