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ANALYSIS OF EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES FROM THE WORK ENVIRONMENT PERSPECTIVE AT PT. CITRA SAWIT MANDIRI LABUHANBATU DISTRICT

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the employee performance improvement strategies implemented by PT. Citra Sawit Mandiri, specifically from a work environment perspective. A conducive work environment is believed to play a significant role in increasing employee morale, motivation, and productivity. The research method used is qualitative with a descriptive approach. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews with several employees and field foremen as well as documentation at the research location. The results show that employee performance improvement strategies in this company include routine work briefings, incentives, technical training, and periodic performance evaluations. However, the physical work environment conditions such as lighting, temperature, and work facilities in the field are still inadequate and are a complaint for some employees. In addition, the relationship between superiors and subordinates is also an important factor that influences work comfort. From this analysis, it can be concluded that performance improvement strategies will run optimally if balanced with improvements in the work environment, both physical and non-physical. This research is expected to provide input for companies in formulating more effective and sustainable human resource management policies.

Keywords: Strategy, Employee Performance, Work Environment, PT. Citra Sawit Mandiri

INTRODUCTION

In today's highly competitive business world, companies need to continuously improve their employees' performance to remain superior and competitive. One important factor influencing employee performance is the work environment. A conducive work environment increases employee motivation, productivity, and well-being. A company is where production activities take place, producing goods and services that play a vital role in the economy. The company is required to improve the quality of its human resources, as this is crucial to ensuring employees exhibit positive behavior and attitudes toward the company, in the hope that the company's goals will be met. Employee performance is reflected in employee capabilities. Employee performance serves as a model for the company in achieving specific goals. Strategy is defined as a process by which top leaders determine plans focused on the organization's long-term goals, along with the development of methods or efforts to achieve those goals. Strategy is generally defined as a process involving senior leaders in establishing plans focused on the organization's long-term goals and developing methods and initiatives to achieve those goals.

Performance is essentially the result of the quality of work performed by an employee in carrying out tasks according to the responsibilities assigned to each employee. Meanwhile, an employee performance improvement strategy is a way for a company to improve employee performance so that it can achieve company goals. Therefore, an employee performance improvement strategy is a process carried out by leaders to improve and advance employees so that they can change their work abilities, thinking, and other skills to improve employee performance, so that the company's organizational goals can be achieved properly. Human resource management plays a vital role in enhancing employee productivity by ensuring that employees have the appropriate skills, tools, support, and work environment to achieve their full potential. This involves developing training and development programs, conducting regular performance appraisals, maintaining a healthy work-life balance, and implementing incentive and reward systems that encourage employees to achieve high levels of productivity. Improving employee productivity is a key

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factor in achieving organizational success. Productive employees not only improve a company's operational efficiency but also contribute to innovation, growth, and long-term sustainability. PT. Citra Sawit Mandiri, located in Labuhanbatu, North Sumatra, is a company engaged in oil palm plantations. This company focuses on managing oil palm plantations to produce high-quality fresh fruit bunches (FFB). However, unlike other palm oil companies, PT. Citra Sawit Mandiri does not process its harvest into crude palm oil (CPO). Instead, the FFB produced is sold directly to the nearest palm oil processing plant. PT. Citra Sawit Mandiri is known as a company committed to improving operational efficiency and business strategy through the application of the latest technology and innovation in human resource management. PT. Citra Sawit Mandiri is also involved in management consulting and other professional services, which aim to help other companies improve their operational performance and efficiency. PT. Citra Sawit Mandiri is a company that faces significant challenges in its efforts to improve the productivity and efficiency of its employees' performance. Amidst the demands to achieve higher targets, the company realizes that employee performance depends not only on individual abilities or training, but also on an adequate work environment. However, in recent years, there have been indications that the work environment at PT. Citra Sawit Mandiri has an impact on employee performance.

