

Abstract

The aim of this research is to identify how a positive working environment can be nurtured through utilising positive reinforcement and recognition to motivate employees. The intention of this study is to discover the definition of a positive working environment and to determine valuable skills and techniques managers may use to foster a positive working atmosphere. Furthermore, the meaning of this project is to investigate the effectiveness of giving and receiving positive reinforcement and recognition as a manager and an employee. The final purpose of this dissertation is to explore why positive methods are not always effective in generating an encouraging and motivating working environment.

The companies in this research are very different in nature however both companies share the desire to create and sustain a positive working environment. Company X is an Irish company with 35 employees, in comparison Company Y is a multinational business with 15,000 employees worldwide. The sample population consists of two Human Resource Managers, two Line Managers and three Employees. The research methodology utilised in this study is a qualitative case study approach with an exploratory design through face to face interviews with participants.

Both primary and secondary research offers an understanding of a positive working environment. It is found that fair policies, respect and hard work define an optimistic working atmosphere in Company X; however the element of fun is deemed to be a major importance in Company Y. The skills and techniques that are discussed include trust, communication, positive expectations, team work, reward techniques, recognition methods, positive reinforcement procedures, personal well-being and interview skills. The effectiveness of positivity is found to be generally positive however, working relationships have a substantial effect on the motivation that may occur (Ventrice, 2009). The personal well-being and character of the individual appears to be the cause of why positive methods may not be effective. The need to recruit the right type of person is discovered as a skill that appears to be overlooked by many companies today, thus explaining the challenge of nurturing a positive working environment.

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Ethical Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is wholly my own work except where I have made explicit reference to the work of others. I have read the chapter Structured Masters' Programmes Research Policy, Procedures, and Guidelines and I hereby declare that this dissertation is in line with these requirements. I have discussed, agreed and complied with whatever confidentiality or anonymity terms of reference were deemed appropriate by those participating in the research and dealt appropriately with any other ethical matters arising.

I have uploaded the entire dissertation as one file to Turnitin® in Moodle®, examined my 'Originality Report' by viewing the detail behind the overall 'Similarity Index' in the 'Match Overview' listing, and have addressed any matches that exceed 3% in this listing. I have made every effort to minimise my overall 'Similarity Index' score and the number of matches occurring.

Kelly Dunford

Date

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Ethical Declaration.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Figures.....	ix
List of Tables.....	x
List of Appendices.....	xi
Chapter One: Introduction	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Rationale and Justification for the Research	1
1.3 Outline of the Research Problem	2
1.4 Research Objectives	3
1.5 Contributions of the Study	4
1.6 Limitations of the Study	4
1.7 Methodology	5
1.8 Organisation of the Dissertation.....	5
1.9 Conclusion.....	6
Chapter Two: Literature Review	7
2.1 Introduction:.....	7
2.2 A Positive Working Environment	8
2.3 Skills and Techniques to Nurture a Positive Working Environment	9
2.3.1 Trust.....	10
2.3.2 Communication	10

2.3.3 Positive Expectations.....	11
2.3.4 Team work.....	11
2.3.5 Reward Techniques	12
2.3.6 Recognition Techniques	13
2.3.7 Positive Reinforcement Techniques	13
2.7.8 Personal Well-Being.....	14
2.7.9 Interviewing Skills.....	15
2.4 The Importance of Positive Reinforcement and Utilising Recognition to Motivate Employees	15
2.5 Reasons why Positive Reinforcement and Recognition may not be effective for all employees.....	17
2.6 Literature Review Conclusion.....	19
Chapter Three: Research Methodology.....	20
3.1 Introduction	20
3.2 Research Question.....	20
3.3 Research Objectives	20
3.4 Research Design.....	21
3.4.1 Exploratory Research	21
3.4.2 Descriptive Research	22
3.4.3 Justification for Exploratory Research Design	22
3.5 Research Methodology.....	22
3.5.1 Quantitative Research.....	23
3.5.2 Qualitative Research.....	23
3.5.3 Justification of Qualitative Research.....	24
3.6 Qualitative Data Collection Methods.....	24

3.6.1 Secondary Qualitative Collection Methods	25
3.6.2 Primary Qualitative Collection Methods	25
3.7 Face-to-face Interviews	25
3.7.1 Advantages of Face-to-Face Interviews	25
3.7.2 Disadvantages of Interviews.....	26
3.8 Case Studies	27
3.8.1 Advantages of Case Studies	27
3.8.2 Disadvantages of Case Studies	28
3.8.3 Case Study Selection	28
3.9 Data Analysis	28
3.10 Limitations of the Research.....	29
3.11 Ethical Statement.....	29
3.14 Conclusion.....	29
Chapter Four: Findings.....	30
4.1 Introduction	30
4.2 Profile of Case Study Selection.....	30
4.3 Operational Details.....	31
4.3 Findings of the Definition of a Positive Working Environment	32
4.3.1 A Positive Working Environment Defined By Human Resource Professionals.....	32
4.3.2 A Positive Working Environment Defined By Line Managers.....	33
4.4 Objective one: To discover the skills and techniques that managers can use to nurture a positive working environment.....	34
4.4.1 A Human Resource Management point of view	35
4.4.2 A Line Manager's perspective.....	37
4.4.3 An employee's perspective.....	39

4.5 Objective Two: To develop a comparative analysis of the effectiveness of positive reinforcement and recognition on the manager (the giver) and the employee (the receiver).	40
4.5.1 The effectiveness of positive reinforcement and recognition on the manager (the giver).....	40
4.5.2 The effectiveness of positive reinforcement and recognition on the employee (the receiver)	41
4.6 Objective Three: To understand why positive reinforcement and recognition may not motivate employees.....	42
4.6.1 Human Resource Management Point of View	42
4.6.2 Line Manager Point of View	43
4.6.3 Employees Point of View	44
4.7 Conclusion.....	45
Chapter Five: Discussion.....	46
5.1 Introduction	46
5.2 A Positive Working Environment.....	46
5.3 Discussion regarding Objective One: Skills and Techniques to Nurture a Positive Working Environment.....	48
5.3.1 Trust:.....	48
5.3.2 Communication and Positive Expectations:	48
5.3.3 Teamwork.....	49
5.3.4 Reward, Recognition and Reinforcement Techniques	49
5.3.5 Personal Well-Being.....	50
5.3.6 Interviewing Skills.....	51

5.4 Discussion regarding Objective Two: The effectiveness of positive reinforcement and recognition on the manager (the giver) and the employee (the receiver).....	51
5.4.1 The effectiveness on the manager (the giver).....	51
5.4.2 The effectiveness on the employee (the receiver)	52
5.5 Discussion regarding Objective Three: To understand why positive reinforcement and recognition may not motivate employees.....	53
5.6 Conclusion.....	54
Chapter Six: Conclusions and Recommendations	55
6.1 Introduction	55
6.2 Objectives of the Study	55
6.3 Research Conclusions	55
6.4 Recommendations for Practitioners	57
6.5 Recommendations for Further Study	58
Bibliography:.....	60
Appendices.....	71
Appendices One: McGregor’s Motivational Theory	71
Appendices Two: Herzberg’s Motivational Theory.....	72
Appendices Three: Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs	73
Appendices Four: Letter/E-mail to Participants.....	74
Appendices Five: Consent Form	75
Appendices Six: Interview Questions	76
Appendices Seven: Personal Reflection.....	83

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List of Figures

Figure	Name	Page
4.3.1	A positive working environment defined by human resource professional	32
4.3.2	A positive working environment defined by line managers	33
4.3.3	A positive working environment defined by employees	34
4.4.1	Skills and Techniques managers use to nurture a positive working environment from a human resource management point of view.	35
4.4.2	Skills and Techniques managers use to nurture a positive working environment from a line manager's point of view.	37
4.4.3	Skills and Techniques managers use to nurture a positive working environment from an employee's point of view.	39
4.5.1	Manager's ratings of giving positive reinforcement and recognition.	40
4.5.2	Receiver's ratings of giving positive reinforcement and recognition.	41
4.6.1	Human resource management point of view of why positive reinforcement and recognition may not motivate employees.	42
4.6.2	Line Manager's point of view of why positive reinforcement and recognition may not motivate employees.	43
4.6.3	Employee's point of view of why positive reinforcement and recognition may not motivate employees.	44

List of Tables

Table	Name	Page
4.3	Operational Details of Participants of Interviews	31

List of Appendices

Appendices	Name	Page
One	McGregor's Motivational Theory	71
Two	Herzberg's Motivational Theory	72
Three	Maslow's Theory of Hierarchy of Needs	73
Four	Letter/E-mail to Participants	74
Five	Confidentiality Agreement	75
Six	Interview Questions	76
Seven	Personal Reflection	83

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Chapter one provides the reader with a broad overview of the dissertation. This chapter outlines the rationale and justification of the study and its relatedness to the wider areas of business, followed by the research problem and objectives of the research. Furthermore, the appropriate methodology is briefly examined along with the contribution and limitations of the research. Moreover, the organisation of the study will be explored and a synopsis of main discussions will conclude the chapter.

1.2 Rationale and Justification for the Research

The predominant rationale for this assignment is to research and examine the impact managers have on nurturing a positive working environment. Consequently, this research will explore the power of motivating employees by means of positive reinforcement and utilising recognition. This title was chosen as it is believed that positivity can result in people thriving, thus motivating individuals to achieve their personal and professional goals in life (Evan, 2010). The author feels very passionate about this topic as she, as a qualified secondary school teacher, has practical experience of authentic results from simply forming a positive teaching environment in classrooms. The author has been successful in her past teaching experiences in motivating students; this experience has resulted in the interest in developing the knowledge and skills to be able to positively encourage people to perform to accomplish goals in the workplace.

In addition, practices of self-fulfilling prophecies are acknowledged such as the Pygmalion effect or McGregor's Theory Y (refer to Appendices One for further information on McGregor's Motivational Theory) that can nurture a positive and productive atmosphere, it is true to say that the recognition of self-fulfilling prophecies is necessary for managers to effectively create an working environment (Stroh, Northcraft, Neale, Kern and Langlands, 2003). It is understood that substantial changes can occur in the attitudes and work ethic of people when positive reinforcement and recognition is applied (Ventrice, 2009). This research aims to fill the gap in literature of how positive reinforcement can be practiced

effectively and how recognition can be utilised successfully to ensure a positive working environment is developed (Marrelli, 2010).

Finally, a positive working environment can result in the difference between success and failure for an organisation (Sreenivas, 2006). It is accepted that good relationships among employees can lead to improved teamwork where innovative thinking is encouraged thus positively affecting the success of the organisation (Hammilton, 2001). It is hoped that a discovery skills and techniques that managers can use to nurture a positive working environment will emerge from this research. A comparative analysis of the impact on the giver (the manager) and the receiver (the employee) of positive reinforcement and recognition will be explored as it is evident that there is a gap in literature for this comparative study.

1.3 Outline of the Research Problem

The rationale of this section is to understand clearly the research problem arising from the literary review (O'Leary, 2004). For the purpose of this dissertation the following title has been selected:

Nurturing a Positive Working Environment: An Understanding of the Power of Positive Reinforcement and Utilising Recognition to Motivate Employees

The theory of creating a positive working environment has been examined and analysed by many academic professionals however it seems that many employees still do not feel appreciated in the workforce (Marrelli, 2007). Ventrice (2009) elucidates how people are unique and what motivates one person may not motivate another, consequently what may seem like positivity to one employee may seem the opposite to another, thus it is significant to understand how to create an environment that will positively stimulate all characters in the workforce.

Furthermore, it is understood that financial rewards were once the primary way of showing employees recognition however changes to the economic environment has made extrinsic rewards less feasible therefore the research problem of how to show recognition with no financial cost needs to be discovered (Nelson and Spitzer, 2002).

1.4 Research Objectives

It is evident that the research objectives derive from the research questions (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). Saunders et al. explain the necessity in choosing understandable and accessible objectives to allow for the research problem to be explored. For the purpose of this research paper, three objectives have been developed as follows:

➤ Objective One:

To discover the skills and techniques that managers can use to nurture a positive working environment.

As expressed by literature, there are various skills and techniques that managers can use to nurture a positive working environment (Abell and Napoleon 2008). Under this objective, the author wants to discover skills and techniques that can nurture a positive working environment in the workplace and how these may impact employee motivation.

➤ Objective Two:

To develop a comparative analysis of the effectiveness of positive reinforcement and recognition on the manager (the giver) and the employee (the receiver).

The author wants to understand how positive reinforcement and recognition affects the manager (the giver), to understand if managers like giving positive feedback. The impact on the employee (the receiver) is to be discovered. The author wants to compare and contrast the effectiveness of positive reinforcement and recognition on managers and employees to understand if the emotions of both parties are similar or different. The author wants to discover the effect of positive reinforcement and recognition on the working environment.

➤ Objective Three:

To understand why positive reinforcement and recognition may not motivate employees

From literature, the author understands that different people are motivated in different ways, thus a positive working environment can be formed in a number of ways depending on the different employees (Ventrice, 2009). The author wants to understand when positivity does

not work and when other approaches need to be used to motivate employees and achieve results.

1.5 Contributions of the Study

It is believed that this study will be beneficial to human resource professionals, managers at all levels and employees as the understanding of how to nurture a positive working environment from a professional, managerial and employee perspective is determined. Human resource professionals may increase their knowledge and appreciation for positive strategies and practices in organisations as an insight to successful methods to enhance the effectiveness of positive reinforcement and recognition will be explored. A greater understanding of skills and techniques to establish a positive working environment may be gained by managers; this may lead to the increase in managers self confidence in their ability to productively manage people through positive recognition and reinforcement. In addition, a holistic understanding of how people feel giving and receiving positive recognition and reinforcement may be acknowledged which can enhance effectiveness of future practices and methods in organisations. Furthermore, knowledge of why positivity in the workplace may not always produce a positive result is explored, allowing managers and human resource practitioners to understand the essentiality of adapting strategies to individual needs. Overall, this study may assist managers to nurture a positive working environment by using reinforcement and recognition in an appropriate manner to motivate and encourage employees, thus increasing productivity and profits of firms.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

The chief limitation of this study is the author is time restricted, with this in mind two companies with a total of seven people participated in the research. The author would have wished to conduct research at a wider scale in many organisations to gain a deeper understanding of the objectives, particularly from the perspective of the employee if time constraints were not an issue.

1.7 Methodology

The collecting and analysing of both primary and secondary data will be used to gain a profound knowledge and understanding of the research problem (Byrne, 2013). Secondary data will entail the review of literature from various sources, including academic articles, journals, database resources and books. It is suggested by Wilson and Odgen (2008) that secondary data should be gathered and studied to a great extent before attempting to collect primary data. To ensure the objectives are achieved, the author will carry out primary research in the manner of semi-structured interviews with human resource professionals, line managers and employees and develop a case study on each company.

1.8 Organisation of the Dissertation

Chapter one delineates an overall view of the research project. The research problem and objectives are defined along with the methodology practiced and limitations of the dissertation.

Chapter two provides the literature review containing relevant information from past researchers. This chapter emphasises the necessity of conducting this research as it highlights the gap in literature.

