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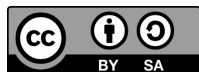
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Motivation Systems Evolution and Their Impact on Employee Satisfaction in a Modern Workplace on the Example of IT Industry

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Abstract: Motivation is a critical factor in employee performance and job satisfaction, particularly in the IT industry, where the demand for skilled professionals is high. Companies must develop effective motivational systems to attract, retain, and inspire IT employees to achieve their business goals. However, designing and implementing a motivational system that meets the needs of IT professionals can be challenging, as these needs are continually evolving. Therefore, this article aims to investigate the motivational systems in the IT industry in Poland and provide actionable recommendations for enhancing these systems. The primary objective is to identify the most common benefits listed by employers, compare them with the preferences of IT professionals, and examine the effectiveness of various incentive systems in attracting, retaining, and inspiring IT employees. The study aims to capture the prevalent benefits that companies typically offer in their motivational systems and provide a comprehensive overview of the benefits commonly offered in the IT industry. The research findings will contribute to the field of organizational behaviour and provide actionable recommendations to enhance motivational systems in the IT industry, ultimately benefiting both employees and companies alike.

Keywords: motivation, motivational systems, IT professionals, job satisfaction, intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, benefits, adaptation

1. Introduction

The rapidly growing IT sector has intensified competition for skilled professionals, making it increasingly challenging to retain top talent. Employee benefits play a pivotal role in creating a positive work environment, but there often exists a disconnect between the benefits offered by companies and the preferences of IT professionals. This article seeks to delve into this gap and propose solutions by comparing the benefits highlighted by companies with the priorities of IT professionals. Additionally, it aims to understand how IT professionals perceive existing benefit systems and

their impact on job satisfaction and employee retention. Through this research, we aim to identify ways to enhance motivational systems to better align with the needs of employees, ultimately leading to increased engagement, satisfaction, and improved organizational performance. The study suggests that regularly updating these systems can positively influence motivation and job satisfaction. Ultimately, the goal is to provide evidence-based recommendations to help companies create a work environment that attracts and retains top talent.

The key research inquiries include identifying primary benefits outlined on IT employers' websites, uncovering the top 5-10 benefits prioritized by IT professionals, understanding IT professionals' attitudes towards existing benefit systems and how these systems impact satisfaction and retention, conducting a comparative analysis between IT professionals' preferences and benefits offered by companies, and formulating practical recommendations for companies to enhance their motivational systems.

The importance of this research is underscored by the challenges faced in talent recruitment and retention within the expanding IT sector. Understanding the motivating factors and external factors influencing the lifecycle of motivational systems is critical for achieving success in the business. This study contributes to the field of motivational systems research by shedding light on misalignments and advocating for adaptive strategies to address them.

2. Theoretical Background

An extensive body of research connected with motivation is available, focusing on various theories and aspects of the subject, so a comprehensive review of research across various domains, including business, education, and IT was conducted and summarized.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1954) posits that individuals are initially driven to fulfil their basic needs before progressing to higher-level aspirations. Ackerman (2018) introduced the Self-Determination Theory, which explains motivation through the satisfaction of basic psychological needs. The work of Kondratyev et al. (2005) emphasizes the essential role of motivation in enhancing employee performance and engagement. Schöttle (2020) underscores the critical importance of understanding the drivers of project teams for effective motivation and leadership. Additionally, Ryan and Deci (2000) distinguish intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, with intrinsic motivation stemming from the inherent satisfaction derived from the task itself. The Expectancy-Value Theory (Wigfield and Eccles, 2000) proposes that motivation is influenced by the perceived likelihood of success and the value assigned to the task. Kolman et al. (2012) categorize work motivation theories into content, process, and situational types, showcasing the diverse perspectives in this domain. Heckhausen (2018) highlights the evolution of motivation research over time, with a current emphasis on identifying and understanding the factors that

shape human behaviour. Additionally, Sorko and Brandstätter (2020) note that while classical motivation theories remain relevant, adjustments may be needed to align with the challenges posed by Industry 4.0.

