

**STRATEGIES OF MOTIVATION AND PROMOTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL  
FOR THE POSITIONING OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN  
COMPETITIVE ORGANIZATIONS**

**ESTRATEGIAS DE MOTIVACIÓN Y PROMOCIÓN DEL INDIVIDUAL PARA  
EL POSICIONAMIENTO DE LA MEJORA CONTINUA EN LAS  
ORGANIZACIONES COMPETITIVAS**

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**Abstract**

In the current business scenario, there is a significant increase in competition that has affected long-term profitability, so it is necessary to implement strategies that impact the daily work of organizations in order to generate a differential value over the competition. In this way, several researchers situate motivation as a factor of great influence in current work environments. The purpose of the article is to analyze how motivation strategies have been developed in favor of a better positioning of organizations. With the purpose of observing the guidelines that traditional and contemporary investigations have raised on the subject, the following are the results of a qualitative investigation that, from the review of the scientific literature, seeks to establish the postulates given to know by recognized authors. The results show the relevance of aspects associated with motivation and recognition as key tools for achieving high value corporate objectives.

**Keywords:** Strategies, motivation, employee, companies, competitiveness.

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## Resumen

En el escenario empresarial actual, hay un aumento significativo en la competencia que ha afectado la rentabilidad a largo plazo, por lo que es necesario implementar estrategias que afecten el trabajo diario de las organizaciones para generar un valor diferencial sobre la competencia. De esta manera, varios investigadores sitúan la motivación como un factor de gran influencia en los entornos laborales actuales. El propósito del artículo es analizar cómo se han desarrollado estrategias de motivación en favor de un mejor posicionamiento de las organizaciones. Con el fin de observar las pautas que las investigaciones tradicionales y contemporáneas han planteado sobre el tema, los siguientes son los resultados de una investigación cualitativa que, a partir de la revisión de la literatura científica, busca establecer los postulados dados a conocer por autores reconocidos. Los resultados finales muestran la relevancia de los aspectos asociados con la motivación y el reconocimiento como herramientas clave para lograr objetivos corporativos de alto valor.

**Palabras clave:** Estrategias, motivación, empleados, empresas, competitividad.

## Introduction

Several authors know the present era as the Age of Knowledge. Different tendencies have been identified in the past, the one in which the land determined who had the power was known as the Agricultural Age; then came the time in which competitiveness depended on capital and machinery, known as the Industrial Age; the Knowledge Age is then the one in which information, knowledge and new information technologies prevail; the latter has been the one that has contributed the most to the dynamics of these times since it allows information to be available almost immediately and, in most cases, for free, generating the engine of change in the economic and perhaps social paradigm. In this way, the ability of organizations to develop new capabilities and competencies will be the determinant to excel in an environment of high competition, turbulence and rapid technological advances (Palomera *et al.*, 2017).

Some authors define knowledge management as the ability to effectively manage the flow of knowledge within the organization to ensure its permanent access and reuse, thereby stimulating innovation, improved decision-making processes and the generation of new

knowledge (Niebles *et al.*, 2016). Once again, information technologies become the facilitator of the process, as this enables the flow of information throughout the organization and the optimization of internal and external communication channels.

Under this measure, the human resource is highlighted as a generator of knowledge, which is why organizations value human capital as a source of sustainable competitive advantage in the environment and for this reason boosting its motivation and growth becomes vital (Palma *et al.*, 2016). The Strategic Management of Human Resources then becomes the means to ensure that people, their capabilities, their attitudes, their behavior, the factors that determine their personality, the mechanisms and processes of generation and assimilation of knowledge, their relationships with other people, their reactions, among others, are properly oriented and maintained towards the fulfillment of the company's strategic plan (Hernández *et al.*, 2017).

The International Labour Organization - ILO, promotes a sustainable people-based approach to enterprise development, linking the best productivity actions with better working conditions, together with good working relations and good environmental practices. This includes the promotion of social dialogue, human resource development, clean production, and the reduction of energy use and environmental impact. However, to achieve all these objectives, it is key that companies have a strong, healthy organizational culture that supports these strategies, so that their employees adopt them as part of their values and personal culture (Chacón, 2018).

After many analyses and revisions of theories on sustainable development, the conclusion was reached to define it as the design of human and industrial systems that ensure that humanity's use of natural resources does not diminish the quality of life through impact on social conditions, human health and the environment; it is composed of 4 dimensions (Palomera *et al.*, 2017):

- Environmental dimension: considers the development of environmentally friendly products and processes, taking into account the prevention of pollution and good management of natural resources, through the design of green products from their raw material to the end of their life cycle.
- Social Dimension: seeks the benefit of staff and their environment with an efficient management of human resources, providing health, safety and economic

growth, both to the organization and to the staff and the place where the company has been established.