Chapter three presents the qualitative approach that is used in achieving the objectives of the research. Rationale of selecting methods of interviews and case studies is outlined.

Chapter four outlines the findings of the primary research conducted. This findings chapter provides answers to objectives and contribute to the literature gap.

Chapter five consists of the discussion between the similarities and differences among theory and practice.

Chapter six consists of the overall conclusions and recommendations of the study

1.9 Conclusion

This introductory chapter is the basic foundation for the dissertation. It provides the reader with the main design and the key concepts that is elaborated on in further chapters. The rationale and justification of the study is examined and the research problem and objectives are discussed. The methodology, contributions and limitations of the research were delineated and the organisation of the study was briefly outlined in conclusion of the chapter.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction:

This chapter presents previous academic and professional research conducted on the skills and techniques needed to nurture a positive working environment. This chapter provides evidence that a positive working environment can enhance the motivation of the workers therefore benefitting the entire organisation. Furthermore, this chapter illustrates the importance of positive reinforcement and recognition to nurture a positive working atmosphere, thus motivating employees. Moreover, this chapter raises the interesting question as to why positive reinforcement and recognition may not always prove effective for all employees.

To begin the review of literature, one can state that the most essential yet complex role of a manager is to provide a positive working atmosphere where employees feel motivated and engaged (Pride, Hughes & Kapoor 2004). Christopher (2003) explains how managers can use skills and techniques to nurture a positive working environment, thus creating a motivated workforce. It is evident that developing a positive environment has a tremendous effect on the success of the organisation (Lauby, 2005). Madura (2006) explains how motivated employees can lead to an increase in productivity, which in turn results in an increase in profits for the organisation.

Moreover, Nelson and Spilzer (2002) explain how challenging times due to the economic crisis has actually widened opportunities for managers to explore the true value of recognition which does not involve the use of extrinsic rewards but involves using the much deeper recognition that develops from the intrinsic value of others (Chen, Ma, Jin and Fosh, 2011) . It can be said that positive reinforcement and intrinsic recognition holds the utmost value and the lowest cost (Urquhart, 2011). Ventrice (2009) explains the impact of recognition and positive reinforcement depends on the personality and the characteristics of the individual, for example as Daft and Lane (2009) propose a confident manager may feel joy when giving recognition to his/her employees whereas a manager suffering from low self-esteem may find it difficult to give credit to others. On the other hand as Podmoroff (2005) elucidates, employees may also respond to positive reinforcement and recognition very differently depending on their nature for example one employee may thrive as a result of

his/her idea being published in the workplace newsletter whereas another employee could feel embarrassed and uncomfortable with this recognition.

Furthermore, Podmoroff (2005) argues that an effective manager should get to know employees on an individual basis to identify individual positive motivators, thus nurturing a positive atmosphere. It can be said that the key to motivating employees is the recognition of the fact that what motivates one employee, may not motivate another (Iland, 2013). Thus, accepting employee individuality often requires managers to create a variety of motivational techniques and methods to generate a motivated positive working environment (Crouse, 2005).

2.2 A Positive Working Environment

The environment of the workplace can drastically influence how people feel about their work (Daft, 2011). The environment can be understood as everything that shapes the involvement of workers such as relationship with work colleagues and managers, organisational culture, opportunities to professionally and personally prosper (Lewis, 2011).

A positive environment can be described by Marrelli (2010), as an environment where each working member is treated with dignity and respect, where the abilities and knowledge of workers are acknowledged and where productivity and customer service are enhanced due to the contentedness of managers and employees in the positive atmosphere. In addition, employees feel safe and secure in a positive working environment as there are policies, rules and regulations put in place to ensure fairness, equality, working conditions and employee rights (Evans, 2010).

Carver (2005) elucidates that a positive working environment is a place where employees look forward to coming to work and they enjoy the experience and challenges work endures. Capon (2009) explicates that the environment is friendly and helpful, a workplace where each member of staff aims to work with one another. Furthermore, according to Knight (2008), a positive working environment is an environment where workers feel comfortable and confident in communicating with one another individually and as a team.

It can be argued that a positive atmosphere is fostered when the employees and managers generate a positive working relationship (Butler, 2004), thus work in collaboration to achieve goals (Gerson, 2006). Butler (2004) illustrates that a positive working environment is one where employees feel appreciated by their managers, thus giving workers a sense of purpose in the work they conduct in the organisation. Furthermore, Evans (2010) understands that when workers feel appreciated they are positively motivated and engaged to perform to their best abilities. To continue, Shukla (2009) suggests that the working environment is positive when managers and employers openly recognise the skills, knowledge and efforts of each team member. Employees are given the opportunity to be innovative with managers encouraging the ideas and solutions of their employees. Finally, a positive workplace contains managers who, not only, takes pride in their accomplishment of personal and professional growth in the workplace but also provides opportunities for employees to experience personal and professional growth within the organisation (Burchell and Robin, 2010).

To conclude, Ricketts (2010) suggests employers should recognise the importance of promoting a positive working environment as it can attract new skill and talent, retain and motivate employees, therefore increasing productivity and profits of the organisation. A positive working environment can be advantageous to the organisation as employees feel they can contribute and share ideas which can often lead to innovative creations or solutions to business problems (Mauzy and Harriman, 2003). Furthermore, Watson (2010) proposes that a positive working environment can ensure a healthy work-life balance which can lead to happier people at home and work.

2.3 Skills and Techniques to Nurture a Positive Working Environment

It is understood that managers can create a positive working environment by using skills and techniques to make the workplace an enjoyable place to be (Veeck and Williams 2005). For the purpose of this dissertation, the most recurrent skills and techniques provided by various literatures will be discussed.

2.3.1 Trust

Trust is the essence of all relationships; therefore an environment of trust is highly significant for building a positive workplace (Kitchen and Schultz, 2001). It can be said that trust is displayed in the actions of the manager and employees as it reflects everything a worker does in the organisation (Garber 2004). Tarafder (2004) states that managers can develop trust by demonstrating responsibility, reliability, accountability and consistency to their employees, resulting in a positive working environment. Maister (2012) believes that it is highly significant for the words and performances of managers to be harmonious to ensure trust is formed between the manager and the employees, thus creating a dependable relationship. Day (1999) expounds that a trustworthy relationship between the employer and the employee helps to create a positive working environment even in undesirable circumstances. Trust can be maintained in difficult situations when managers are truthful, sincere and compassionate as employees will uphold their respect for their manager (Day, 1999). However, it is noted by Gollan (2006) that a manager must put in a great deal of time and effort to build trust with their employees. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that time is precious in organisations thus attempts to build trust is often overlooked (Gollan, 2006).

2.3.2 Communication

Schermerhorn (2010) makes it very clear that managers need excellent communication skills to generate an effective positive workforce that feels worthy and valued in the organisation. Managers can use communication techniques such as greeting employees, listening to employees and talking with employees that are deemed to be very simplistic, yet highly effective as employees feel valued and respected (Garber 2004). It is evident that communicating and sharing the goals of the company with employees can have a positive effect on the working environment (Parker, 2010). Posner (2012) suggest that managers should take the time to articulate their commitment to their job and communicate their efforts in performing to their best ability to motivate their employees to model this positive behaviour. The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy promotes positive communication between managers and employee as it is acknowledged that people will make an effort to at the very least satisfy the communicated expectations of the manager (Stroh, Northcraft, Neale, Kern and Langlands, 2003). However, Blecker, McCormick and Topchik (2012) place emphasis on the time constraints and the busy schedule of managers in organisations thus taking the time to

communicate to employees has proven to be very difficult for many managers in today's demanding workplace.

2.3.3 Positive Expectations

Additionally, Kalpin (2009) elucidates that the Self-Fulfilling Prophecy is demonstrated in Douglas McGregor's Motivational Theory. Moreover, it can be argued that Douglas McGregor's Theory Y on motivation can be an effective tool that can be used by managers to generate a positive working environment; positivity can arise when managers expect the best from employees and when managers assume employees are ambitious, committed and self-disciplined (Schermerhorn, 2010). Harris & Brannick (1999) understand that giving employees the freedom to be creative and to solve problems results in a positive work ethic. According to Daft & Marcic (2012) employees feel motivated as they have the opportunity to use their individual talent and to accept responsibility within the organisation. McGregor explains that Theory Y managers understand that employees take pride in accomplishing tasks; managers believe that the satisfaction of successfully completing a task is a powerful motivation. It is apparent that Theory Y management forms a positive relationship between managers and employees, consequently nurturing a trusting climate where communication is encouraged and decision making is shared, thus creating team spirit and a positive working environment (Secord, 2003).

2.3.4 Team work

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (refer to Appendices Three for further information) demonstrates the need for humans to feel a sense of belonging (Tucker, 2010). It can be said that managers have the responsibility to ensure employees have the opportunity to fulfil this basic human need (Cooper and Burke, 2011). To create team spirit and to ensure a positive environment is sustained, Holbeche and Matthews (2012) propose managers to encourage collaboration among employees, also the importance of managers being proactive in their

ability to help employees complete tasks is emphasised. Moreover, Holbeche and Matthew (2012) understand the importance of employees sharing one general goal rather than various individual goals, which can lead to competitiveness between staff. Additionally, Abell and Napoleon (2008) explain ways in which managers can create a team working environment;

- Developing the relationship of team members by providing the opportunity for staff to get to know one another by allowing a small number of minutes at staff meetings to allow employees to share a positive experience in their personal life.
- Celebrating occasions such as birthdays or special events by presenting food, cake or special banner to celebrate are certain ways of ensuring staff feel appreciated.
- Ensure stretch exercises are part of the daily routine with different employee taking responsibility to lead the exercises each day. Physical activity helps to promote team bonding and healthy mind and body (Glover, 1992).
- Incorporate respectful humour as much as possible into daily working environment; illustrate the importance of fun in work such as simply laughing with each other at times in work.

2.3.5 Reward Techniques

Armstrong (2007) highlights the importance of providing rewards and bonuses in nurturing a positive working environment. It is deemed necessary to offer adequate pay and bonuses to ensure employees feel rewarded for their work. Furthermore, Shields (2007) suggests additional benefits including paid holiday leave and private health insurance are deemed significant in nurturing a positive working environment. Morrison and Adams (2013) appreciate the essentiality of career development as an encouraging technique to reward employees thus developing positive working environment. However, Boone and Kurtz (2009) highlight the substantial cost to the firm in providing financial rewards to employees.

2.3.6 Recognition Techniques

Armstrong (2007) elucidates to the value of the different types of recognition. In addition, there is great emphasis on the opportunity for managers to give recognition on a daily basis that includes smiling, say thank you and complimenting employees work (Armstrong, 2007). Stephens and McCallum (2005) express the motivational effect of intrinsic recognition that includes credit for job well done at a meeting or a positive letter in the file of the employee. Furthermore, recognition such as employee discounts tickets to an event, vouchers and free car parking are very effective in creating a positive working environment to employees who are financially orientated. It is acknowledged by Nelson and Spitzer (2002) that employers can convey a strong message of appreciation through formal recognition methods such as awards for performance for example ‘employee of the month award’, employee events and celebrations. Nelson and Spitzer (2002) understand that applying recognition techniques can be time consuming and costly for managers; however it is emphasised that the benefits for the individuals in the organisation has an overall positive effect on the organisation itself.

2.3.7 Positive Reinforcement Techniques

Skinner’s Operant Conditioning Theory outlines behaviour that brings positive rewards and consequences is most likely to be repeated. Rewards include the recognition and reinforcement of positive actions (Nevid, 2011). Bogardus (2009) explicates that performance reviews should be an opportunity for employers to use positive reinforcement to inspire employees to replicate good behaviour. The significance of providing employees with specific feedback in performance reviews is highlighted by Bogardus (2009). For example as an alternative to saying “Great job”, it is suggested managers should specifically say “I was very impressed with the way you used your own initiative to solve the problem on the floor yesterday, that demonstrated creativity and ambition”. Schermerhorn (2011) describes that positive reinforcement can be used even when addressing issues, for example by saying to an employee “you are a valuable employee in this store, we need you here on time every morning” instead of saying “you are always late”. Schneid (1998) makes it clear that Positive reinforcement is by no means a substitute for appropriate disciplinary procedures in the workplace. It is significant to concentrate on the positive achievements of employees; however unacceptable behavior should not be ignored. Moreover, a positive working balance

is created with the balance of positive reinforcement. Shell (2012) explains that autocratic managers do not understand the benefit of expecting the best from employees, it is believed they know best at all times thus generating potential frustration for employees in an organisation.

2.7.8 Personal Well-Being

The personal well-being of the individual has a remarkable effect on the working environment as healthy workers are happy and productive explains Theobald and Cooper (2001). Albrecht (2010) understands the vitality of managers having the ability to handle stress and pressure in work is highly significant to ensure the working environment remains positive. Francis and Woodcock (1996) acknowledges that managers have structures in place to promote the well-being of employees however the well-being of the manager is often overlooked. Moreover, it is understood that the responsibilities of managers can be very intense, thus the lack of care for well-being has negative consequences. Seaward (2006) highlights the need to sustain a healthy body with a nutritious diet and regular exercise to ensure an individual's well-being is maintained. Haar and Ford (2013) emphasise the importance of time management skills to be able to promote a positive working environment. The technique of using specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely (SMART) goals proves to decrease stress and enhance the confidence and motivation of the individual (Harr and Ford, 2013). Hobson (2013) identifies the need for managers to balance work and life activities. The regular practice of work/life evaluations through surveys and meetings with other professional is beneficial as managers have the opportunity to recognise their balance between life and work. The provision of workshops is an effective tool to ensure managers are aware of the strengths of work/life balance; however these workshops are very time consuming and costly to a firm (Hobson, 2013).

2.7.9 Interviewing Skills

The skill of selecting the suitable individual to join the company is highly significant to ensure a positive environment is maintained throughout the life cycle of a business (Davila and Kursmark, 2004). Managers need to have the ability to hire the best person for the company to ensure the new member will add to the positive working environment, thus enhance the motivation of the workforce (Mackey and Wilson, 2013). Brown (2011) explains that recruiting the right people needs to be placed as a chief importance in order to retain, engage and stimulate workers in the business. Furthermore, Brown (2011) elucidates that the creation of a great place to work begins with the people in the company. However, it is understood that when a company experiences a period of rapid growth more employees are needed extremely fast. Firms may be forced to recruit individuals regardless of their skills, experience or personality as they simply need workers to fulfil demand and supply (Burchell and Robin, 2010).