In the context of motivation in Business, several works can be highlighted. Damij et al. (2015) found that Slovenian workers are motivated by factors like meaning, creation, challenge, ownership, identity, and optimism, challenging traditional motivators like money and prestige. Research on individual needs and social conditions suggests that autonomy and social connectedness positively impact work motivation, while competence has a negative impact (Vo, 2022). Busque-Carrier et al. (2022) added that individuals with high basic psychological need satisfaction are more likely to be intrinsically motivated. Alderfer (1969) categorized employee needs into three levels: existence, relatedness, and growth. Blumenfeld (2020) highlighted Zappos's company culture, emphasizing employee happiness and satisfaction.

Van Tuin et al. (2020) discovered a positive association between corporate purpose and employee motivation and engagement. Vasilenko (2019) evaluated the work motivation system in a commercial enterprise, finding that the implementation of the work motivation mechanism increased employee satisfaction and annual profits. Lee et al. (2022) explored the impact of employee generations on factors related to employee retention and motivation in the workplace, revealing differences in motivations of different generations. Nikolova and Cnossen (2020) highlighted the economic significance of meaningful work, demonstrating that autonomy, competence, and relatedness explain around 60% of the variation in work meaningfulness perceptions. Chen (2017) conducted a meta-analysis, revealing a substantial and positive connection between employee motivation and organizational performance, with potential publication bias as a limitation. Chen J (2015) showed that leadership significantly impacts employee motivation, with perceived leader support moderating this relationship. Albuquerque et al. (2017) suggest that agile software development methods may lead to higher levels of motivation compared to traditional methods.

Another domain that was reviewed is motivation in education, where Yan et al. (2022) found that teacher competency at the university level is related to professional commitment and job satisfaction, emphasizing the need for qualified teachers.

Chen (2017) explored the relationship between teacher support and student motivation, highlighting its importance, especially in middle schools.

As for motivation in IT, the body of research is relatively smaller, as most of the studies are conducted for more conventional business, however França et al. (2018) analysed motivation in software engineering, finding that intrinsic factors like job satisfaction, enthusiasm, and personal development are key motivators. França et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of intrinsic motivation factors for software engineers' job satisfaction. Gong et al. (2018) revealed that authentic leadership

plays a crucial role in creating a conducive team climate, positively impacting Innovative Work Behavior (IWB).

Dostert and Müller (2021) underline that motivational assistance systems can be designed to promote intrinsic motivation in industrial production settings. Gopalan et al. (2020) emphasize that various motivation theories, models, and instruments can be used to enhance motivation in learning environments. Grčar (2020) provides an example from the hospitality industry, stating that Bellagio Hotel offers great employee advancement options, contributing to employee motivation. Gagné and Deci (2005) suggest that Self-determination Theory indicates intrinsic motivation can be reinforced through autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Devloo et al. (2015) add that basic psychological need satisfaction and intrinsic motivation are positively related to innovative work behaviour. Majumder (2016) shows Google's approach to employee motivation, emphasizing factors such as autonomy, flexibility, and collaboration.

However, despite the extensive research in these areas, a significant gap exists in understanding motivation as a comprehensive system. Most studies focus on specific elements or individual aspects of motivation, rather than providing a holistic view. This gap is particularly relevant in the highly competitive IT sector, where effective motivational systems are essential for organizational success. Addressing this gap was the main purpose of the research, aiming at providing valuable insights for designing effective motivational programs aligned with organizational goals.

3. Method

The research was conducted in three key stages: content analysis of IT company websites, survey conducted with IT professionals and comparative analysis of the former two.

At the initial stage the websites of leading IT employers in Europe were analysed, focusing on commonly mentioned benefits in job postings. Thematic analysis techniques categorized benefits and uncovered prevalent themes. Sample size of 20 companies was used and considered sufficient for comprehensive insights. The sample companies were shortlisted based on statistical information from Statista, namely "Largest exporters of IT products and services in Poland in 2021, by revenues from export (in 1,000 zloty)" (Sas, 2023a) and "Largest IT companies in Poland in 2021, by revenue from sales of IT products and services (in million zloty)" (Sas, 2023b).