PT. Citra Sawit Mandiri, which operates in the agribusiness sector, faces various challenges in managing employee performance to support operational success and achieve business targets. As a company engaged in palm oil plantations, employee productivity and efficiency play a crucial role in determining harvest yields, product quality, and smooth distribution. Therefore, human resource management is one of the company's top priorities. In an effort to improve employee performance, PT. Citra Sawit Mandiri recognizes the importance of building a productive and conducive work culture. Common challenges include a lack of technical skills, lack of motivation, and ineffective communication between teams. Furthermore, the operational characteristics of remote plantation locations require a specialized approach to employee management, particularly in terms of training, welfare, and coaching. This employee performance improvement strategy at PT. Citra Sawit Mandiri is a strategic step to address this issue. PT. Citra Sawit Mandiri has identified the need to develop a competency-based training program to improve employees' technical and managerial skills. Furthermore, the company is focusing on creating a fair, performance-based incentive system. This system is expected to increase employee motivation and drive optimal work performance.

In addition to training and incentives, PT. Citra Sawit Mandiri also prioritizes effective communication between management and employees. Through regular meetings and open discussion forums, the company strives to build harmonious working relationships. This aims to create a work environment that supports collaboration and the development of individual potential. With an integrated approach, the employee performance improvement strategy at PT. Citra Sawit Mandiri aims to create a professional, efficient, and results-oriented work team. These steps are expected to not only increase company productivity but also create job satisfaction for all employees, so that the company can continue to compete and grow in the coconut industry. Based on the results of internal surveys and employee satisfaction reports, several aspects of the work environment at PT. Citra Sawit Mandiri have been highlighted and require serious attention. Several employees complained about the uncomfortable physical conditions of the work environment, such as minimal facilities, a lack of staff space, inadequate lighting, and poor network connectivity, which affect their comfort and productivity. In addition, there are also problems related to non-physical aspects, such as a work atmosphere that tends to be less conducive, ineffective communication between divisions, and a lack of support from superiors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategy

As a foundation for understanding management, it's important to identify the foundations of strategy. In this regard, Ansoff (in Chairunnisa, 2022:11) explains that strategy is a set of rules that govern decision-making and standard-setting. A company's strategy is often referred to as its business plan. Sukristono in the book*Business Development Strategy*(Amang et al., 2023:2) states that strategy is a process of determining the plans of top leaders that focuses on the organization's long-term goals, accompanied by the preparation of a method or effort to achieve these goals.

Performance

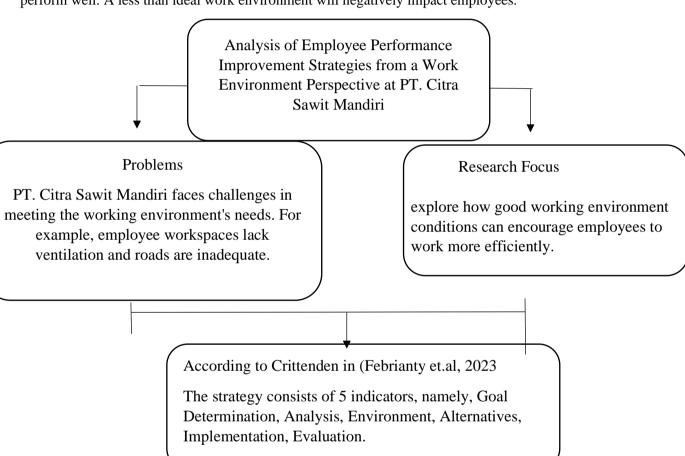
Performance comes from the words Job Performance or Actual Performance, which means work achievement or actual accomplishments achieved by an individual. Performance is defined as the quality and quantity of work achieved by an employee in accordance with the responsibilities assigned to them in carrying out their duties. Performance is the result of completing all assigned tasks and responsibilities within a specified timeframe. Performance is the result of carrying out a task, both physical and non-physical. According to Simanjuntak (in

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Syaidah, 2021), performance is the achievement of results in carrying out a specific task. Meanwhile, individual performance is the achievement of a person's work against targets or tasks that must be completed within a specified timeframe.