2.4 The Importance of Positive Reinforcement and Utilising Recognition to Motivate Employees

Positive reinforcement is defined by Nigro (2007) as the practice of rewarding desired performance of employees in order to encourage repetition of this behaviour and to stimulate employees desire to surpass individual standards. Positive reinforcement motivates the receiver (employees) as it increases the employees' self-worth and self-image (Hellriegel and Slocum, 2008). Simmons-Welburn and McNeil (2004) explain how managers have the opportunity to use positive reinforcement when evaluating staff performances. Furthermore, Simmons-Welburn and McNeil (2004) state that employees should look forward to staff evaluations as it should be a positive experience for both the manager and the employee. The manager has the opportunity to praise strengths and help employees to work towards how to improve weaknesses (Singer-Gordon, 2005). Armstrong and Baron (2005) explain how the use of positive reinforcement can be vital when giving evaluations to ensure the experience is encouraging and motivating for both the employer and the employee. Abell and Napoleon (2008) offer questions that managers can ask employees in the evaluating meeting to ensure a

positive atmosphere is maintained between the manager and employee and also maintained in the wider organisational community such as;

- What talents and abilities would the employee like to develop before the next evaluation meeting?
- What understanding and information would the employee like to know better?
- What changes would the employee like?
- What can the manager/organisation do to help the employee achieve personal goals?

Armstrong and Barron (2005) make the importance of revisiting issues raised in evaluation very clear, as the manager needs to demonstrate that the goals of the employees are important to him/her too. Gostick and Elton (2004) explain the significance of recognising the employee's attempt to develop and progress towards professional and personal goals.

It can be said that recognising and rewarding positive employee behaviour is fundamental to motivating and stimulating employees, consequently nurturing a positive working environment (Ventrice, 2009 and Marrelli, 2010). According to Gostick and Elton (2004) recognition is seen as the essence of innovative thinking, productivity and retention of employees in the workplace. It can be accepted that the sincerity beyond the reward is what makes the recognition valuable and not the actual reward itself (Stephens and McCallum, 2005). Recognition can result in employees becoming eager to improve their knowledge, to enhance their skills, to develop their techniques (O'Connor, 2010) and to accept greater responsibility within the working environment (Wingfield and Berry, 2001).

Moreover, it is understood that positive reinforcement and recognition not only impacts the receiver but also has a predominant effect on the giver (the manager). According to Gostick and Elton (2012), managers enjoy giving positive feedback to employees. It is acknowledged that giving positive feedback can have a positive effect on the manager as the manager may feel a sense of pride of the employees' diligence and efforts to achieve targets and goals (Hiam, 2003). It is suggested that positive reinforcement and recognition can be advantageous for managers as the fear factor in the working environment is eliminated, thus encouraging innovative mind-sets, thus gaining and sustaining competitive advantage within the organisation (Weiss and Legrand, 2011). It can be argued that managers benefit from giving recognition as an enthusiastic workplace is created where individuals support one

another to achieve goals. Finally, Lewis (2011) explains how giving positive reinforcement and recognition can make the job of a manager easier as it helps to develop a culture that accepts and adopts to change.

2.5 Reasons why Positive Reinforcement and Recognition may not be effective for all employees

It is important to note that positive reinforcement and recognition effect different people in different ways, Ventrice (2009) emphasises the importance of considering employee individuality when determining action to show recognition. When discussing employee individuality it can be wise for managers to understand various motivational theories to ensure all employees motivational needs are satisfied (Mullins, 2007). It is interesting to discover that positive theories on motivation such as McGregor's Motivational Theory and Herzberg's Motivational Theory (refer to Appendices Two for further information on Herzberg's Motivational Theory) may not always be effective (Adair, 2006).

Douglas McGregor's motivational Theory X explains how managers assume that employees do not enjoy work, lack ambition, and require strict discipline and guidance, thus forming a negative working atmosphere (Furnham, 1992). Georg & Gregor (2013) explain how a negative working environment can lead to hostility between managers and employees, therefore impacting employee motivation in a negative manner. However, studies have found (Daft & Marcic, 2012) that extrinsically motivated employees may actually perform better under an authoritarian management style; therefore it is possible for managers to create a positive working environment by fulfilling extrinsic needs of employees. Consequently, it can be understood that extrinsically motivated employees do not want opportunities to be innovative; they do not want the independence of accountability and are uncomfortable with the idea of receiving recognition or rewards for their behaviour (Thomas, 2009).

Further research has highlighted limitations of McGregors motivational Theory Y. Researchers such as Drucker, (1999) & Griffin (2008) have outlined restrictions of the positive approach of Theory Y which includes the fact that McGregor's theory is based entirely on assumptions. As each employee is unique it is questionable that one can assume the attitude and work ethic of an entire group of people. Powell (1999) explains that

employees come from a variety of backgrounds, education, race and gender which results in a variety of ways to motivate each one. As Theory Y involves getting to know each employee it can be seen as almost practically impossible in large firms (Fox, 2007).

The dual-factor theory of Herzberg states that job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction work independent of one another (Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman, 1959). It can be said that if the employees are satisfied with their jobs, an optimistic workplace is generated (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2010). According to Herzberg, employees are not fulfilled with the satisfaction of hygiene factors whereas motivator factors lead to employee contentment and high satisfaction (Pride, Hughes & Kapoor 2004), therefore leading to positive working environments. Differing from the work of Maslow and McGregor, Herzberg argues that employees are not motivated by hygiene factors. This can be important to recognise as managers may feel they can create a positive working environment by satisfying hygiene factors when this is not always the case.

However, Herzberg understands that the absence of these factors can lead to the drastic consequence of a dissatisfied and unmotivated workforce, thus creating severe problems for management and the company, resulting in the creation of a negative working environment (Pride, Hughes & Kapoor, 2010). Herzberg explains the need for managers to understand that even money cannot and will not motivate employees (Lussier, 2011), the key is to ensure employee wages are high enough to prevent employee dissatisfaction (Smoke, 2009).

Managers can use Herzberg's theory to encourage a move towards a highly motivated, highly satisfied and strongly committed workforce, thus creating a positive working environment (Hoffmann, 2007). According to Herzberg, managers can create a positive work environment by giving employees' responsibility and utilising recognition (Miner, 2007). Herzberg believes that the only way to motivate employees is by means of internal factors. Factors such as employee recognition, stimulation, responsibility and development and growth are seen by Herzberg as intrinsic motivational tools that will generate a positive working environment. One can conclude by saying managers need to be aware of what factors motivate their employees on an individual basis before they attempt to nurture a positive working environment as it can be accepted that attempting to satisfy the motivational factors and before fulfilling the hygiene factors could result in disengaged and unmotivated workforce, forming a negative relationship between employees and managers.

2.6 Literature Review Conclusion

In conclusion, the literature provides managers with an array of practical skills and techniques that can be adopted to nurture a positive working environment. It is necessary to recognise that different characteristics requires different forms of recognition to ensure recognition is valuable and worthy to each individual. It is stimulating to discover that employees value intrinsic recognition to be more worthy than costly rewards. It is thought-provoking to think that positive reinforcement and recognition not only effects the employee but also has an enormous effect on the manager and overall the entire organisation. One may find it astonishing to believe that a positive approach may not always be effective in a working environment as each individual is motivated and satisfied in a diverse range of ways.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research problem and objectives in a clear and focused manner, followed by a discussion on descriptive and exploratory research designs. Qualitative and quantitative methodologies are explored prior to selecting an appropriate approach for this research study. The justification and limitations for choosing the specific approaches are outlined. Primary and secondary data collection methods are analysed and one method is selected for this research. The advantages and disadvantages of face-to-face interviews and case studies will be discovered. The data analysis is made clear along with the operational details of participating companies and individuals. Finally, the limitations of the research study and reference to ethical issues are addressed.

3.2 Research Question

Research is identified as a systematic and coherent process of exploration and analysis that aims to enhance knowledge and understanding (Litchman, 2010). Kothari (2004) explains that defining the research question is a crucial part of a study as the concrete understanding of the research question is prerequisite to outlining the appropriate research design. The research question is as follows:

How is a positive working environment nurtured with the use of positive reinforcement and recognition to motivate employees?

3.3 Research Objectives

Polonsky and Waller (2010) elucidate that it is vital that research objectives are presented in a comprehensible and established manner to guide the research in exploring the research problem. The research objectives are as follows:

- *To discover the skills and techniques that managers can use to nurture a positive working environment*

- *To develop a comparative analysis of the effectiveness of positive reinforcement and recognition on the manager (the giver) and the employee (the receiver)*

- *To understand why positive reinforcement and recognition may not motivate employees*

3.4 Research Design

Willis (2008) emphasises that research design is a critical aspect in a research study as it helps the researcher to make appropriate decisions throughout the process. Primary qualitative collection methods for this dissertation is case study research with information gathered through face to face semi-structured interviews with human resource professionals, line managers and employees of two companies operating in the retail industry and biomedical industry. Flick (2014) understands the research design as a number of questions asked to determine the research plan. The research plan comprises of the gathering and studying of data to answer questions. Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006) elucidate to two research designs that include exploratory and descriptive research design.

3.4.1 Exploratory Research

Exploratory research is used to conduct enquiry into relatively unknown components of research. Exploratory research utilise an open, semi-structured or unstructured and inductive methods to research as it aims to discover original insights into the phenomena (Stebbins, 2001). Furthermore, the researcher has the opportunity to make a number of observations and conclusions to develop a general but approximate answer to the research problem or issue (Blanche et al, 2006).

3.4.2 Descriptive Research

Mitchell and Jolley (2012) state that descriptive research evaluates and describes the phenomena; it aims for precise and accurate findings. In addition, the focal point of this design is validity and reliability of the examination and the sample respondents. Descriptive research answers the question of what rather than the questions of how, when and why. Moreover, it is used for statistical calculations, percentages, averages, ratios and frequencies.

3.4.3 Justification for Exploratory Research Design

Exploratory research has been carefully selected for the purpose of this dissertation as it is acknowledged that research needs to be conducted in this topic (Nelson and Spitzer, 2002). Tavana (2014) explains that much research has been accomplished in how to motivate employees however there is an unknown element of how to nurture a positive working environment through positive reinforcement and recognition to result in employee motivation. Exploratory research comprises of studying an area of limited information in order to develop a greater understanding and answers to objectives (Stebbin, 2001). The main use of exploratory research is to enhance the researcher's knowledge and comprehension of the topic and determine the why and how elements of the research study. Majumdar (2007) explains a principal reason for using exploratory research is the ability to probe answers to obtain a rich understanding from the participants; also the researcher has the liberty to ask questions in a semi-structured manner to ensure impulsive issues can be addressed.

3.5 Research Methodology

Payne and Whittaker (2006) explain that there is a vast majority of methods available to use when attaining primary research. Kumer (2014) elucidates to the fundamental importance of selecting the appropriate methodology to successfully achieve the research objectives. Kumer (2014) offers a number of primary research methodologies that include qualitative and quantitative research.

3.5.1 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research entails answering the research question by the collection and analysis of data using statistical techniques (Muijis, 2010). Balnaves and Caputi (2001) explicates that quantitative research comprises of expressing behaviour and other variables using numbers and often involves deciding on a particular sample size to be researched.

Willis (2008) explains that the most common and simple form of quantitative research is in the form of a survey. Conducting research from surveys involves the formation of questions and the distribution of questionnaires to participants. Furthermore, the questionnaires often have a prearranged set of answers in the form of closed ended or multiple choice questions in order to collect data from the research participants (Hennum and Hoole, 2011).

3.5.2 Qualitative Research

Merriam (2014) gives an explanation of qualitative research as the study to describe, compare, contrast, decode and translate the meaning of a natural phenomenon in the world. In other words, qualitative research is concerned with the experiences of people, the meanings that people have formed and how people understand their experiences. Furthermore, the researcher aims for an in-depth comprehension of the individuals' opinions, qualitative research illustrates personality variables such as attitudes, outlooks and mind-sets and is presented in words rather than numbers (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009).

According to Creswell (2007), there are five main approaches to conducting qualitative research:

- Case Study is a method or record of research into the progression of a specific individual, group, or state over a period of time, it is a certain case of something utilised or examined in order to demonstrate an idea or theory (Oxford Dictionary, 2014).
- Narrative Research is a collection of methods that depend on the written or verbal words or visual account of the person; it is focused on the story of the interviewee (Lichtman, 2012).

- Phenomenology is one that concentrates on explanations of what and how people experience (Heidegger, 2005).
- Grounded Theory is a systematic style of conducting research that involves the finding of a hypothesis as a result of data analysis (Corbin and Strauss, 2008).
- Ethnography is the methodical account of individuals, groups and cultures with their traditions, behaviour, and common distinctions (O'Reilly, 2005).

3.5.3 Justification of Qualitative Research

The benefits and weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative methods are understood however qualitative research has been selected as the appropriate choice for the purpose of this dissertation. The feelings and experiences of the participants must be understood to ensure achievement of research objectives therefore qualitative research is the best option (Saunders et al 2009). This research study is very personal to each participant; therefore quantitative methods would not be suitable as predicted answers in surveys may not be adequate to respondents. It is much more viable to gain an in-depth understanding of a smaller sample of participants through qualitative research where personal experiences can be explored, stories can be shared, opinions can be discovered and issues that arise can be discussed in great detail (Creswell, 2007).

3.6 Qualitative Data Collection Methods

Saunders et al (2009) state data collection is the method of collecting and evaluating information to allow the researcher to develop answers to questions and analyse conclusions. Moreover, the data collection element focuses on honest and truthful collection of valuable data; this data can then be interpreted into analysis to develop reliable and worthy answers. Primary and Secondary data collection methods are the main forms.

3.6.1 Secondary Qualitative Collection Methods

Secondary qualitative collection methods have been used throughout this research process. The literature review offers an examination and an evaluation of literature through books, databases, journals, reports and other research papers. Information on the companies involved in the research was gathered through their online websites, internet journals, newspapers and executive magazines.

3.6.2 Primary Qualitative Collection Methods

A multiple case study research is chosen as primary qualitative collection methods for this dissertation. Face to face semi-structured interviews with human resource professionals, line managers and employees of the biomedical and retail industry are conducted.

3.7 Face-to-face Interviews

Qualitative research is frequently used by researchers in the form of conducting face-to-face interviews (Lichtman, 2010). Qualitative interviewing is a technique used to gather an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the behaviour of humans (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005), it provides a comprehensive report of the opinions, attitudes, beliefs and feelings of individuals (Hakim, 2000) and it gives the researcher the autonomy to explore issues in an unstructured or semi-structured manner to convey a more accurate understanding (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). Qualitative interviewing collects descriptions of the life-world of the participant (Cassell and Simon, 2004). A case study approach has been selected to further strengthen the value of the research by creating a concrete context of the companies and the individual participants involved.

3.7.1 Advantages of Face-to-Face Interviews

Saunders et al (2007) explains that face-to-face semi structured interviews allows the interviewer to explore issues in a much deeper context by asking further questions or by

probing the interviewee. Saunders et al (2007) explains how the researcher has the liberty to produce questions and gain additional information and knowledge on the matter. The author understands that it is important for this research to hear the interviewee's stories and experiences, therefore interviews are the ideal option. Face-to-face interviews allow for the researcher to observe the behaviour of the respondent in terms of eye contact, body language and facial expressions (Litchman, 2010).

Jupp (2006) explains that interviews with professionals in an organisation or community can give you an overall proficient perspective. Interviews with human resource managers are carried out to explore their experiences in successfully motivating employees through positive reinforcement and recognition and how they nurture a positive working environment.

Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2013) suggest interviews can be highly successful when conducted in an interactive manner. An interview can be very effective in gathering research as a group of people can be asked a number of questions about their perceptions, beliefs, opinions towards certain issues and topics (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, 2013).