A survey of IT professionals to identify prioritized benefits and preferences was conducted online with 108 valid responses submitted over the period of 2 weeks. The survey was fully anonymous, ensuring the integrity of the results and higher participation. Comparative analysis was conducted to align IT professionals' priorities with job-posted benefits. Qualitative and quantitative approaches were

combined for accurate findings. Actionable recommendations stemmed from aligned analysis, aiming to enhance corporate motivational systems. This holistic approach to understanding IT industry motivational systems aims to align employer offerings with employee preferences, enhancing motivation, satisfaction, and retention, benefiting both employees and companies.

The research sample determination for stage 1: content analysis of IT company websites involved selecting companies for analysis, focusing on Poland as the primary area of interest. This stage addressed the first research question: What are the most common benefits on IT employers' websites forming their motivational systems?

Key sources for company selection were two reports providing insights into industry players. The first source, "Largest IT companies in Poland in 2021, by revenue from IT products and services," offered financial insights for industry leaders. The second source, "Largest exporters of IT products and services in Poland in 2021, by export revenue," highlighted companies actively involved in exporting IT products and services. Using information from these sources, a list of 25 prominent IT companies in Poland was compiled for the content analysis. This selection encompassed global tech giants and local players, ensuring a diverse and representative sample.

Websites of the selected companies were analysed, with a focus on career pages and job postings. After in-depth review, 20 websites were found to have sufficient information about employee benefits, forming the final sample for the analysis.

The second part of the research involved a survey carried out among IT professionals. This survey aimed to determine IT professionals' prioritized benefits and preferences. A structured questionnaire was distributed through various platforms, collecting 108 valid responses that constituted the sample for the analysis. The sample's characteristics were further examined based on years of experience, location, and job titles.

The sample distribution analysis reveals a relatively even distribution of professionals across experience levels, with a slight predominance of professionals with 5+ years and 3-5 years of experience with 37 and 33% respondents, respectively, while the other 30% were the respondents with 1-3 years of experience.

Geographically, respondents from multiple countries participated, with Poland, Belarus, and Georgia prominently represented, with the majority of 51% located in Poland, 21% in Belarus and 10% in Georgia.

Job titles were categorized into: software engineers – 47%, IT managers/administrators (including HR and IT finance professionals) – 25%, QA specialists – 15%, and business analysts/consultants – 13%, reflecting the prevalence of development-related occupations.

The final part of the research was dedicated to the comparison of the results of stages 1 and 2 and drawing the conclusions based on that, as well as considering the possible recommendations for bridging the gap between the employer proposition and employee preference in terms of motivation.

4. Results

At the 1st stage of the research, the collected data underwent thorough analysis, resulting in the identification and classification of 44 benefits (Tab. 1). A tiered framework was created based on benefit mention frequency:

- tier 1: most important benefits listed by 30-40% of companies (6-8 out of 20),
- tier 2: benefits listed by 20-25% of companies (4-5 out of 20),
- tier 3: benefits listed by 10-15% of companies (2-3 out of 20),
- tier 4: benefits listed by only 1 company.

Table 1. List of benefits by tier

Tier 1	Tier 2
Professional development	Employee recognition programs
Health insurance	Work from home options
Access to training	Comfortable and modern office
Competitive pay	Team building activities
Bonuses or profit sharing	Sport/education expenses coverage
Flexible work hours	Focus on personal well-being
Benefits package	Networking opportunities
Personal development	International team
Tier 3	Tier 4
Home office equipment	In-house amenities including gym and cantina
Dynamic work environment	Tailored onboarding program
Paid time off (vacation/sick days)	Project customization and assistance in career transitions
Career development opportunities	Dog-friendly office
Engaging projects with prestigious brands	Accessible management
Positive work atmosphere	Employee referral program
Maternity/paternity leave	Language lessons and social events
Stable and long-term cooperation	Equal pay
Certification support	Subscriptions and vouchers
Discounts on products and services	Fertility benefits
Access to the newest technologies	Tax benefits for creative work
Relocation assistance	Free access to games
Flexible employment forms	Giving programs for charitable causes
Diversity and inclusion	
Company culture	

Source: own research.