Work environment

The work environment is the external institutions or forces that have the potential to influence organizational performance. The environment is divided into two categories: the general environment and the specific environment. The general environment is everything outside the organization that has the potential to influence the organization. This environment includes social and technological conditions. The specific environment, on the other hand, is the part of the environment that is directly related to achieving an organization's goals (Robbins, 2016). An employee's daily life is greatly influenced by their environment, as it can boost their work ethic, make them lazy, or even cause stress in their work. The better the work environment in a company, the greater the likelihood that employees will perform well. A less than ideal work environment will negatively impact employees.



Research Output

This research is expected to provide PT. Citra Sawit Mandiri with a clear picture of the relationship between the environment and employee performance, as well as strategic steps that can be taken to create a better and more productive work environment.

Figure 2.1Framework of thinking

RESEARCH METHODS

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The appropriate research to use is a qualitative method with a descriptive approach, a qualitative method uses concepts that form an investigation in helping, understanding, and explaining the meaning of social phenomena in research. The reason researchers use qualitative methods is because they adapt to the research theme and are easier when dealing directly between researchers and sources. According to Moleong in the book Qualitative Research Methods (Abdul Fattah Nasution, 2023: 34) conveys that qualitative research is research that intends to understand phenomena about what is experienced by research subjects such as behavior, perception, motivation, actions, etc. holistically, and by means of descriptions in the form of words and language, in a specific natural context and by utilizing various natural methods.

RESEARCH LOCATION

The selection of the research location at PT. Citra Sawit Mandiri was motivated by indications of significant problems related to the work environment and its impact on employee performance. Based on the survey, there are several work environment factors at PT. Citra Sawit Mandiri that are not fully optimal. These factors, both physical such as inadequate work facilities and networks, and non-physical such as inter-division communication and support from superiors, are known to affect the level of employee motivation, comfort, and productivity. In addition, PT. Citra Sawit Mandiri is a company that has a fairly large number of employees and a complex organizational structure.

RESEARCH INFORMANT

According to Sugiyono (in Handayani, 2020), a research informant is a source who understands the research object and is able to provide an explanation of the research topic. This definition provides information about the background situation and conditions of the research. Research informants play a crucial role in data collection and facilitate the researcher in the data collection process.

3.4 Data Sources Data Collection Techniques

Arikunto (in Fadilla and Wulandari, 2023) explains that data sources in research are the subjects from which the data is obtained. Based on the method of acquisition, data sources are divided into two groups: primary data and secondary data.

1. Primary Data

Primary data is data obtained directly from the original source. The methods used to obtain primary data include interviews and observations. Primary data is data obtained directly in research based on its source through measurements in the form of observations, interviews, and other means (Handayani, 2020).

2. Secondary Data

Secondary data is data obtained indirectly by researchers through intermediary media (received and recorded by other parties). Secondary data generally takes the form of evidence, notes, or historical reports that have been compiled in archives. According to Handayani (2020), secondary data is data obtained indirectly, either from books, reports, or libraries.

Data collection technique

According to Handayani (2020), data collection techniques are the primary step in research, aimed at obtaining data. If researchers don't understand the data collection methods, they won't obtain appropriate data. In this study, the data collection techniques used by the author are as follows:

1. Observation

One technique that can be used to identify and investigate nonverbal behavior is observation. Observation is a data collection technique that has specific characteristics compared to other techniques.

2. Interview

According to Sugiyono (in Sugianto, 2023) interviews are a data collection technique if researchers want to conduct preliminary studies to find problems that need to be researched, but also if researchers want to know things from respondents that are in depth.

It can be understood that in this research the researcher used an unstructured interview technique where the interviewer did not ask systematic questions, the researcher only asked questions that were in accordance with the main problems that had been previously formulated in this research.

3. Documentation

According to Sugiyono (in Handayani 2020), documentation techniques are explained as the collection of data obtained or acquired through documents.

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Data Analysis Techniques

According to Miles and Huberman in the book Qualitative Research Methods (Abdul Fattah Nasution, 2023:132) using qualitative data processing methods or techniques can be carried out in three stages, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

1. Data Reduction

Data reduction is a form of analysis that sharpens, classifies, directs, removes unnecessary and organizes data in such a way that final conclusions can be drawn.