3.7.2 Disadvantages of Interviews

One of the main challenges in conducting interview as part of qualitative data collection is the organisation of the interview as the working participants are very busy carrying out their own roles and responsibilities, also face-to-face interviews are very time consuming for both the researcher and the respondent (Evans and Rooney, 2010).

Joppe (2000) identifies reliability of interviews as a challenge as the degree to which results are constant over time and a truthful representation of the total population under study impact the outcome of the research (Grant, 2011). Joppe (2000) describes validity as the determination of how the research accurately assesses and measures information gathered (Grant, 2011). This challenge has been overcome as comprehensive research has been conducted on the background on each industry and company; furthermore seven in-depth interviews took place in safe and confidential environment where interviewees felt they could be open and honest to give a fair and truthful contribution to the study.

3.8 Case Studies

A case study is an illustrative and investigative analysis of an individual, group or occasion (Yin, 2009), they may be prospective, criteria is created and cases fitting the criteria are incorporated as they arise in the study (George and Bennett, 2005). Case studies can also be retrospective, criteria is created for chosen cases from past records for inclusion in the research (George and Bennett, 2005). Thomas (2011) explains how case studies offer an analysis of people, incidents, verdicts, timeframes, assignments, rules and regulations or other organisations that are studied together by one or more methods. Yin (2009) elucidates how case studies can be conducted in a qualitative and quantitative approach. Furthermore, Thomas (2011) elucidates how the case is the subject of the research that will be an illustration of a type of phenomena that will offer an analytical frame, an object. The object is provided within the study and the case makes this clear. Moreover, a case study can be defined as a research strategy; an experiential inquiry that examines a phenomenon within its real-life perspective (Daymon and Holloway, 2005). Deji (2012) explicates how case study research can be conducted in a sole or numerous manners and can contain quantitative verification. However, Daymon and Holloway (2005) explain how case studies rely on various resources of evidence, and benefits from the former growth of research.

3.8.1 Advantages of Case Studies

Case study data is formed from the experiences of people therefore can be viewed as real, legitimate, persuasive and accessible (McLeod, 2010). Case studies allow for a huge amount of detail to be gathered that would be usually difficult to obtain by other research methods (Willis, 2008). In addition, they allow for studies to be carried out from an exact topic to a broad topic (McLeod, 2010). Case studies allow the researcher to demonstrate the difficulties of social life, worthy case studies develop these difficulties to discover other meanings (David, 2004). Furthermore, case studies can supply a data source from which additional study can be conducted; consequently they can be a starting point for further research work (Yin, 2009). Moreover, case studies expand on real life practices and contributions can lead to change in future practice (Blaxter, Hughes and Malcolm, 2010).

3.8.2 Disadvantages of Case Studies

It can be said that it is challenging to extract a concrete foundation or an outcome from case study research as the information may be untruthful or interpreted incorrectly by the researcher (Remenyi, 2012). The complexity of case studies can make examination difficult as the person carrying out the study often is very aware of the relationships between occurrences and results (Thomas, 2011). Many case studies are not scientific (Lichtman, 2012) and a key difficulty is the data collected is not universal, thus can be seen as irrelevant (Maltby, Day and Macaskill, 2010).

3.8.3 Case Study Selection

The decision of two diverse industries is selected to give a holistic view of how a positive working environment is nurtured in many sectors. For the purpose of this study one Human Resource Manager, one Line Manager and two Employees from each company were asked to participate however it should be noted that the researcher found it greatly difficult to secure interviews as many company did not feel comfortable with the idea of the researcher speaking with their employees. Six small to medium sized indigenous companies and five large multinational companies who operate in Ireland were contacted via phone, e-mails and face-to-face contact to ask for their participation in the study to allow the author to develop a comparison between large international companies and small national companies. However, five refused the request while four companies did not give any reply. The security to interview a Human Resource Manager and a Line Manager of one Irish owned company took place with the permission to interview one employee and the author secured all requested interviews with an international company.

3.9 Data Analysis

The questions asked and the collected data is categorised into three main divisions to ensure each objective is achieved; the definition of a positive working environment is also explored. The data is transcribed with the use of a Dictaphone, similarities and differences between the companies and professions are manually discovered.

3.10 Limitations of the Research

Marshall and Rossman (2011) make it very clear that limitations of this study exist such as the restricted timeframe of conducting the research study. There are clear deadlines required that may restrict the researcher in her time to study further literature. The author realised that financial resources are limited, which may restrict the travelling distance to interview people in organisations in the wider geographical location. The author is aware that interviews are based on people's opinions and their own experience and it may not be the actual truth. The author hopes to overcome this issue by conducting face to face interviews with managers and employees in organisations where the environment is familiar and safe for participants.

3.11 Ethical Statement

The author recognises the major responsibility she has to remain ethically responsible at all times. Completing a research study involves an understanding of ethical implications and confidential practices that must occur when collecting data. The proposed participants will be contacted with a letter and/or e-mail (see appendix) that will ask them to partake in my research study. The author understands the importance of being professional at all times throughout the dissertation process. All participants wish for their names and company to remain confidential in this study.

3.14 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter presented a synopsis of the research problem and objectives. Descriptive and exploratory research designs were discussed followed by justification for selecting exploratory research design for this dissertation. Qualitative and quantitative methodologies were considered prior to the justification of using qualitative methods for this study. Primary and secondary data collection methods were analysed followed by the advantages and disadvantages of face-to-face interviews and case studies. The data analysis was outlined along with operational details of participating companies and individuals. Finally, the limitations of the research study and reference to ethical issues were examined.

Chapter Four: Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter identifies the main findings obtained from the primary research phase. An overview of the profile of each participating company is outlined to ensure a comprehensive understanding of both companies is gained. The findings of the case studies are presented simultaneously in a sequential order according to significant themes and individual research objectives. Each theme and objective is not discussed however the comparison among the respondents of Company X and Company Y is developed throughout. The findings produced from the human resource manager, the line manager and the employee of Company X is the viewpoint of a small Irish company whereas the findings generated from interviewees of Company Y is the perspective of a large multinational business.

4.2 Profile of Case Study Selection

Company X is a small Irish company who has been successfully operating in the bio medical industry since 1975. The company provides thermal spray solutions for the biomedical, aerospace, automotive and semiconductor industries. Company X is located in the South East area of Ireland and employs in the region of 35 people. As displayed in table 4.3 below the human resource manager of this firm has 15 years' experience, the line manager has 30 years' experience and the employee has worked in this company for 8 years. It should be noted that all three participants are extremely happy in their workplace.

Company Y is a large international public limited company. It operates in the retail business and established an Irish market in 1997. Today it functions in 12 countries across Asia, Europe and North America, Malaysia, Ireland, the United Kingdom and Thailand. Company Y has an approximate 15,000 employees and 142 stores in Ireland. The participating store employs 188 people and is situated in the South East region of Ireland. As seen in the table below the human resource manager of company Y has 10 years' experience, the line manager has 11 years' experience and the two employees have worked in this company for 7 years. It should be noted that the human resource managers is very content in her role, the line

manager is satisfied in his workplace but not fully content, employee ‘F’ is returning to college in September to open new career opportunities and employee ‘G’ is looking forward to starting her new profession elsewhere after finishing college this year.

4.3 Operational Details

Company	Interviewee	Respondent	Time in Firm	Date of Interview	Duration of Interview
X	Human Resource Manager	A	15 years	07/04/2014	1 hour 10 minutes
	Line Manager	B	30 years	07/04/2014	46 minutes
	Employee	C	8 years	07/04/2014	41 minutes
Y	Human Resource Manager	D	20 years	22/06/2014	1 hour 6 minutes
	Line Manager	E	11 years	22/06/2014	43 minutes
	Employee 1	F	7 years	24/06/2014	41 minutes
	Employee 2	G	7 years	24/06/2014	47 minutes

Table 4.3 Operational Details of Participants of Interviews

4.3 Findings of the Definition of a Positive Working Environment

The findings of the definition of a positive working environment offer a human resource manager perspective, a line manager perspective and employee's perspective as each individual perception is unique yet similar, thus needing individual attention.

4.3.1 A Positive Working Environment Defined By Human Resource Professionals.

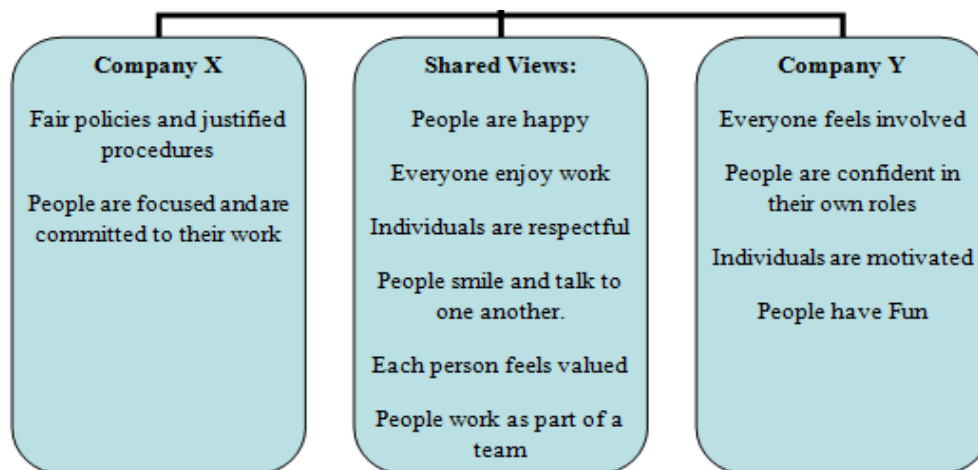


Figure 4.3.1: A Positive Working Environment Defined By Human Resource Professionals.

Human resource manager of company X 'A' has a strong belief that a positive working environment begins with the inevitability of fair policies and justified procedures to ensure 'everyone gets treated fairly'. In comparison, human resource manager of company Y 'D' primarily understands a positive environment to be where people feel involved their workplace and confident in their work role. In addition 'D' makes it clear that everyone has an imperative part to play in the success of the company. She continues to explain that once employees are sufficiently trained to do their jobs 'they are self-assured in their ability and are generally very motivated'. The element of fun, humour and laughter is deemed a major importance according to 'D', whereas 'A' states 'it may be all work and no play, but that's how we work here and our employees are happy with that culture'. Both 'A' and 'D' elucidate that a co-operative atmosphere where employees and management work together is a pleasant working environment.

4.3.2 A Positive Working Environment Defined By Line Managers

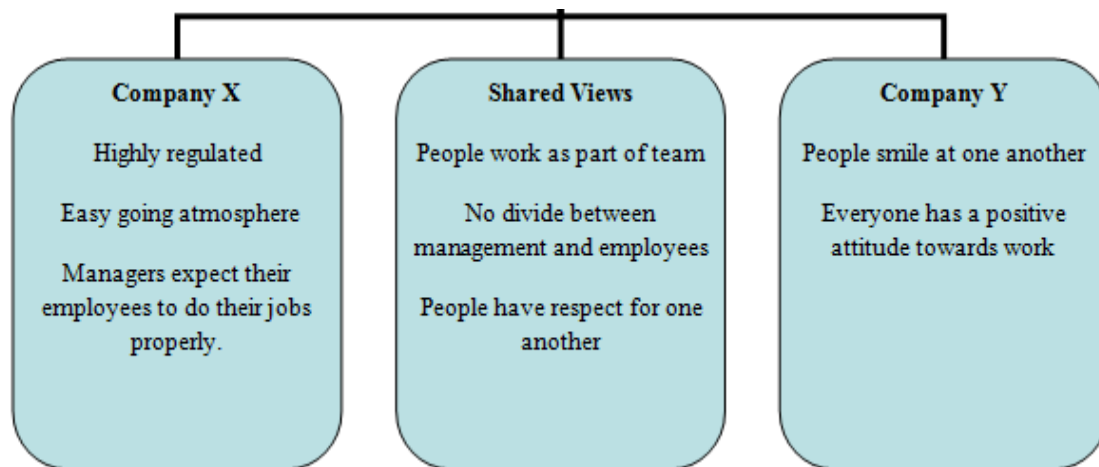


Figure 4.3.2: A Positive Working Environment Defined By Line Managers

The Line Manager ‘B’ explicates that a positive working environment is one that is highly regulated yet has an easy-going and relaxed atmosphere where employees can be trusted to do their jobs properly. The Line Manager ‘E’ from Company Y understands a positive working environment to be a place where people are happy and smile at one another, a place where people enjoy being. Both ‘B’ and ‘E’ believe the ability for each person in the company to work as part of one united team is a major factor of a positive working environment. ‘B’ states ‘we are all part of the same jigsaw puzzle, there is no us and them’ in relation to managers and employees. It is considered a great importance for employees to see managers ‘mucking in and doing what employees do’ in order to have positivity among everyone in the workplace. The concept of respect plays an important role in defining what is a positive working environment, ‘B’ stresses the need to ‘treat everyone the same from the top down’ while ‘E’ states ‘if you do not have respect for one another negativity will occur undoubtedly’.

4.3.3 A Positive Working Environment Defined By Employees

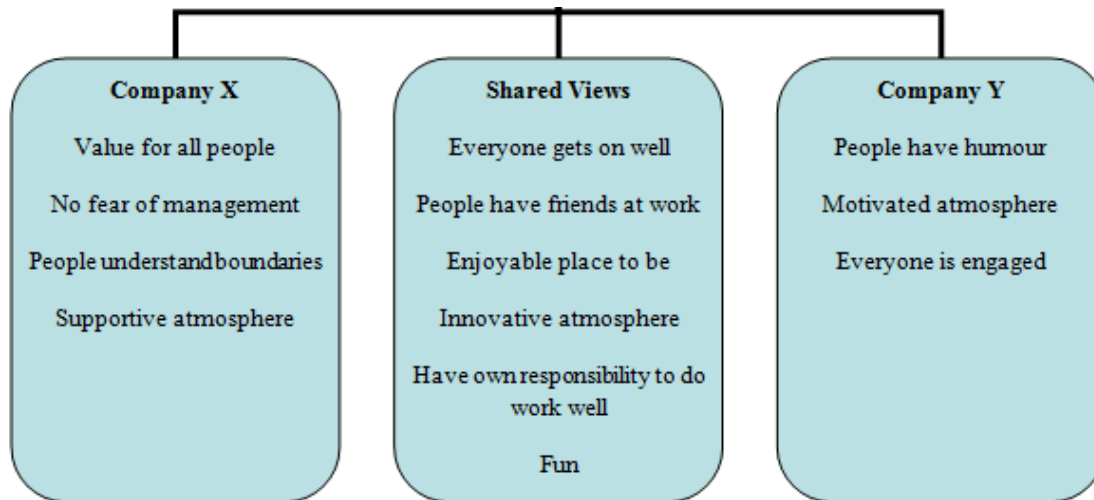


Figure 4.3.3: A Positive Working Environment Defined By Employees

Employee 'C' from Company X defines a positive working environment as a place where each person has utmost value for everyone; she continues to explain that managers are friendly, not fearful and are very supportive. 'C' states that a positive atmosphere at work is one where 'your manager can be your friend...you can have a laugh, but you must work hard and realise there is a line not to be crossed'. Employee 'F' elucidates that a positive working environment is fun however 'people must still do their jobs and do their jobs well'. Employee 'G' describes a positive working environment as a place where everyone feels happy, engaged and a sense of belonging within work.