The tiered structure's legitimacy and effectiveness are well-supported by analysing the distribution of benefits among the sampled companies. Tier 1 benefits,

representing the most common and significant offerings, constituted a substantial percentage of the list, making up 40.7% of the total benefits mentions. This distribution emphasises the importance of these benefits within organizations' motivational systems. Tiers 2 and 3 each encompassed around 25% of the benefits, indicating a balanced distribution among mid-level categories. Tier 4 benefits showed lower prevalence, representing only 9.3% of the total benefits, which indicates a more unique nature of those offerings (Fig. 1). These results validate the accuracy of the tiered categorization in capturing benefit importance and prevalence.

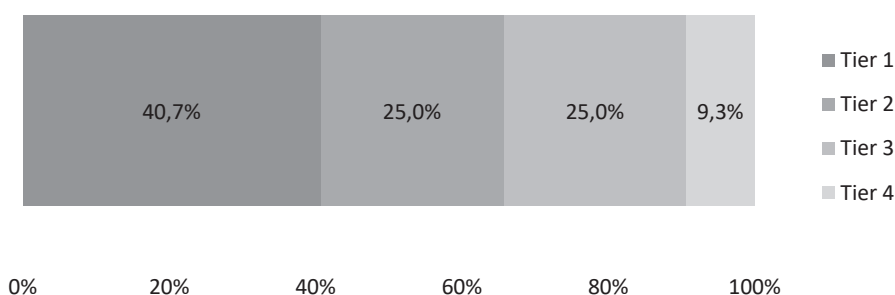


Fig. 1. Benefits distribution by tier (in %)

Source: own research.

The observed distribution pattern in the chart confirms the relevance and effectiveness of the tiered framework as a valuable tool for comprehending and assessing organizational motivational strategies. The framework offers insights into how benefits are prioritized and emphasizes within the companies' motivational systems.

The research question "what are the most common benefits listed on the IT employers' websites that form the foundation of companies' motivational systems" is answered by analysing the tiered benefit framework. The tier 1 benefits, constituting 40.7% of the total benefits listed by the sampled companies, represent the most common and significant offerings forming the foundation of these companies' motivational systems. These benefits include professional development, health insurance, access to training, competitive pay, bonuses or profit sharing, flexible work hours, benefits package, and personal development. These findings underscore the importance of these benefits in fostering employee motivation and engagement within the IT industry.

The survey component addressed the key research questions: What are the top 5-10 benefits or motivational tools that IT professionals prioritize.

The IT professionals who participated in the survey were given a list of 14 benefits and asked to rate the significance of each benefit on a scale from "don't care/ignore" (1) to "very important" (5). Using an approach similar to that used for the content analysis of employers' websites, the collected responses were used to

calculate the average ratings for each benefit, which were then classified into tiers. Based on the average results, the following analysis showed three separate tiers: Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 (Tab. 2).

Table 2. Average score of benefits, by tier

Tier	Average score
Tier 1	4.2
Tier 2	3.3
Tier 3	3

Source: own research.

The results showed that tier 1 average score was 4.2 out of 5, indicating that this tier's benefits are given a remarkably high priority level. Comparatively, tier 3 scored an average of 3 out of 5, whereas tier 2 demonstrated an average of 3.3 out of 5. The stark contrast between the average ratings for tier 1 and tier 2 implies that tier 1 benefits are of a far higher priority to the sampled IT professionals than tier 2 or 3 incentives.

The conclusion is that tier 1 represents the top list of the most wanted employment benefits for the particular sample of IT workers can be drawn from the average scores and the noticeable difference between tier 1 and tier 2. The individual scores of each separate benefit listed in the survey were examined, as well as their distribution within the assigned tiers, and Tier 1 clearly represents the top-5 most valued benefits from the perspective of IT professionals (Table 3).

Table 3. Benefits by tier and score

Tier	Benefit	Average score
Tier 1	Work from home options	4.4
	Flexible work hours	4.3
	Health insurance	4.2
	Career development opportunities	4.2
	Paid time off (vacation/sick days)	4.2
Tier 2	Relocation assistance	3.6
	Company culture	3.4
	Sport/education expenses coverage	3.3
	Team building activities	3.3
	Retirement savings plan	3.3
	Bonuses or profit sharing	3.3
	Employee recognition programs	3.2
Tier 3	Maternity/paternity leave	3

Source: own research.