- Economic dimension: seeks to generate results and/or benefits based on investment in technology to reduce energy consumption and improve the environmental quality of processes, also conceiving that its objective is not only to generate economic profits, but also to return something to society at the social, economic and environmental level that allows the company to take root permanently.
- Institutional dimension: it contemplates the creation of a sustainable culture, with a mission and vision that impacts on all its members, establishing norms, habits and values to be practiced inside and outside the organization, making them a new form of behavior and education.

On the other hand, it is necessary to deepen the organizational culture, which is known as the basic assumptions and beliefs shared by the members of an organization; these contribute to generate a sense of identity, orient conduct towards institutional goals, facilitate the company to the environment, learning, change, and keep the internal social system stable. They are characterized for being collective, based on history, symbolic, dynamic, emotional and ambiguous; they must have beliefs, fundamental principles and predominant values, show regularity in their behaviors, philosophies, norms, regulations and organizational climate, first of all, they must be innovative. Similar to the concept of sustainable development, organizational culture can also be defined from four dimensions (Dessler and Ayala, 2015):

- Involvement: talks about empowering people, building teams, considers the commitment of different workers and their ability to influence. It consists of empowerment, team orientation and capacity building.
- Adaptability: It consists of the ability to respond to changes in the environment and new demands of customers, sometimes internal integration and external adaptation can conflict with each other. It is made up of organizational learning, customer focus and the creation of change.
- Mission: deals with the purpose of organizational goals and strategic objectives. It is composed of goals, objectives and vision.

- **Consistency:** Considers that people's behavior is based on a set of core values; staff have the ability to reach agreements, and the organization's activities are well coordinated and integrated. It is composed of coordination and integration, agreements and core values.

In general, studies indicate that organizational culture not only influences sustainable development, but also that sustainable development contributes to the integral growth of all members of the organization in a reciprocal way. It is for this reason that companies in the current environment should prepare to adequately integrate these concepts into their strategic platform, not only because they bring benefits such as economic and social returns, but also because it provides an opportunity for the development of the members of the organization towards an integral formation of competencies (Grant, 2016).

### **Background and literature review**

Within the Latin American panorama, in the province of Guanacaste, Costa Rica, a training diagnosis for SMEs was carried out in 120 companies, from which it was obtained as a result that 51.7 % have carried out training to their workers; in the same way, of the interviewed personnel, 100% recognize the vital necessity of the process of labor training for the growth and improvement of the performance. On the other hand, for the development of organizational skills, Costa Rican entrepreneurs refer to the management carried out by the public and private institutions that support their mission, such as the University of Costa Rica, the National Bank, the Costa Rican Association for Development Organizations and the National Learning Institute (ACORDE) (Bermúdez, 2015).

Along the same lines, microentrepreneurs in Costa Rica emphasize the need and prioritization of training programs and training, in a greater percentage for the administrative area of their organizations; additionally, other interests follow such as financial, tax, legal and technical, using preferential schedules as the morning, with 60%, and the afternoon, with 24%, mostly on Fridays and Saturdays, as they are considered the most affordable for activities additional to the day-to-day processes (Bermudez, 2015).

Within the group of entities that promote business development in Costa Rica is ACORDE that, in addition to providing credit solutions, has given talks, workshops and courses for the training of entrepreneurs that have a positive impact on the performance of

their businesses, in this sense, this organization has conducted more than 500 business diagnoses, trained more than 620 women in entrepreneurship, developed skills, knowledge in sales and self-esteem, and carried out more than 5000 hours of technical assistance in 85 national companies. Additionally, other training topics carried out by this entity are related to customer service, legal issues, productivity among labor personnel, and organizational management of affiliated organizations (Sicultura, 2014).

Adding to the above, the organizational administration, within its processes, also requires training in project management, considered as a method for the development of strategic skills and that affects the rapid growth of companies. In relation to this, for the year 1990, the management from the project area was annexed to the other operations, today, is one of the most efficient tools to move the world of business; as a result, in the United Kingdom, the State and private sector have been trained with Prince2 certifications, aimed at project managers and administrative staff, in order to develop their skills towards the management of different business scenarios (Edmonds, 2009).

In Argentina, studies by Valente *et al.* (2015) show, as a growth strategy within SMEs, the need to create middle management to support managerial activities and decisions, where the management of knowledge and resources are committed, depending on organizational needs that cannot cover positions of greater rank. On the other hand, in Santafé, there has been an increase in activities related to the primary sector, such as oilseed, meat, dairy, leather, footwear, textiles, due to its applicability in the formation and growth of SMEs.

Additionally, companies such as Tremblay, dedicated to dairy processing, has relied on training programs that constantly encourage their development through distance education projects, such as that created by the University of Rosario, which have strengthened the organization with new knowledge and technologies applicable in their processes (Valente *et al.*, 2015).

The research carried out by Ramírez *et al.* (2008), exposes the case of a company dedicated to the supply of carbon steel for industrial applications, in which, within its quality policy is continuous improvement, which in turn includes the creation of a work environment that contributes to the professional development of its employees. In order to develop this study, an analysis was made of the reality of the microenterprise, made up of twenty people, divided into 10 with administrative and 10 operational functions; by which it was found that

85% of the personnel researched has considered indispensable the labor motivation for the performance of their activities, proposing as favoring elements, not only of salary improvement but also of labor security, promotion to the achievement of better jobs and good environment.