4.4 Objective one: To discover the skills and techniques that managers can use to nurture a positive working environment.

The discoveries of objective one appears distinctive to each individual profession, therefore the skills and techniques are portrayed in an individual manner according to vocation.

4.4.1 A Human Resource Management point of view

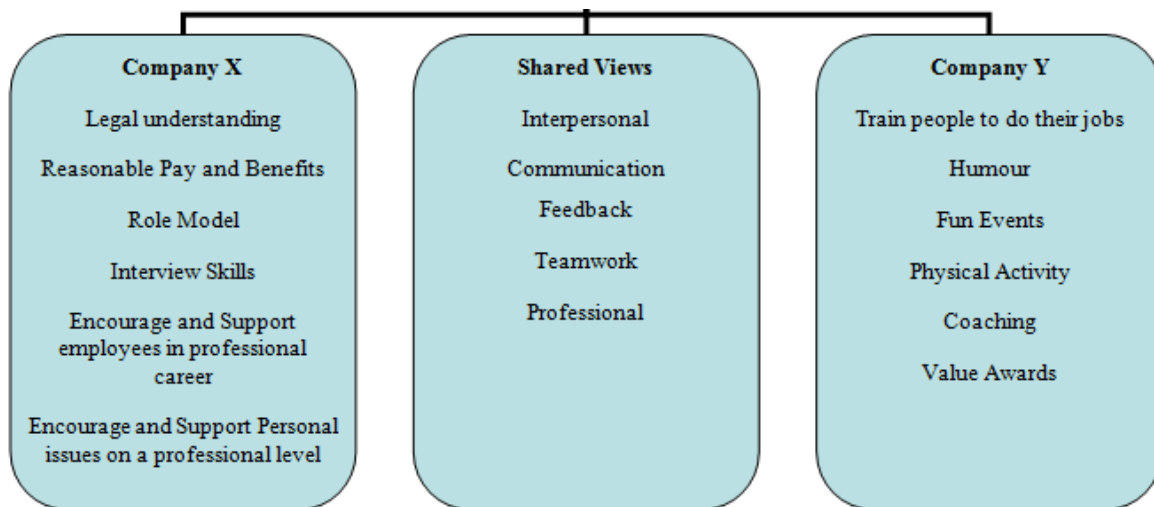


Figure 4.4.1 Skills and Techniques managers use to nurture a positive working environment from a Human Resource Management point of view.

‘A’ passionately declares the essentiality of having an exceptional knowledge of the company’s legal framework; she explains ‘once you know the rules and regulations you have the ability to create a positive environment where everyone can feel recognised as important and positive reinforcement can be utilised’. In addition, ‘A’ believes a concrete legal awareness allows managers to develop a technique to ‘deal with the issues, not the people when a problem occurs’. ‘A’ explains that the success of nurturing a positive working environment where recognition and constructive reinforcement is accepted begins in the interview process ‘we try to get the right people in rather than the right experience’, the ability to make good judgement on the person’s work ethic and personality fit is deemed significant for Company X. Furthermore, ‘A’ states the need to offer satisfactory pay and benefits is a technique employed to ensure each employee feel their work is recognised. Additionally, ‘A’ puts an immense value on giving employees encouragement to develop their professional growth. ‘A’ explains that her company uses positive reinforcement to support employees to study as part of their succession planning and also as a means to illustrate recognition of employees’ abilities and efforts. Moreover, ‘A’ identifies how providing professional help to employees to overcome personal issues can be beneficial to the entire organisation; she continues to explain that it is ‘not just asking how your employees are

but taking action if you know there is something not right'. 'A' understands that by giving employees the professional aid to overcome difficulty¹ employees feel recognised as commendable assets in the company.

Human Resource Manager 'D' believes that using techniques to create fun in the workplace is predominant when creating a positive working environment through positive reinforcement and recognition 'for some people work is just a job, fun allows work to be a positive place where people can enjoy themselves'. To ensure employees feel recognised for their work, 'D' explains how the company gives time to organise events for employees to enjoy such as charity events, secret Santa, Easter egg trials, nights out, bake sales, children parties, dress up days 'in an effort to keep everyone upbeat, enthusiastic and motivated in the workplace'. To further ensure the employees feel recognised 'D' explain that her company provides activity facilities where each member of the firm has the opportunity to take part in physical exercises throughout the day. 'D' considers coaching to be a chief component in utilising positive reinforcement in an organisation; she continues to explain 'the greatest gift you can give to someone is to help them to help themselves, that is a skill within itself'. 'D' understands the positive outcomes that can arise when awards are given to employees 'who go that extra mile for the company', she explains that employees like the fact that they are being acknowledged, generating motivation to continue great efforts in the workplace.

Both Human Resource Managers expressed that interpersonal skills are necessary to create a positive working environment; it is found that a likeable character that is friendly, approachable, reliable and an honest individual has the ability to disperse positive vibes that will 'nurture positivity from the top management down to the very last employee in the door' explains 'D'. Communication skills is found to be of prime importance in the nurturing of a positive working environment 'simple greetings such as hello, how was your weekend' can have a drastic impact on how employees feel about their manager and subsequently about their workplace, however it was noted that 'there is a line between being friendly and being

¹ 'A' explained how an employee had lost a loved one and was struggling in work; the company offered her professional therapy with their company psychotherapist on their expense.

nosey and you don't want to be noseey' added 'D'. The appropriate tone of voice and body language of the manager needs to be carefully considered prior to giving informal and formal feedback to ensure the efforts of the employee are recognised and the employee will be positively motivated to overcome challenges. Both human resource managers put equal focus on the need to rehearse material prior to delivery to ensure the message is communicated in an optimistic and effective manner, 'A' explains 'you always start with a positive before discussing something they have to improve on'. The need to communicate how to work as one united team is found to be an importance. The essentiality of having the professional skills appears to be a crucial aspect of managers creating a positive working environment. The need to practice confidentiality at all times is vital in earning the trust of employees which is needed to sustain a positive working environment. The skills to ensure a balance between work and life is declared by both human resource managers, It is found that a positive working environment begins with each individual being mentally and physically healthy. 'A' exclaims managers have to 'switch off and concentrate on your personal life otherwise you are in danger of your work taking over your mind', furthermore, 'D' explains 'in this line of work you have to know when to make a call and say I have done everything I can as an employer and leave it there and let others do their jobs that is a skill within itself'.

4.4.2 A Line Manager's perspective.

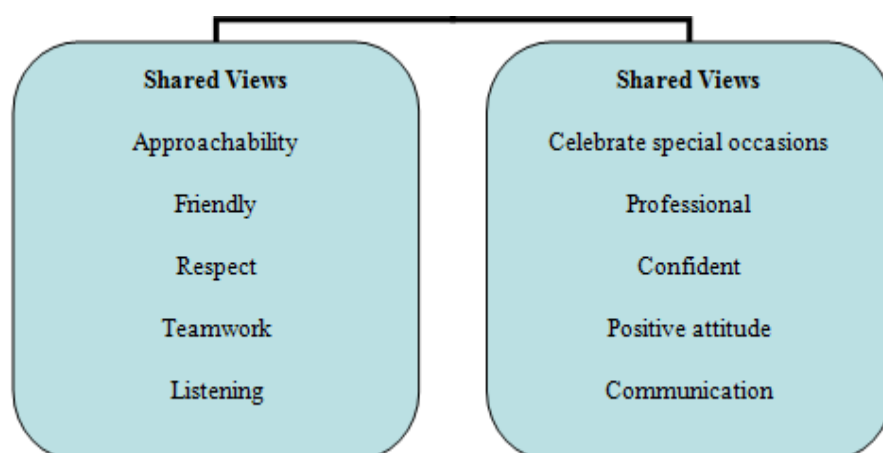


Figure 4.4.2 Skills and Techniques managers use to nurture a positive working environment from a Line Manager's perspective.

Both managers call attention to the need to be approachable, 'E' explains he makes a conscious decision to ensure he smiles and makes eye contact with employees while 'B' says 'my employees can come talk to me on an hourly, daily, weekly basis, they know that'. Respect for employees is a prime focus for 'E', he elucidates to a simple skill of asking people to do something rather than telling people whereas 'B' highlights the importance of showing respect by having no hierarchy between managers and employees. It is expressed that the need to make an effort to know the names of each employee is critical in developing positive relations 'you have to show your employees the respect of knowing their name' says 'B' while 'E' adds 'if you want to achieve anything in your job you have to have positive relations with your team'. Listening skills is focused on as a remarkable skill that needs to be developed in order to create a happy workforce 'E' states 'if your employees do not feel listened to they will feel discouraged and disheartened'. The two managers express their belief in the importance of showing your employees care, one technique that they use is recognising birthdays or special occasions which range from simple verbal well wishes to sending a card to presenting a special gift. The ability to be able to distance professional and personal life is significant for generating a positive working environment 'B' says 'if I am not in good form the employees will be affected. The need of a positive attitude is greatly emphasised 'E' keenly states 'when you have an optimistic attitude it generates positive energy throughout the workplace. Both 'E' and 'B' explain that this energy can be passed from one person to the next nurturing an upbeat atmosphere where employees can take pleasure in coming to work.

4.4.3 An employee's perspective

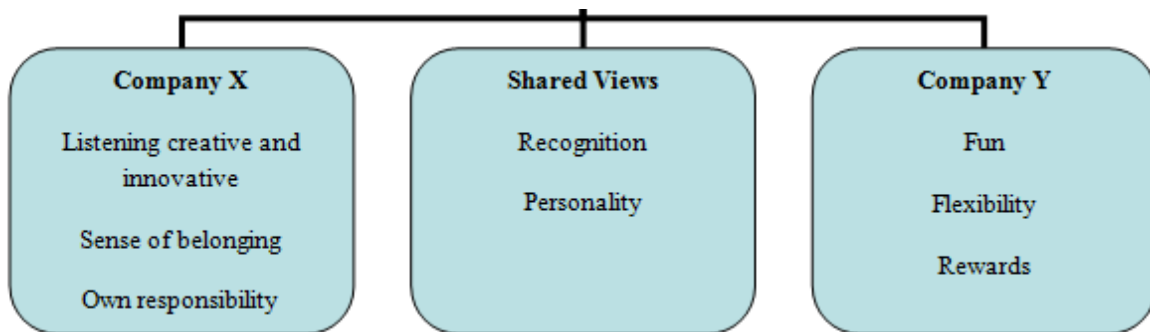


Figure 4.4.3 Skills and Techniques managers use to nurture a positive working environment from an employee's perspective

Employee 'C' says from her experience 'the most valuable skill managers can have is the ability to listen'. It is found that employee 'C' feels she has the opportunity to be innovative and creative when her suggestions are regarded as worthy in the workplace. 'C' feels a great sense of belonging when in the presence of her managers and fellow staff 'we are all friends, we are very lucky we just get along'. Employee 'F' believes that the importance of fun events is significant in 'keeping the atmosphere upbeat on the floor' states 'F'. Employee 'G' articulates how flexibility of managers creates a positive working environment, by showing support in her college studies she was motivated to work harder on return to work. Furthermore, 'G' makes it very clear how rewards play an imperative role in creating positive working environment; she explains 'it is nice when someone makes a big deal of your work'.

All three employees place enormous emphasis on the simple communication of smiling and greeting employees which has a major impact on their working environment. The personality of the manager is found to be a massive importance in developing a positive working environment as 'when your manager is in good form, they can change the atmosphere from stressed and downbeat to proactive and optimistic' adds 'F'.

4.5 Objective Two: To develop a comparative analysis of the effectiveness of positive reinforcement and recognition on the manager (the giver) and the employee (the receiver).

The discoveries of objective two lead to the comparison between the givers and receivers of positive reinforcement and recognition. To ensure this objective is met, the findings from the givers is offered prior to the findings from the receivers and comparisons are stated however are not discussed in this section.

4.5.1 The effectiveness of positive reinforcement and recognition on the manager (the giver)

It is found that the use of positive reinforcement and recognition has an encouraging impact on the giver, 'A' articulates to the motivating feeling of encouraging others to progress in their career, while 'B' elucidates to the 'great sense of pride' felt when a result has been achieved. 'D' explains 'there's no better feeling than seeing employees smile and seeing their chest rise with confidence', while 'E' conveys that when an individual receives recognition for good work 'it is very stimulating to see your employee excel with positive feedback'. As seen in Figure 4.5.1, managers rate between 7 and 10 for an enjoyable experience and between 9 and 10 for a motivating experience of giving positive reinforcement and recognition.

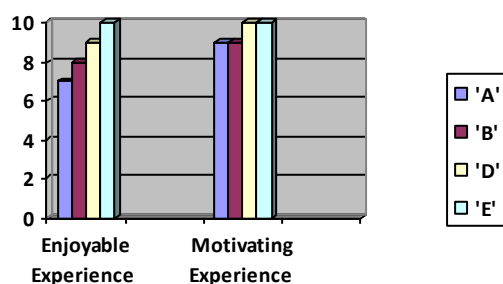


Figure 4.5.1: Managers ratings of giving positive reinforcement and recognition.

4.5.2 The effectiveness of positive reinforcement and recognition on the employee (the receiver)

‘A’ explains that the use of positive reinforcement and recognition resulted in one general employee developing the courage to go back to education and is now a qualified accountant who works in the financial department in Company X. ‘B’ is aware of the profound impact of when positivity is practiced ‘employees want to work as part of a team, they will approach you and you can see they are happy to put in an extra effort when we need them’. ‘C’ expresses ‘a simple thank you or good job said to me is very motivating, I don’t want my face going up on a wall or anything like that’. In addition, ‘C’ believes when a positive environment is successfully achieved, verbal communication is not even needed all the time ‘they don’t always have to say it, you know you’re appreciated’. ‘D’ expresses that the power of positive reinforcement and recognition is unlimited, ‘you can make employees believe they can achieve anything’.

‘E’ explains that when he receives positive reinforcement and recognition it is always constructive ‘I understand as a receiver and a giver of feedback that standards have to be set and met’. However, ‘E’ describes the feeling of receiving recognition for hard work as ‘utmost motivating’. ‘F’ states ‘it’s grand; you don’t want them making a fuss about you but it does make you feel good I suppose’ when asked to explain the effect of receiving recognition. However ‘G’ explains how she received a value award for her hard work which she found to be extremely motivating and very much appreciated the efforts of her management in showing her recognition. As seen in figure 4.5.2, receivers rated between 6 and 10 for the enjoyable experience and between 8 and 10 for the motivating experience of receiving positive reinforcement and recognition.