The survey also explored IT professionals’ attitudes toward their current benefit systems and their impact on professional life. This question delved into satisfaction levels, engagement, and overall well-being linked to benefit systems (Fig. 2).

How satisfied are you with the benefits offered by your current employer?

108 responses

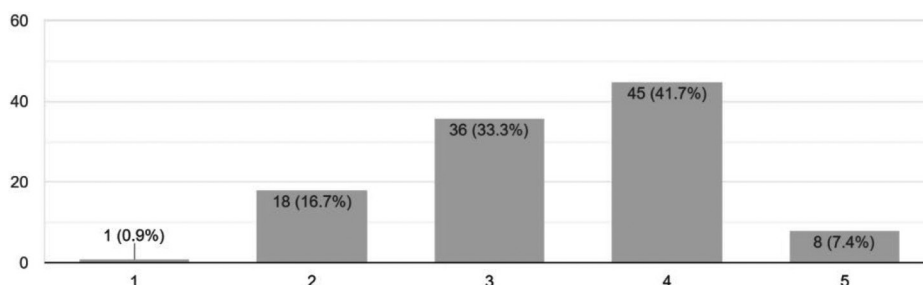


Fig. 2. Benefits satisfaction (in %)

Source: own research.

These results made it clear that less than half of the respondents (49.1%) expressed satisfaction with the benefit programs their companies now offer. The remaining 50.9% of respondents, including those who gave a grade of 3 or lower, showed that businesses must improve and modernize their incentive methods to raise job satisfaction among IT professionals successfully.

Considering that a substantial portion of respondents (50.1%) expressed varying levels of dissatisfaction with the benefits system, the survey aimed to investigate whether this dissatisfaction influenced their decision to leave a job. Participants were provided with three response options: “yes”, “no”, and “maybe” (Fig. 3).

Have you ever left a job because the benefits were not satisfactory to you?

108 responses

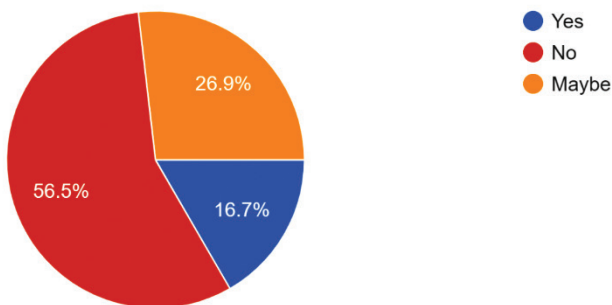


Fig. 3. Dissatisfaction with benefits as a reason for job change (in %)

Source: own research.

According to the numbers, most respondents (56.5%) responded “no”, indicating that substandard benefits were not the main factor in their decision to leave their former occupations. However, 26.9% of respondents chose the “maybe” response, indicating that they might have changed jobs because of their discontent with the incentive system. Notably, 16.7% of participants formally admitted having quit a job because they were unhappy with the benefits package.

Second, they were asked what they thought about whether or not employees should actively participate in choosing the final benefits package.

Participants were given a variety of response alternatives on the frequency of inspection and adaptation, including “annually”, “every 6-9 months”, “every 3-6 months”, “every 2-3 years”, and an open option to express their opinion differently from those offered (Fig. 4).

How often do you think employers should review and update their motivational systems to align with employee preferences?

108 responses

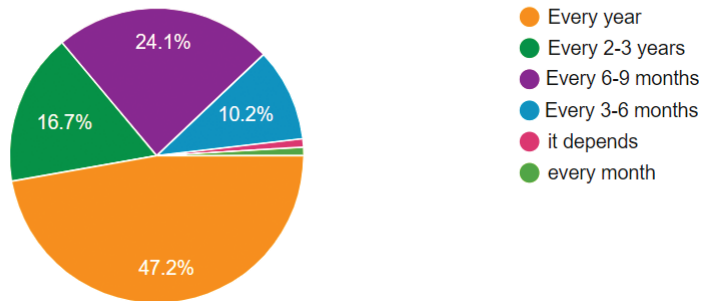


Fig. 4. Desired frequency of motivational systems inspection and adaptation

Source: own research.