2. Data Presentation

After reducing the data, the next step is to display or present the data so that it has clear facilities. In qualitative research, data presentation can be done in the form of tables with a neat format, chart graphs, pictograms, and the like.

3. Drawing Conclusions

The final step, drawing conclusions, is one of the qualitative data analysis techniques. Conclusions are the results of the analysis that can be used to take action. Drawing conclusions is the final stage in the data analysis process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Employee Performance Improvement Strategy

Strategy is an effort undertaken by an individual or organization to produce decisions and actions used to plan steps to achieve a desired goal. This strategy can also be called a tool used to build and deliver a consistent value proposition and establish a distinct image to the target market. As expressed by Mr. Batanghari Sitompul as Deputy Chairman of the Union in the following interview:

"To improve employee performance, we implement several strategies, including incentives for employees who achieve work targets, morning work briefings before starting work, and regular training to enhance skills. We also conduct field supervision to ensure work is carried out according to standards."

From the statement above, it can be concluded that the employee performance improvement strategy at PT. Citra Sawit Mandiri, such as providing incentives, regular briefings, training, and direct supervision, has been implemented with the aim of increasing employee enthusiasm, skills, and maximizing work results. This strategy has proven very effective because employees are more disciplined and productive. This aligns with Arifin's (2018) research, which shows that incentives, training, and supervision have a significant positive impact on employee performance. Their strategy can be considered appropriate and proven to support performance improvement.

Goal Setting

Goal setting is setting clear and measurable goals in the initial steps of a strategy that an individual, group or organization wants to achieve within a certain time period. Goals become a direction or guide in making decisions and developing strategic steps to achieve the desired results. As stated by Nazwan as head of the union at PT. Sawit Mandiri's image in the interview was carried out as follows:

"The main goal of our strategy is to increase employee productivity so that everyone works according to targets and procedures, without having to be constantly monitored."

"The objectives of these strategies were designed from the outset to create a professional and efficient work environment. We want employees to work not just out of obligation, but because they feel valued and empowered. The goal, of course, is to support the achievement of production targets and maintain operational stability in the field."

Based on the analysis above, it can be concluded that setting clear, specific, and measurable goals is a crucial initial step in the employee performance improvement strategy at PT. Citra Sawit Mandiri. All interviewees agreed that goals form the basis for designing strategies such as incentives, job training, daily briefings, and supervision. Without well-defined goals, strategies are difficult to direct and their results difficult to measure. With clear goals, the company can direct all efforts more effectively.

Alternative Strategy

Strategic alternatives are various strategic choices or options that an organization or company can take to achieve its goals and improve performance. Strategic alternatives are typically developed based on the results of an analysis of the internal and external environment, such as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT

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analysis). The goal is to ensure the company can remain competitive, adapt to environmental changes, and achieve competitive advantage. As expressed by Mr. Nazwan, Head of the Union at PT. Citra Sawit Mandiri, as follows:

"Alternative strategies the company is considering include implementing a digital production recording system, using drones for land monitoring, and regularly evaluating the performance of foremen and harvesters. Furthermore, the company is striving for efficient logistics for transporting fresh fruit bunches (FFB) to make them faster and more cost-effective. The ultimate goal is to speed up the work process without compromising quality."

Based on the analysis above, it can be concluded that the company is currently developing and considering various alternative strategies to improve operational efficiency and performance, particularly in production data management. One key strategy being considered and initially tested is the implementation of a digital production recording system, which is considered capable of addressing the problems of manual recording, which is prone to errors, slow, and inefficient.

Implementation

Implementation is the process of implementing strategies, plans, or policies established by an organization into concrete actions on the ground. The goal is to achieve organizational goals through program execution, resource utilization, and systematic monitoring of results.

"We have implemented several measures, one of which is providing regular training to employees, especially harvesters and field operators. Our training aims to help them understand SOPs and work more efficiently. Furthermore, we also implement an incentive system based on daily performance to motivate them to work optimally."

"From a management perspective, we ensure there's a morning briefing before employees start work. This is crucial for fostering a positive and focused work mindset."