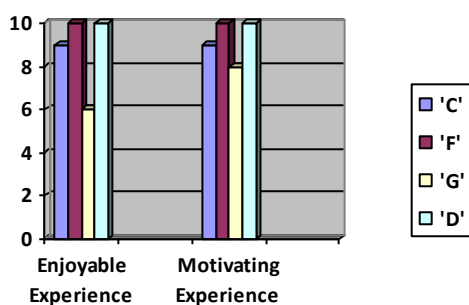


Figure 4.5.2: Receivers ratings of giving positive reinforcement and recognition.

4.6 Objective Three: To understand why positive reinforcement and recognition may not motivate employees

The primary research found that the human resource managers, line managers and employees express very different opinions on why positive reinforcement and recognition may not motivate employees, consequently the findings are provided in separate headings.

4.6.1 Human Resource Management Point of View

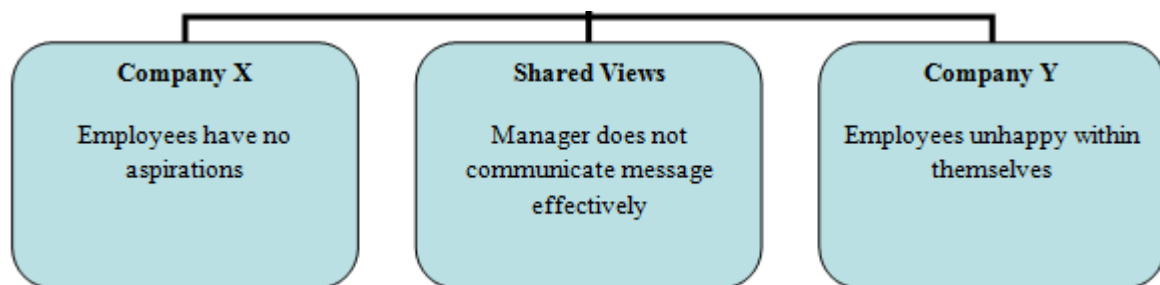


Figure 4.6.1: Human Resource Management Point of View

‘A’ states that some people have ‘no desire to progress in an organisation, they simply go to work for money’, she explains that those employees are generally not motivated by positive reinforcement and recognition. In addition, ‘D’ articulates to the fact that ‘some people are unhappy within themselves, when they are in a negative place they will see negativity even in the most positive situations’. Both human resource managers expressed their responsibility for delivering positive reinforcement and recognition in an appropriate and effective manner. It is discovered that employees may feel discouraged when employers are not specific in the behaviour that is acknowledged.

4.6.2 Line Manager Point of View

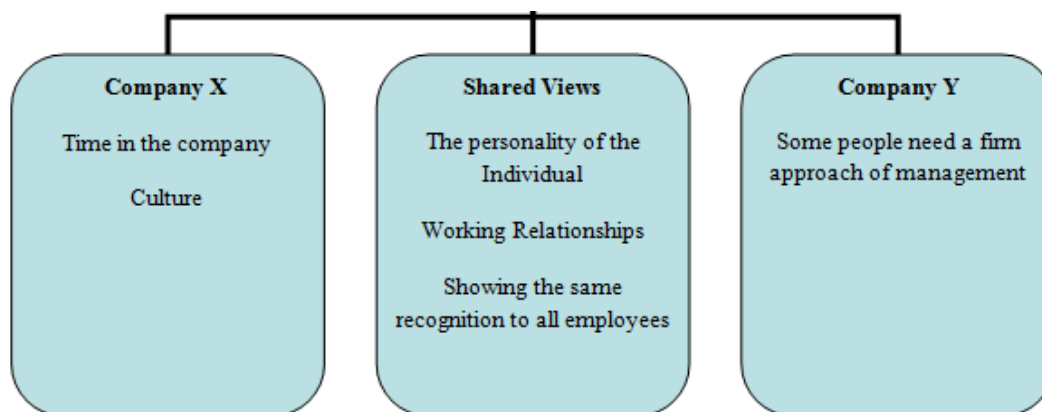


Figure 4.6.2 Line Manager Point of View

‘B’ strongly believes that the time period of the employee in their job has a major impact ‘the longer a person is in the same job day and day out the harder it is to motivate them’. Furthermore, he expresses that the culture of the company has an effect on the motivation of positivity ‘if people are not happy in their workplace, no matter what you say or do they won’t respond well’. In addition, ‘E’ explains that a positive approach to managing people does not work for all individuals ‘sometimes telling someone they have done a good job can result in the person actually doing less’. Both believe that motivation may not arise as the individual simply does not react well to positivity or constructive feedback ‘some people if you praise them or offer them awards they still won’t be happy’ adds ‘E’. The focus on the individual personality of each employee is deemed significant ‘you have to be able to give the same value of recognition to all employees in a different way’ explains ‘B’, while ‘E’ states ‘this doesn’t sound right but you have to treat people different to treat them equal’. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that some people flourish under praise whereas others feel embarrassed and uncomfortable with any attention ‘the name of the game is to know your employees, you have to be able to read people fairly well to give them the recognition that will motivate them’ says ‘B’.

4.6.3 Employees Point of View

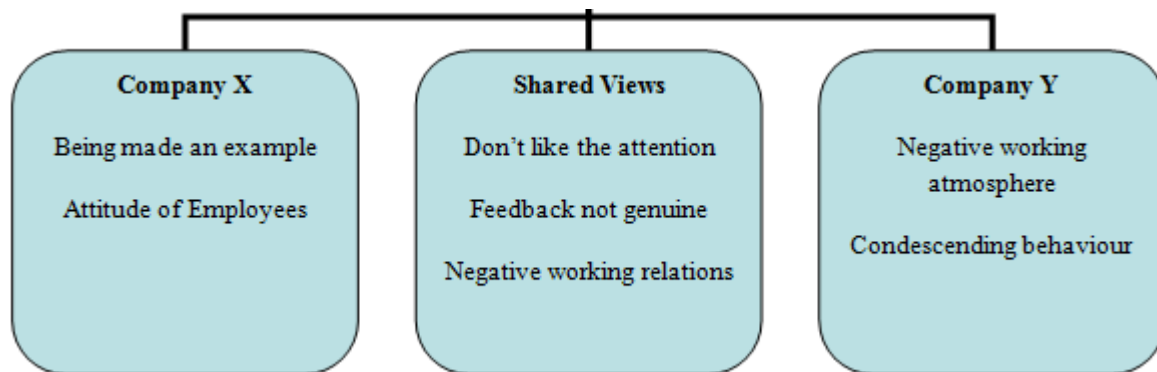


Figure 4.6.3 Employees Point of View

‘C’ gives an insight of her past working experiences for this objective as all her experiences have been positive in her current employment. ‘C’ elucidates to a time where she was given praise at the expense of others ‘my manager was telling the others to be more like me. I wanted the ground to swallow me up... was a horrible feeling and a very de-motivating experience’. Furthermore, ‘C’ added ‘some people have the wrong attitude towards work; they don’t see anything positive in terms of work’. ‘F’ communicates that when managers give him special attention in front of others is a negative experience for him ‘even though it is supposed to be positive I don’t like the fact that everyone knows, you would get a bit of a mocking over it by others’. ‘G’ understands the negativity and de-motivation that can occur from receiving “positive reinforcement” as she explains when her manager referred to her as ‘a good girl’. ‘G’ expresses the humiliation she felt when her manager would ‘pat’ her on her head when tasks were completed. Furthermore, ‘G’ says this behaviour had very little meaning as it was obvious her manager was being very patronising. In addition, ‘G’ explains that even when the manager used positive reinforcement in a genuine manner ‘it was still ineffective as our working relationship was so negative’. All employees refer to the importance of the manager having positive working relations and having the ability to create a positive working environment for the success and motivation of positive reinforcement and recognition.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter offers a summary of the key findings from the gathered primary research. The definition of a positive working environment is unleashed from the perspective of a human resource manager, a line manager and employees. The chief findings of each objective are presented to give the reader an insight from the same professionals working in diverse companies and industries.

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter intends to elaborate and comprehensively analyse the findings elucidated to in chapter four. An examination and an explanation of the findings regarding relevant themes and objectives are offered with a comparison to the review of literature². The discovery of similarities and differences between the primary and secondary research is elaborated upon. Furthermore, this chapter discovers new material; this is discussed in greater detail.

5.2 A Positive Working Environment

The primary and secondary research emphasises the importance of a positive working environment, therefore the definition of this concept is outlined as a significant theme in this study.

Marelli (2010) describes a positive working environment as a place that has fair policies. Equally, 'A' puts an intense stress on fair policies when describing a positive working environment. Likewise to the literature, 'B' and 'C' give great focus on the element of respect in defining a positive working environment. In comparison to Company X and to the literature review, Company Y does not place emphasis on the generation of policies. It is recognised that participants of Company 'X' describe their workplace in a very positive manner in comparison to the participants of Company 'Y', this may imply literature is correct to emphasise the need for appropriate policies in the workplace.

Carver (2005) explains that employees feel happy, involved and appreciated in a positive working environment. Similarly, 'D' elaborates on the significance in people feeling involved and confident in the workplace. In addition, 'E' highlights the need for people to be happy

² Due to word count restrictions, the author had to use the letter alone to describe the participant in this chapter.

and smile at one another when expressing the meaning of a positive workplace. 'G' highlights the importance of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as she understands a positive working environment to be a place where each individual is content, engaged and feels a sense of belonging in the workplace.

Capon (2009) stresses the importance of cooperation between managers and employees. The human resource managers acknowledge the need for teamwork in an organisation however both line managers and all employees give great emphasis on the fundamental importance of people at work regardless of profession working with one another to achieve success as highlighted in literature.

Butler (2004) argues that a positive working environment is dependent on an optimistic working relationship between managers and staff. The human resource managers do not place a massive emphasis on this theme in comparison to the other professions, this may be significant to note as literature stresses the need to lead by example from top management down. In line to the literature, both line managers and all three employees make it very clear that managers and employees must have positive working relationships in a pleasant workplace.

Company 'Y' highlights the element of fun when defining a positive working environment, however this aspect is not deemed significant in Company 'X' and is not focused upon in the literature when defining a positive working environment. It may be worthwhile reminding the reader that the employee from company 'X' is much happier in her workplace in comparison to the employees of Company 'Y'; this may suggest that the element of fun in the workplace is not as important just like literature suggests.

Overall, the primary and secondary research findings on the definition of a positive working environment are similar. The significance of a happy, friendly and helpful work staff and strong work relationships are illustrated in literature and the primary data analysed, however differences between the focus on policies and fun is distinguished between Company 'X' and Company 'Y'.

5.3 Discussion regarding Objective One: Skills and Techniques to Nurture a Positive Working Environment.

In regard to objective one, pivotal topics including trust, communication and positive expectations, rewards, recognition and reinforcement techniques, personal well-being and interviewing skills have been selected to be discussed in detail.

5.3.1 Trust:

Kitchen and Schultz (2001) recognise the skill of forming trust; 'A' reiterates the need for managers to demonstrate trust, dependability and reliability in their actions. Furthermore, as too highlighted by Maister (2012), 'A' and 'D' elucidate to the essentiality of practicing confidentiality in the workplace to build trust with colleagues. All four managers reveal the timing difficulty in generating trust in the workplace as stressed by Golan (2006). Whilst all three employees elaborated on the importance of managers demonstrating trust, it is only the employee from Company 'X' who expressed her comfort and confidence in discussing private matters with her managers. It is important to note that the employees of Company Y do not describe their working environment as positive, this research suggests the lack of trust between managers and employees could be one reason for that.

5.3.2 Communication and Positive Expectations:

Communication is a skill highlighted equally in the primary and secondary research. Both human resource managers give explicit consideration to the importance of communicating approachability, reliability and friendliness to employees as specified by Schermerhorn (2010). This theory is confirmed as all participants in the study established the significance of simple greetings such as saying hello, smiling and asking someone how they are. It is found that Company 'X' has a positive working environment but yet they do not regularly communicate the goals of the organisation as outlined as an importance by Parker (2010), instead line manager 'B' explains 'our goals and values are known through our work and the

atmosphere here, they don't have to be spoken about'. The Pygmalion Effect is found to be valuable in Company X, positive expectations and actions have an optimistic effect on the participants of Company X. In comparison, the employees of Company Y acknowledges the importance of positive expectations and actions being sincere to be truly effective as employees outline that 'some managers only say nice things to you to get something from you, it's not honest'.

The managers of this study highlights the requirement of communicating a positive message before discussing a matter that needs improvement, this concept corresponds with Skinner's Operant Conditioning theory (Nevid, 2011).

5.3.3 Teamwork

The line managers and employees of this study prove the work of Holbeche and Matthews (2012) to be accurate as they emphasise the importance of knowing people in an organisation, however both recognise the difficulty in achieving this in larger organisations as highlighted by Blecker et al (2012). Abell and Napoleon (2008) highlights the need to celebrate birthdays or special events to create a team working environment proved effective in Company X but not in Company Y, employees in Company 'Y' express the enjoyment of the events however the relationship between managers and employees is not improved. This again, places great importance on the need for positive relationships between managers and staff for a positive working environment to be created.

5.3.4 Reward, Recognition and Reinforcement Techniques

The need to pay employees adequately in the attempt to create happy workforce is evident from the findings of Company X as also outlined in the literature review under Herzberg's Dual Factor Theory. It is found in the primary research that providing Christmas bonuses and private health care insurance to employees are effective ways of rewarding staff to nurture a positive working environment as revealed by Shields (2007).

Morrison and Adams (2013) acknowledge the technique of rewarding employee by means of career progression and professional growth. Company 'X' gives an insight of the benefits of encouraging and supporting employees to accomplish further studies as general employees have progressed up to office occupations. In contrast, Company 'Y' exclaimed that there are progression opportunities for employees however it is the responsibility of the individual to find out information about it.

Nelson and Spitzer (2002) believe in recognition techniques such as 'employee of the month awards' however this study highlights the ineffectiveness of such awards. Company 'X' does not believe in awarding individuals in this manner as 'there is always someone who feels left out' explains 'B'. In comparison, Company 'Y' applies 'awards' to show recognition. It seems necessary to note that even though Company 'Y' has recognition techniques in place that is comparable to literature, Company 'X' is actually more successful at making employees feel appreciated for their work.

5.3.5 Personal Well-Being

The study by Theobald and Cooper (2001) recognises that healthy individuals are happy and productive workers, this is proved true in this research from a managerial perspective. Both human resource managers give a thorough debate on the importance of managers maintaining a healthy mind and body to ensure responsibilities can be completed effectively. Hobson (2013) identifies the fundamentality of managers needing to balance work and life activities, this is exhaustively stressed by both human resource managers. In addition, the line managers of this study acknowledge the practical consequences of their personality, frame of mind and attitude on the employees as explained by Francis and Woodcock (1996). To promote well-being of staff and recognition, 'D' explains that her company provides activity facilities where each member of the firm has the opportunity to take part in physical exercises throughout the day, this concept is in line with the work of Seaward (2006).

5.3.6 Interviewing Skills

Mackey and Wilson (2013) identify the fundamental importance of selecting the correct people for the company in an effort to ensure a positive working environment is built upon; however this concept is highlighted by Company 'X' only. This philosophy is parallel to the belief that the development of a great working environment is dependent on its people (Brown, 2011). Company 'Y' does not place an emphasis on the importance of its people, thus this major difference between the two companies could be the reason why employees seem content in Company X and not in Company Y.