According to the findings, the majority of respondents (47.2%) agreed that the motivational systems should be examined and modified annually. This indicates employee perception of the significance of ongoing assessments and modifications to maintain benefits alignment with changing needs and expectations. A sizable percentage of respondents (34.3%) indicated that they would want inspections to occur more frequently, selecting intervals of 6-9 months (24.1%) or 3-6 months (10.2%). Notably, a small percentage of respondents recommended their own frequency ranges, and 16.7% were satisfied with the bi-annual motivational system assessment.

The purpose of the second question on employee participation in creating the final list of benefits was to determine respondents’ views on participatory decision-

-making. Participants were asked to rate how much they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: “Employees should have an active say in shaping the final list of available benefits” (Fig. 5).

Do you think that employers should allow employees to choose their own benefits?

108 responses

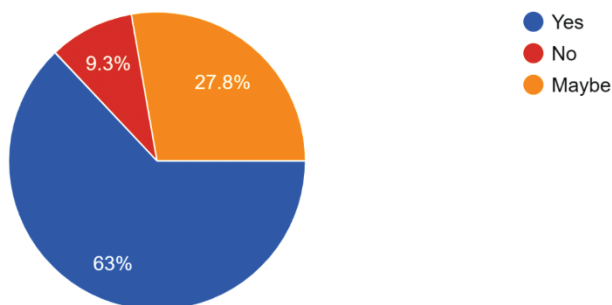


Fig. 5. Attitude towards employees choosing their benefits (in %)

Source: own research.

The findings showed that a substantial majority of respondents (63%) explicitly agreed with this statement, 27.8% of respondents suggested they might agree with this by answering “maybe”, and only 9.3% did not.

This conclusion showed that IT workers have a significant desire to be more involved in the decision-making process regarding the benefits that are provided to them. By supporting employee input, respondents underline the value of taking into consideration their viewpoints and requirements when building incentive systems.

Organizations should adopt a culture of ongoing motivational system evaluation and change to address workers’ issues and foster job satisfaction. Additionally, while creating motivational systems, they should actively seek out and consider employee input. By doing this, companies can show that they are dedicated to catering to the needs of their staff, encouraging a sense of empowerment, and eventually boosting their workers’ general satisfaction and experience.

5. Conclusions

The survey outcomes showed that IT professionals prioritize work-from-home option, flexible work hours, health insurance, career development opportunities, and paid time off. It also indicates that a substantial portion of respondents expresses dissatisfaction with their current benefit systems. This dissatisfaction is connected to a consideration of job changes, with a notable percentage attributing their decision to leave a job to unsatisfactory benefit packages.

The survey suggests that IT professionals want active involvement in shaping the list of available benefits, highlighting the significance of considering their viewpoints. The desire for more frequent reviews and modifications to benefit systems indicates a need for ongoing assessment and adaptation.

Comparing benefits listed by companies with employee preferences and evaluations reveals alignment in some cases but disparities in others. Employees prioritize benefits related to work-life balance, professional growth, and health coverage, while some employer-listed benefits do not align with employee preferences.

The purpose of this article was to investigate the motivational systems in the IT industry in Poland and to provide actionable recommendations for enhancing these systems. The research process consisted of a content analysis of IT company websites, a survey given to IT professionals, and a comparison of IT professionals' priorities with the perks indicated in job advertising for IT positions. The study aimed to identify the most common benefits listed by employers, compare them with the preferences of IT professionals, and examine the effectiveness of various incentive systems in attracting, retaining, and inspiring IT employees.

The research findings indicate that work-from-home option, flexible work hours, health insurance, career development opportunities, and paid time off are the top benefits that IT professionals prioritize. However, a sizable percentage of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with their current benefit programs, indicating that businesses must improve and modernize their incentive methods to raise job satisfaction among IT professionals successfully. The study also shows that vast majority of the IT professionals considers their active participation in benefits selection crucial and calls for motivational systems inspection and adaptation on either annual, or even more frequent basis.