From the statement above, it can be concluded that the implementation of employee performance improvement strategies at PT. Citra Sawit Mandiri has been implemented effectively through routine job training, morning briefings before work, incentives, and periodic evaluations. Implementation is not merely administrative but is also carried out in the field to encourage employee discipline, motivation, and productivity.

Work Environment at PT. Citra Sawit Mandiri

The work environment is the institutions or external forces that have the potential to influence organizational performance. The environment is formulated into two, namely the general environment and the specific environment. The general environment is everything outside the organization that has the potential to influence the organization. This environment consists of social and technological conditions. The workplace includes the layout of equipment, workspace, lighting, ventilation, safety equipment, and occupational health and safety measures. All of these factors play a crucial role in the effective performance of tasks. Imagine a workspace with a messy layout, poor cleanliness, inadequate lighting, and minimal ventilation. This can lead to employees becoming lazy and slacking off in their work, as they lack the comfort they need to perform their jobs.

"Access to the plantations here is still difficult, especially during heavy rain. The dirt roads become slippery, and motorcycles often fall off. Even fruit trucks often get stuck." (Interview, March 20, 2025)

"Some divisions have fairly good road access because they've been paved. But others still use dirt roads, and during the rainy season, work is disrupted. Furthermore, problems can arise when harvesting vehicles from the plantations arrive late."

From the statement above, it can be concluded that road access remains a major obstacle, especially during the rainy season. Poor road infrastructure hampers operational activities and poses a risk to employee safety at PT. Citra Sawit Mandiri's plantations. Therefore, the company needs to improve its road infrastructure to support work efficiency, crop distribution, and worker safety in the field.

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ROOM

A workspace is a physical area designed to support employees' professional activities. This includes various facilities and environments that support productivity, comfort and work safety.

"In general, the clinic space is intended for healthcare services, but its physical facilities still have shortcomings. The room can sometimes feel stuffy due to inadequate ventilation, especially when there are a lot of patients. Cleanliness is maintained, but there's no dedicated staff, so we often clean it ourselves between shifts. Lighting is also less than optimal, especially in the examination rooms, as the lamps are often dim or broken and are often replaced slowly."

From the statement above, it can be concluded that the physical work environment, such as workspaces, warehouses, and supporting facilities, significantly impacts employee morale and performance. Employees who work in cramped, stuffy spaces or with minimal facilities experience decreased concentration and work speed.

Conclusion

Based on the results of research conducted at PT. Citra Sawit Mandiri, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- 1. Based on the analysis of Employee Performance Improvement Strategies, PT Citra Sawit Mandiri has implemented several strategies to improve employee performance, such as morning work briefings, regular technical training, and incentives based on work results. These strategies are considered quite effective because they provide a clearer understanding of work and motivate employees to achieve company targets. Employees also feel that management is paying attention to improving their skills and work productivity.
- 2. Based on the analysis, although performance improvement strategies have been implemented, their implementation in the field is still hampered by suboptimal work environment conditions. Some of the problems identified include limited work facilities such as rest areas and clean water, damaged road infrastructure, and a lack of occupational safety training. This inadequate work environment can impact employee comfort and effectiveness in carrying out their duties, requiring further attention and improvement from the company to support better performance.

Suggestion

Suggestions that can be given to improve employee performance improvement strategies seen from the perspective of the work environment at PT. Citra Sawit Mandiri are as follows:

- to continuously develop performance improvement strategies by increasing the intensity of routine
 technical training and ensuring that every employee understands the established targets and work standards.
 Incentives also need to be evaluated to ensure fairness and transparency, thereby motivating all employees.
 Furthermore, companies can consider implementing technology in stages, accompanied by initial training,
 to ensure the digitalization process is both seamless and acceptable to all employees.
- 2. Companies need to focus on improving the quality of the physical work environment, such as providing basic facilities (rest areas, clean water, and toilets), as well as repairing damaged road infrastructure in plantation areas. Furthermore, it's crucial to improve occupational safety through regular occupational health and safety (K3) training programs and strict field supervision. Communication between management and employees also needs to be strengthened so that work environment issues can be identified more quickly and addressed appropriately.

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