Generally, the findings and the literature in this section are comparable in nature however differences between Company 'X' and Company 'Y' have emerged in the process of evaluating the case studies with the literature.

5.4 Discussion regarding Objective Two: The effectiveness of positive reinforcement and recognition on the manager (the giver) and the employee (the receiver).

The effectiveness of positive reinforcement and recognition of both the giver and receiver is overall very positive. The analysis of the giver is from the perspective of human resource managers and line managers and the examination of the receiver is from the perspective of line managers and employees.

5.4.1 The effectiveness on the manager (the giver)

The primary data gathered proved Singer-Gordon (2005) to be accurate in the acknowledgement of the effect of reinforcement and recognition on the givers as all four managers share their enjoyment of providing employees with positive feedback. The managerial perspective establishes the credibility of the literature, it is understood that giving positive feedback stimulates, motivates and encourages the manager. Hiam (2003) recognises that managers may feel a sense of pride which is verified by the primary data as the participants confirm this encouraging sensation. Both line managers place equal focus on the

importance of positive reinforcement in the attempt to show approachability as outlined in literature. The research outlines the effects of positivity that include the creation of an innovative workforce who are comfortable in sharing ideas or problems with their managers. McGregor's Theory X is referred to by Line Manager 'B' as he shares the frustration he experienced in his working life, he proves McGregor's theory to be accurate as he differentiates between how people react to positive encouragement.

5.4.2 The effectiveness on the employee (the receiver)

'A' shares the experience of positively motivating an employee to complete her accounting exams, the employee's self-confidence and self-worth was enhanced which lead to success as outlined in the work of Hellriegel and Slocum (2008). All managers agree that staff evaluations should be a positive experience for the receiver; Simmons-Welburn and McNeil (2004) also emphasis this importance. It appears that the primary and secondary research corresponds with one another in the significant of recognising and rewarding the behaviour of employees to nurture and sustain an optimistic working atmosphere.

Recognition is a prominence factor in an employees work life (Gostick and Elton, 2004), however it is interesting to note that individualism is a critical element in giving appropriate recognition. 'C' makes it very clear that specific attention on her such as her picture going up on a wall would not have a positive effect on her, this proves literature correct as Stephens and McCallum (2005) emphasises the need to consider the personality of the employees when giving recognition and rewards.

McGregor's theory of motivation proves to be very precise as it appears from the primary research that theory y employees seem to enjoy positive reinforcement and recognition, thus they are keen to enhance their understanding, improve weaknesses and desire greater responsibilities in the workplace. All receivers express the importance of a positive working relationship with their manager to ensure positive feedback is received effectively as outlined in literature.

Overall, the understanding of motivational theories appears to be a predominant factor in giving feedback. In general, all participants express their enjoyment and motivation that can occur from positive support and acknowledgement.

5.5 Discussion regarding Objective Three: To understand why positive reinforcement and recognition may not motivate employees

Both the primary and secondary research suggests that when employee individuality is not taken into consideration positive reinforcement and recognition is unproductive (Ventrice, 2009). All managers agree with Mullins (2007) as they express the significance in considering employee individuality prior to giving rewards and recognition to prevent employees being unmotivated and dissatisfied with the managers' words and actions.

Management from Company Y expound to the fact that a certain percentage of employees are in McGregor's Theory X category which may suggest a reason for why positive reinforcement and recognition is not always valuable. It may be worthy to note that participants from Company X describe their workforce as Theory Y workers, thus this suggests that practice of 'getting the right people into the company' may be the superior method of recruiting staff. The work of Brown (2011) is in line with the findings of Company X, it is necessary to make sure people with the right work ethic, behaviour and traits are identified early in the recruitment process. It is found in Company X that the discovery of selecting the right type of person can add value to the company culture as the new employees work with management to sustain a positive working environment and welcome the use of positive reinforcement and recognition. In comparison, Company Y does not place a focus on this point which may be the reason why positive reinforcement and recognition is not effective as the personalities being recruited may not thrive on positivity like Theory Y employees would.

Company X proves Herzberg's Theory to be very accurate as positivity and motivation is generated from internal factors, elements of employee responsibility, development and growth are valuable rewards to the employees of Company X, this again is due to the management of Company X knowing their employees very well. Furthermore, Company Y proves literature to be right as the attempt to know each employee is very difficult in a larger company.

5.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the main themes and objectives are analysed and examined in great detail. The definition of a positive working environment is comparable between primary and secondary research. The skills and techniques elaborated on by the two companies demonstrate the similarities and differences between a small indigenous business and a large multinational company. Overall, it is found that the effectiveness of positive reinforcement and recognition is very enjoyable and motivating for managers and employees. However, it is highlighted that positive reinforcement and acknowledgement may not be effective for all employees due to their individualism, mannerism and motives.

Chapter Six: Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to draw the dissertation to a close and to summarise the major conclusions of the study. The conclusion of the main primary and secondary research of each objective is outlined. Recommendations for managers and employees are presented followed by recommendations for further study.

6.2 Objectives of the Study

- To discover the skills and techniques that managers can use to nurture a positive working environment
- To develop a comparative analysis of the effectiveness of positive reinforcement and recognition on the manager (the giver) and the employee (the receiver)
- To understand why positive reinforcement and recognition may not motivate employees

6.3 Research Conclusions

The examination and analysis of the literature review and findings confirm similarities and differences between, not only the primary and secondary research but also, the two companies. Literature focuses on the elements of fair policies and fun in the understanding of a positive working environment however this study suggests that fair policies to ensure employees feel safe and respected is more important than the aspect of fun. Both primary and secondary findings outline the essentiality of people feeling happy and involved in the workplace to ensure an optimistic atmosphere is created. The significance of stimulating working relationships between managers and employees is highlighted in literature however the primary findings suggest that some human resource managers may not fully understand the fundamentality of this concept.

In regard to objective one, the skills and techniques are all focused on in literature however it is interesting to note how the two companies focus on different methods to create a positive

working environment. Trust is an important component in forming a positive working environment verified in primary and secondary research; it appears that the establishment of trust is less challenging in smaller firms and proves to be extremely difficult in larger businesses. Contradicting findings between the need to communicate the vision and goals of the business is differentiated between literature and the findings; it is found that if a positive working environment is nurtured employees understand the unspoken or unwritten mission of the company. The genuineness of communication and the sincerity of positive expectations expressed by managers are mentioned in literature however employees of this study place a much greater emphasis on this importance. The need for companies to take the time to get to know each employee appears to be an essential task of managers to generate a culture of team work and strong working relationships identified in the primary and secondary research, the difficulty of this in larger firms is confirmed.

Furthermore, it is clarified in this study that intrinsic and extrinsic rewards can be beneficial and effective in promoting a positive working environment as literature suggests however the findings imply rewards are ineffective in developing a stimulating and enjoyable workplace if working relationships are not positive. Personal well-being is an important aspect in creating a positive working environment outlined in literature and by the managers in the findings, it is acknowledged that a healthy life balance is need to ensure workers can fulfill responsibility and encourage positivity. This study suggests that the first step in nurturing a positive working environment is getting the right type of personality, work ethic and attitude into a firm to ensure this person can be a worthy contributor in the development of an encouraging, happy and motivated workplace.

The findings of second objective provides an optimistic view that positive reinforcement and recognition has an enjoyable and motivating effect on both the receiver and the giver. McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y has been found to be very useful in the understanding of how people react to positive methods, it is worth mentioning participants of this study seemed to be theory y individuals thus the author is aware the findings would appear differently if a greater population was used. Overall, the findings of the effectiveness of positive reinforcement and recognition on the receiver and the giver are in line with the potential effects outlined in literature.

In regard to the third and final objective, the lack of individualism is predominately found to be the reason why positive reinforcement and recognition may produce ineffective results. Literature provides the need to consider the personality and attributes of the individual prior to giving reinforcement and recognition, this approach is emphasised in the primary research. As revealed earlier, the need to recruit the suitable person that will flourish with positive reinforcement and recognition is a challenge that every company is faced with. This research suggests if the right people are recruited into the company, constructive methods should be very effective in the motivation of employees to ensure a positive working environment is nurtured.

6.4 Recommendations for Practitioners

The cost and time of the recommendations are acknowledged, however it is believed that these suggestions may help to reduce costs of the firm in the future by ensuring an engaged and motivated workforce is developed and sustained in a positive working environment.

- Recruit the right people.

The use of job application forms is recommended as it gives the employee the opportunity to think about why they want to apply for the role. It is understood that employers use application forms to know the potential employees, if it is evident the applicant has put in thought and effort into applying for the role this could be an indication of their work ethic. The method of confirming references from schools, colleges and past work is advised to ensure the potential employee has positive reputation. It is suggested that interviews take place to help establish the character of the individual.

- Educate and Train Employees

It is recommended to ensure the new employee is satisfied with the contract outlining pay and bonuses. It is proposed that an induction is completed by employees to ensure an understanding of policies, procedures, regulations, rights and responsibilities. Employees should then be trained to be able to fulfill responsibility thus; employees will feel confident and comfortable in their role adding to the positivity of the firm. It is advised that the

management establish a culture of work/life balance to ensure stress is controllable and difficulties are overcome in a positive manner.

- **Trust and Communication**

From the first contact with employees via e-mail, telephone or in person it is recommended that managers start to build positive working relationships by demonstrating respect, professionalism, trust and confidentiality. It is proposed that managers should behave as leaders by being respectful, friendly and optimistic at all times. The use of smiling is an effective tool to make people feel comfortable in approaching management with new ideas, problems or solutions. It is advised that a manager makes an effort to get to know all employees, promotes healthy working relationships among staff and attempts to communicate with employees on a daily basis. The provision of constructive informal and formal feedback is considered to be essential for the creation of a positive working environment, it is suggested that managers always start and finish conversations with something positive and ensure problems are addressed in a positive and motivating manner.

- **Intrinsic and Extrinsic Rewards and Recognition Techniques**

It is recommended that individualism is taken into consideration when attempting to reward employees. The establishment of working relationships is essential for reward and recognition techniques to be motivating and worthwhile to employees. It is suggested that intrinsic rewards such as career progression or support with education is provided, while also extrinsic rewards such as financial awards are applied to ensure the motives of all employees are reflected on. However, this study suggests if a company can get the right people in they will be intrinsically motivated rather than extrinsically.

6.5 Recommendations for Further Study

- A comprehensive research study of the topic is recommended to gain an insight from a larger population size to ensure all types of workers are taken into consideration when analysing results. The timing restrictions and limitations of this study are acknowledged.
- It is suggested that future research could be completed to achieve the objective of creating a model of how to nurture a positive working environment.

- It is proposed that example workshops for managers are created on how to use skills and techniques to develop a positive working environment.
- It is advised to conduct research on identified Theory X employees to understand why they are not motivated by internal factors.

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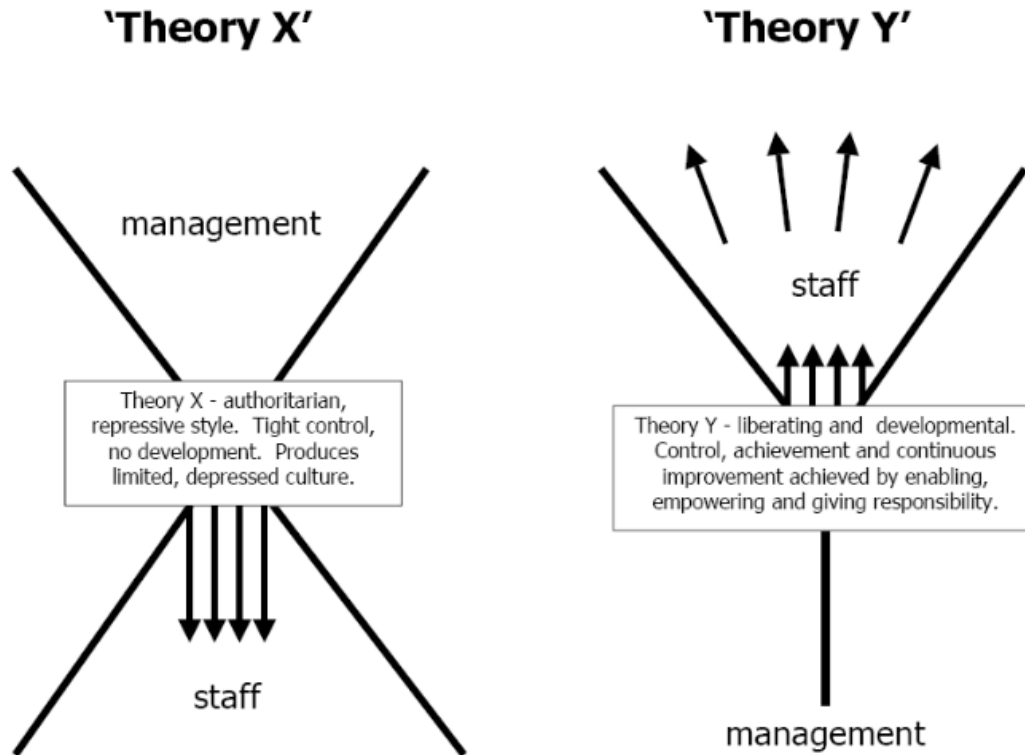
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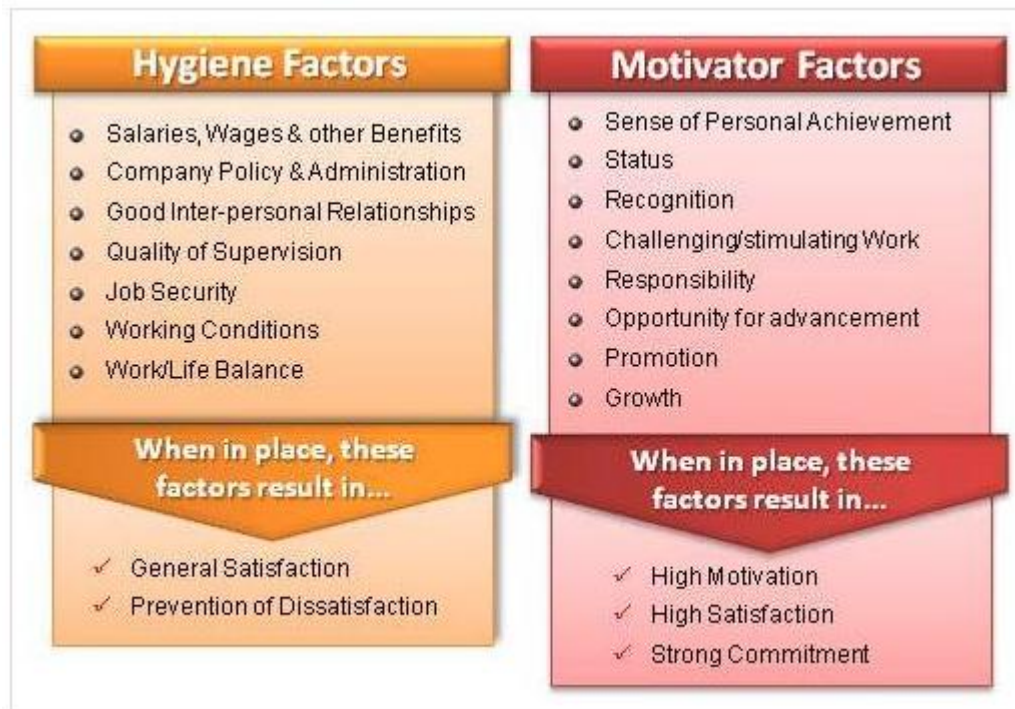
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Appendices