Based on the research findings, several recommendations can be made for practice. Companies could better match their incentive systems to the needs of IT professionals by providing more possibilities for career advancement, a stronger focus on work-life balance, and comprehensive health coverage. Additionally, it is advised to actively seek employee input at every stage of the motivating system's lifespan, from benefit selection to review and efficiency tracking. Companies should also regularly evaluate their motivational systems to ensure that they are meeting the needs of their employees.

The research limitations include the small sample size of 108 participants of the survey and 20 companies for the content analysis, as well as overall focus on the IT industry in Poland, which may not be representative of the entire industry or geographical area. Additionally, the socio-economic and political climate in the area recently may have had a considerable impact on these individuals, which may not fully represent the diversity of viewpoints within the industry. Future studies should increase the sample size to include a wider variety of businesses and IT professionals and examine the effectiveness of various incentive systems in attracting, retaining, and inspiring IT employees.

The study highlights the importance of considering non-material motivators, such as social, psychological, moral, and organizational factors, in employee performance and the need to mitigate demotivators.

The research findings suggest that companies in the IT industry in Poland need to improve their motivational systems to better align with the preferences of IT professionals. The study highlights the importance of providing more opportunities for career advancement, a stronger focus on work-life balance, and comprehensive health coverage. Additionally, it is recommended that companies actively seek employee input at every stage of the motivating system's lifespan, from benefit selection to review and efficiency tracking. Future studies should increase the sample size to include a wider variety of businesses and IT professionals and examine the effectiveness of various incentive systems in attracting, retaining, and inspiring IT employees.

In conclusion, this research provides valuable insights into the motivational systems in the IT industry in Poland and offers actionable recommendations for enhancing these systems. The study highlights the importance of considering non-material motivators, such as social, psychological, moral, and organizational factors, in employee performance and the need to mitigate demotivators, such as lack of career opportunities, toxic work environment, and lack of expectations. The research findings suggest that companies need to improve their motivational systems to better align with the preferences of IT professionals. By implementing the recommendations provided in this study, companies can create a more favorable and gratifying work environment, leading to higher job satisfaction and retention rates among IT professionals.

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Ewolucja systemów motywacyjnych i ich wpływ na satysfakcję pracowników w nowoczesnym miejscu pracy na przykładzie branży IT

Streszczenie: Niniejszy artykuł przedstawia wyniki badań odnoszących się do znaczenia motywacji w kulturze korporacyjnej oraz różne teorie i podejścia w tym zakresie. Badanie podkreśla znaczenie motywatorów niepieniężnych i potrzebę minimalizacji czynników demotywujących pracowników. W pracy omówiono także różne badania dotyczące motywacji do pracy, w tym wykorzystanie analizy sieciowej do identyfikacji kluczowych motywatorów, jak również związek między celem firmy a motywacją i zaangażowaniem pracowników. Przedstawiono również dwa badania dotyczące motywacji specjalistów IT w Polsce. Pierwsze ma na celu zidentyfikowanie najczęściej wymienianych przez pracodawców IT korzyści i porównanie ich z preferencjami specjalistów IT. Drugie badanie analizuje korzyści i narzędzia motywacyjne, które specjaliści IT traktują priorytetowo, oraz ich stosunek do obecnych systemów wynagrodzeń. Wyniki badań wykazały, że opcje pracy zdalnej, elastyczne godziny pracy, ubezpieczenie zdrowotne, możliwości rozwoju kariery i płatny urlop to benefity, które specjaliści IT uznają za priorytetowe. Jednak znaczny odsetek respondentów wyraził niezadowolony z obecnych programów świadczeń, co wskazuje, że firmy powinny ulepszyć i zmodernizować swoje metody motywacyjne, aby skutecznie zwiększyć satysfakcję z pracy wśród specjalistów IT. Ostateczne zalecenia dla firm to lepsze dopasowanie systemów motywacyjnych do potrzeb specjalistów IT przez zapewnienie większych możliwości rozwoju kariery, większego nastawienia na równowagę między życiem zawodowym a prywatnym oraz kompleksowej opieki zdrowotnej.

Słowa kluczowe: motywacja, systemy motywacyjne, informatycy, satysfakcja z pracy, motywatory wewnętrzne i zewnętrzne, benefity, adaptacja