

COOPERATIVE WORKING WITH LOWSKILLED PEOPLE : HOW TO IMPROVE THEIR MOTIVATION ?

CONTEXT :

De Duinenwacht : social workplace, Oostende, Belgium, www.duinenwacht.be

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De Duinenwacht is a nonprofit organization, formed in 1999, who create sustainable jobs and work experience for low skilled and long term unemployed people. De Duinenwacht is engaged in green maintenance and construction (rooftop isolation, pavements,...). De Duinenwacht employs 60 employees of which 2 coordinators and 10 instructors.

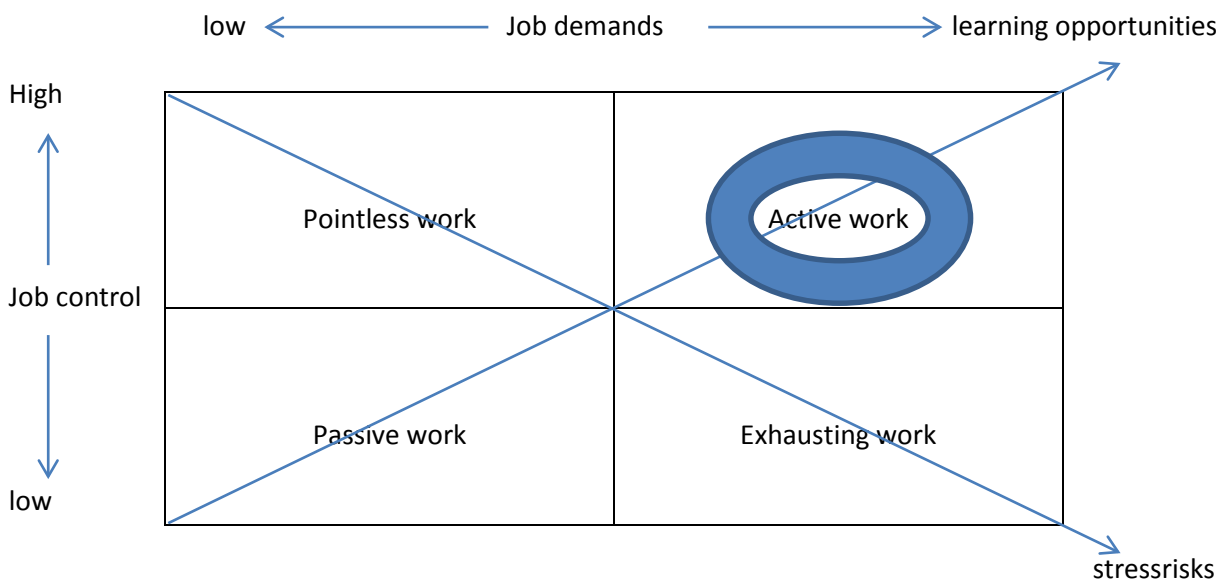
DESCRIPTION :

THE STARTING POINTS FOR DE DUINENWACHT ARE :

- Sustainable jobs for low skilled and long term unemployed people.
- The projects and companies must be feasible. A break-even situation is necessary.
- The employees must be involved in the policy of the company.

We note that we already realize the first two starting points but the third starting still not. We want to realize the third starting point for a lot of reasons :

- We find the sick leave high and we want to reduce the sick leave.
- An employee survey and appraisal interviews shows that the employees want to be more involved at the company policy. They want more information and interactive communication.
- Reducing of subsidies (grants)
- To increase the job satisfaction of the employees



HOW HAVE WE INCREASED THE MOTIVATION OF THE EMPLOYEES ?

We made a strategic choice to organize our organization in another way (**innovative work organization**). This choice is subject to a number of rules and it has an overall impact on the organization.

WHICH BEHAVIOUR DO WE EXPECT FROM OUR EMPLOYEES ?

- Job satisfaction
- Involvement
- Efficiency
- Quality
- Flexibility
- Innovation
- Service
- Sustainability

These are the conditions to which a modern organization must meet.

De Duinenwacht was rather a traditional working organization (specialization, hierarchy, separation of management and implementation, Christmas tree thinking, rules and procedures, separation of thinking and acting)

The consequences : the employees took no responsibility, difficult communication, the responsibility were not clear, high sick leave.

De Duinenwacht want to give an answer and we started with working on :

- Clarifying the functions
- Improve communication
- Competency management
- Competency based work
- Talent development
- Appreciative working together
- Involvement
- Self-managing teams
- Strategy, mission, vision

We will be out of the general principles of the innovative work organization :

- We strive for active jobs (good quality of work, balance between regulation means and task requirements)
- From functional to process- oriented organization
- We give more responsibility to the employees

- Organize horizontally
- Minimum specification and matching systems
- Multi-disciplinary team
- Delegation of decision-making to the lowest possible level
- Working more together
- Openness to new ideas

What's a team ?

- A fixed group of employees
- A clearly defined command
- Command translated into concrete measurable goals
- The team is self-managing (preparation, organization, implementation, regulation, control)
- The team is responsible for the realization

What's a self –managing team ?

A group of employees who are jointly responsible for the total process in which products or services are established.

The mean principles :

- Teams have a workable size (8 à 12 employees)
- The team task includes a complete task
- The team has enough rule- end send options to work independent. This is important for the involvement, job satisfaction, faith)
- The members of the team are interdependent of each other and help each other
- The members of the team are flexible usable in executive tasks
- The team is self-managing
- The team has his own location, resources and information
- The operating systems need to connect to the management responsibility
- The reward systems need to connect to the team working

INTERVIEW :

My name is Steve and I started working twelve years ago in De Duinenwacht. Before I was about 5 years unemployed. The only job experience I had at that time was mainly temporary jobs like working in factories. As I didn't finish my school I also was low skilled. So I had the perfect profile to start working in De Duinenwacht with a long term unemployment and no education or degree.

At first I started working within the project "De duinenwacht" as a green worker. After a couple of years my personal and working skills were improved mainly through coaching, education and on the floor guidance. The job gave me more and more joy and pride and I gained more confidence. All these things led to more and more responsibility within the company.

About 7 years ago I got the change of a lifetime. My dear colleagues asked me to become part of a new project called "De energy savers". This project started out with just one activity, providing energy scans in homes and apartments of target groups. As this was completely new for me I had to

learn again. Later after an intensive training we also started with rooftop insulation. De duinenwacht give me the opportunity to grow and give more and more responsibility. It give me confidence, job satisfaction and new energy.

Outcomes and evaluation :

We apply the principles of the **innovative work organization** to improve the motivation and involvement of the low skilled employees. We do it step by step. We took already the first steps and we will involve the whole organization in the months to come.

The more the employees get involved, the more motivated they are. They get more confidence, they are more involved and they are less sick.