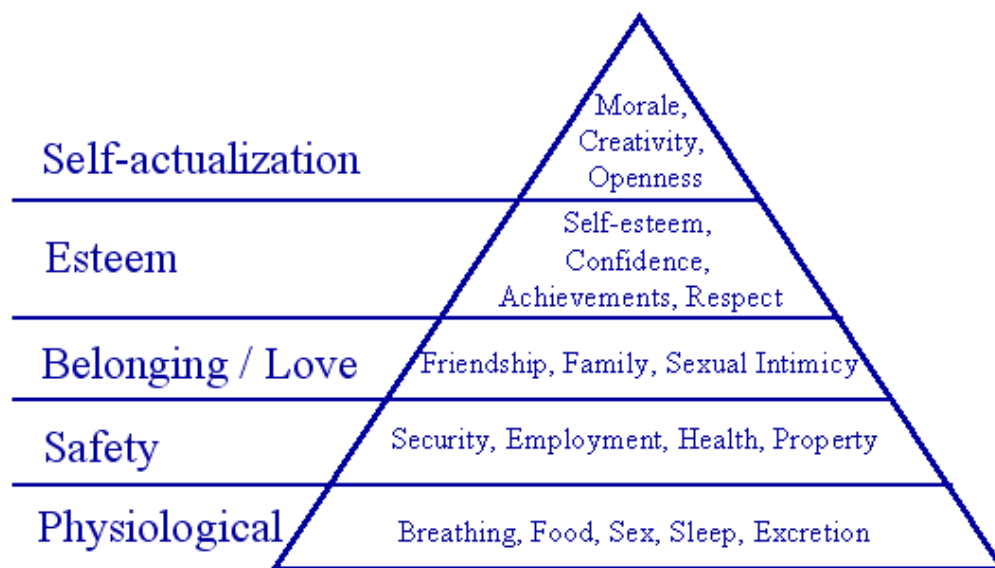
Appendices One: McGregor's Motivational Theory



Appendices Two: Herzberg's Motivational Theory



Appendices Three: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Appendices Four: Letter/E-mail to Participants

Dear XXX,

My name is Kelly Dunford, I am currently completing a Master's in Business Studies specialising in Human Resource Management in Waterford Institute of Technology. As part of my masters I am undertaking a dissertation, my dissertation title is as follows: *Nurturing a Positive Working Environment: An Understanding of the Power of Positive Reinforcement and Utilising Recognition to Motivate Employees.*

I wish to ask XXX to participate in my research study. I would be asking to interview one Human Resource Manager, one Line Manager and two Employees. The interviews would involve of a range of semi-structured questions that may take on average 45 to 60 minutes. The information collected would be integrated into my dissertation assignment.

I would like to take this opportunity to explain that the interview process and the information acquired are completely confidential. I would like it to be also noted that the names of the managers, employees or your company will not be published in my research unless I have specific consent.

If you have any questions, concerns or issues about this study; please do not hesitate to contact me. My contact number is 087-1345769, if a phone call is more convenient for you.

I would like to thank you for taking the time to read this letter/e-mail and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely/ Kind Regards,

Kelly Dunford

Appendices Five: Consent Form

- I, XXX, agree to participate in the research study by Kelly Dunford.
- The rationale and character of the study has been clarified to me in writing.
- I am contributing willingly.
- I give consent for my interview with Kelly Dunford to be tape-recorded.
- I give my permission that extracts from my interview may be quoted in the dissertation.
- Please Pick a Box:

I wish for my identity and the identity of the firm to remain confidential ☐

I do not wish for my identity and the identity of the firm to remain confidential ☐

Signed.....

Date.....

Appendices Six: Interview Questions

Interview Questions for Human Resource Manager

Questions on Objective One: To discover the skills and techniques that managers can use to nurture a positive working environment.

1. How would describe the overall mission and goals of your organisation? Do you share values and missions with your staff? How, how often and when?
2. How would you describe the word working environment? What does a positive working environment mean to you?
3. How would you describe your workforce?
4. How do you create a positive working environment? How do you ensure your employees/line managers enjoy coming to work?
5. What are the impacts of having a positive working environment?
6. What skills are needed by HR professionals to nurture a positive work environment?
7. What techniques are needed to create a positive working environment?
8. How does the working environment affect working relationships among managers and managers and managers and employees?
9. How do you encourage dignity and respect among employees?
10. How do you ensure your employee and line managers feel safe? Rules and Regulations, Policies.
11. How do you show your employee/ line manager's acknowledgement of their hard work? Examples of recognition.
12. How do you communicate with your line managers? How often?
13. Do you encourage Line Managers and Employees to work with one another? How?
14. Do you provide sessions for Employees and Line Managers to meet and share ideas, to be creative and innovative? Is decision making shared within the company?
15. How would you describe your relationship with Line Managers and Employees?
16. How do you form trust as a HR manager? How do you maintain trust? Implications of forming trust?
17. Do you know the names of all your line managers/employees?
18. How well do you know your line managers and employees? Do you celebrate special occasions in work such as birthdays?
19. Is there a mechanism for feedback?
20. How often do you provide an opportunity for line managers/employees to talk to you?

21. How do you show that you expect the best from your managers/employees? Implications on manager/employee motivation?
22. Do you create team spirit? How? What techniques do you use?
23. How does positivity impact employee motivation?
24. Do you make provisions for employees managers to progress in the company?
25. Do you give managers/employees responsibility in the organisation?
26. Do you allow the line managers and employees to take pride in their work?

Questions on Objective Two: To develop a comparative analysis of the effectiveness of positive reinforcement and recognition on the manager (the giver) and the employee (the receiver).

1. Do you use positive reinforcement in your methods to encourage line manager's/employees motivation and commitment?
2. Can you give me an example of when, how and why you used positive reinforcement?
3. How did it make you feel?
4. How do you think it made the receiver feel?
5. Impact on the organisation?
6. Do you show recognition to your line managers/employees?
7. How do you show recognition to them?
8. How often do you make an effort to show recognition/give positive feedback?
9. Can you give a specific example of when, how and why you used recognition?
10. How did it make you feel?
11. On a scale between 1-10, how enjoyable is giving positive recognition/positive feedback?
12. On a scale between 1-10, how motivating is giving positive recognition/positive feedback?
13. How do you think it makes the receiver feel?
14. What impact do you think it has on the line manager/employee?
15. On a scale between 1-10, how do you think employees enjoy receiving positive recognition/positive feedback?
16. On a scale between 1-10, how motivating do you think receiving positive recognition/positive feedback is to line managers/employees?

Questions on Objective Three: To understand why positive reinforcement and recognition may not motivate employees

1. Do you think positive reinforcement and recognition always motivates employees? Why? Why not?
2. Have you ever had a negative reaction to positive reinforcement or positive feedback?
3. Do you think some people may feel patronised when receiving positivity feedback? Why? Why not?
4. Do you consider individuality when preparing to give positive recognition?
5. Do you give the same recognition to all employees?
6. Do you take into consideration employee/manager intrinsic and extrinsic needs?
7. How does this affect motivation?
8. Have you ever given what you thought was something positive and the employee had a bad reaction?
9. How do you ensure you give the appropriate recognition to certain employees?

Interview Questions for Line Managers:

Questions on Objective One: To discover the skills and techniques that managers can use to nurture a positive working environment.

1. How would describe the overall mission and goals of your organisation?
2. How do you describe the atmosphere in your working section? What does a positive environment mean?
3. How do you create a positive working environment? Impact employee motivation? How do you ensure your employees enjoy coming to work?
4. How does the working environment affect your relationship with your employees?
5. What skills do you use to create a positive working environment?
6. What skills do managers need to create a positive working environment?
7. What techniques and methods do you use to create a positive working environment?
8. Do you greet your employees?
9. Do you know the names of each of your employees? How would you describe your relationship with your employees?
10. Do you celebrate birthdays or special occasions?

11. Do you talk to your employees individually on a regular basis? How often?
12. Would you talk about things other than work related matters? Such as news, sport, fashion etc.
13. How do you demonstrate dignity and respect to your line managers?
14. How do you encourage dignity and respect among employees?
15. How do you ensure your employees feel safe? Rules and Regulations, Policies.
16. Do you think they feel they can come to talk to you if they have a problem?
17. How do you show your employees acknowledgement of their hard work? Example of recognition.
18. How do you communicate? How often do you communicate with your employees?
19. Do you encourage Employees to work with one another? How?
20. Do you provide sessions for Employees to meet and share ideas, to be creative and innovative? When? How often?
21. Is decision making shared within the company?
22. Do you feel your Employees trust you? Do you think they feel they can rely on you?
23. How do you form trust as a line manager? How do you maintain trust? What are the implications of forming trust?
24. Is there a mechanism for giving feedback? How often do you provide an opportunity for them to talk to you?
25. How do you show that you expect the best from your employees? Implications on employee motivation?
26. Do you create team spirit? How? What techniques do you use?
27. How does positivity impact employee motivation?
28. Do you make provisions for employees to progress in the company?
29. Do you give employees responsibility in the organisation?
30. Do you allow the line managers and employees to take pride in their work?
31. How often do you communicate with HR manager?

Questions on Objective Two: To develop a comparative analysis of the effectiveness of positive reinforcement and recognition on the manager (the giver) and the employee (the receiver).

1. Do you feel the HR manager uses positive reinforcement to motivate you?
2. Does it work?
3. Can you give an example?
4. On scale of 1-10 how enjoyable is receiving positive reinforcement from your HR Manager?
5. On a scale of 1-10 how motivating is it to receive positive reinforcement from your HR Manager?
6. How do you think positive reinforcement impacts the employees?
7. Can you give me an example of when, how and why you used positive reinforcement?
8. How did it make you feel?
9. How do you think it made the receiver feel?
10. Do you show recognition to your line managers/employees?
11. How do you show recognition to them?
12. How often do you make an effort to show recognition/give positive feedback?
13. Can you give a specific example of when, how and why you used recognition?
14. How did it make you feel?
15. On a scale between 1-10, how enjoyable is giving positive recognition/positive feedback?
16. On a scale between 1-10, how motivating is giving positive recognition/positive feedback?
17. How do you think it makes the receiver feel?
18. What impact do you think it has on the /employee?
19. On a scale between 1-10, how do you think employees enjoy receiving positive recognition/positive feedback?
20. On a scale between 1-10, how motivating do you think receiving positive recognition/positive feedback is to employees?

Questions on Objective Three: To understand why positive reinforcement and recognition may not motivate employees

1. Do you think positive reinforcement and recognition always motivates employees? Why? Why not?
2. Have you ever had a negative reaction to positive reinforcement or positive feedback?
3. Do you think some people may feel patronised when receiving positivity feedback? Why? Why not?
4. Do you consider individuality when preparing to give positive recognition?
5. Do you give the same recognition to all employees?
6. Do you take into consideration employee/manager intrinsic and extrinsic needs?
7. How does this affect motivation?

Interview Questions for Employees

Questions on Objective One: To discover the skills and techniques that managers can use to nurture a positive working environment.

1. Why did you join XXX?
2. Do you enjoy working in XXX?
3. How would you describe the working environment in XXX?
4. What do your company do to ensure there is a positive working environment in the organisation?
5. What does your Line Manager do to create positivity in your working section?
6. Do you feel safe?
7. Do you feel listened to?
8. Do you feel a sense of belonging in work?
9. Do you have friends in work?
10. Do you have the opportunity to share your ideas and be innovative?
11. Do you have the opportunity to take on responsibility?
12. What responsibility and progression have you experienced so far?
13. What are your career aspirations and how do you see your company supporting that?
14. What skills do you feel is necessary for managers to have to motivate you?
15. What would make your work more meaningful and satisfying?
16. What changes need to be made in your work environment?
17. How do you like to be recognised, acknowledged and rewarded for a job well done?
18. What is your greatest challenge at work?

19. What makes you feel like a valuable contributor?
20. What support, tools/resources, skills or empowerment do you need to be more effective?
21. What de-motivates you?

Questions on Objective Two: To develop a comparative analysis of the effectiveness of positive reinforcement and recognition on the manager (the giver) and the employee (the receiver).

1. Do your managers use positive reinforcement to motivate you?
2. Does it work? Why/ Why not?
3. Can you give me an example of when why and how a manager used positive reinforcement and the impact of it?
4. On a scale between 1-10 how enjoyable was that experience?
5. What kind of recognition techniques do your managers use to show appreciation?
6. What kind of recognition do you favour?
7. Can you give me an example of a time when, why and how a manager used effective recognition to show their appreciation?
8. On a scale between 1-10 how motivating was that experience?

Questions on Objective Three: To understand why positive reinforcement and recognition may not motivate employees

1. Had you ever had an experience when you did not enjoy the experience of recognition?
2. Can you explain?
3. Why was it not effective?
4. What could the manager have done instead?
5. Why do you think positive reinforcement and recognition may not work on all employees?
6. What could the managers do to ensure they show appreciation to all employees?

Appendices Seven: Personal Reflection

In June 2013 I started to research ideas for my dissertation in preparation for my interview to complete my Masters course. From my experience of being a secondary school teacher, I understood the significance of using positive reinforcement and recognition to improve the facilitation of learning in a classroom environment. I made the decision to further my education, skills and knowledge as I wanted to be able to work in the human resource profession in the future. I wished to learn how to motivate people to work harder, I wanted to understand what stimulates and encourages individuals and finally I had a desire to enhance my knowledge and skills to create a positive working environment for people I would work with in the future in a business context.

I carefully selected my title to ensure I had an appropriate research question that I could study over the next year. I gave specific attention to each objective as I wanted to make sure they were suitable, measurable and achievable, while also ensuring they were corresponding with the overall research title.

I found the introduction chapter very interesting as it opened up my eyes to the research gap and questions that need to be addressed in this area of study; also the review of literature was a learning experience for me as I was exposed to many theories and studies on this topic. After completing my introduction and literature review I prepared my interview questions according to each specific theme and objective in three categories as I had certain questions for Human Resource Managers, Line Managers and Employee. From this experience I feel I have learned from my mistakes, I feel I asked too many questions which I will take into consideration in my future research studies.

I believe this process was very difficult as I put in so much effort and time however it has been one of the most worthwhile projects I have ever completed. I have enhanced my knowledge of how people behave; I acknowledge the skills and techniques that are valuable for me as a future human resource professional. I understand the reason why some companies struggle to nurture and sustain an optimistic working environment and I now have a greater comprehension of why it is very challenging to engage some individuals. Overall, this process has been a very rewarding and knowledgeable experience.