Other elements taken into account by management with respect to the new motivational direction were the active participation of the staff, who in turn indicated that the motivation plans were designed according to the job position, not only to salaries and wages, which undoubtedly contributes to the continuous improvement of the organization due to the focus on functionality (Ramírez *et al.*, 2008). According to the results of the researches, it can be established that the attitudes that affect the work environment were linked to the degree of job satisfaction and organizational participation and commitment; in this way, commitment programs have been proposed, as well as the promotion of the slogan "the sum of everything", so that, in the development of tourism activities, Spaniards take care of the attitude and raise the level of attractiveness of the country (Espino and González, 2015).

Similarly, Colombia has also shown that motivation is the best way to improve organizations, in this sense, factors such as security offered by companies to employees generate greater confidence and comfort in the position performed (López *et al.*, 2017). Companies such as Global Service & Business S.A.S. are an example for the implementation of activities based on the well-being of the worker, through the use of the SA8000 standard that promotes benefits oriented to fair work, manageable hours, occupational safety, health, good remuneration and adequate treatment; according to this, the company located in the city of Cúcuta (Colombia), contains within its strategic plan, internal communication activities, and employee training through alliances with SENA, whose courses include skills development topics (Hernández *et al.*, 2018).

Other activities emphasize the mothers hired as heads of household, offering them economic facilities for issues such as education, hiring relatives, savings fund and activities for their children; on the other hand, with respect to welfare insurance, moving permits, grade or marriage are included in its improvement plan; additionally, around the subject of inclusion, studies are conducted by competition for positions that can be occupied by disabled personnel, this in search of a culture of non-discrimination (Hernández *et al.*, 2018). Finally, in relation to psychological health issues, Global Service & Business S.A.S. is committed to

the relocation of female employees in other workplaces, in case of discrimination and violation of their rights; in addition, aspects such as self-care, analysis of workplaces and safe practices are part of the preventive culture; in this way it can be evidenced the work that has been done in the development of work welfare (Hernández *et al.*, 2018).

## **1. Methodology**

With the purpose of observing the guidelines that traditional and contemporary investigations have raised on the subject, it is emphasized that this study was developed based on the qualitative approach to research; so that this is developed as a documentary type as a systematic review process of literature on the quality based on the results of this study was carried out. The sources of information selected in this study are from databases such as Scielo, Scopus or Google Scholar.

## **Results**

### ***Motivation and promotion of human resources***

According to authors such as Pfeffer (1994) people have been the key to designing, developing and sustaining the competitive advantage of companies and this has resulted in companies reviewing the role of human resources with a focus on results and value generation (Palma, 2011). Based on the above, Barney (2007) points out that the characteristics that make a resource strategic and, therefore, able to create sustainable competitive advantages in time are: valuable, uncommon, not imitable and not substitutable. Characteristics, also, pointed out by other authors of tradition such as Grant (2016) and Peteraf (1993). In addition to these requirements Armstrong and Taylor (2014), considers that after the fulfillment of these characteristics the bases are founded to include a fifth quality, and this is that the strategic human resources must allow the company to appropriate the rents generated by them. Figure 1 summarizes these characteristics below.

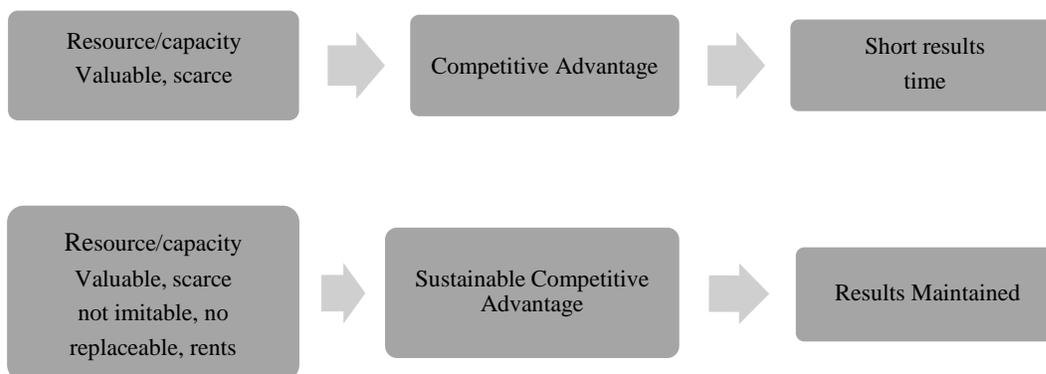
Figure 1. Strategic Human Assets



Source: Own preparation, 2018

In a similar sense, Newbert (2008) considers that the most important qualities are value and scarcity, since they allow the company to generate competitive advantages and good results, in the short term; nevertheless, Barney (2007) ratifies that the congruence of the five qualities is required to generate a competitive and sustainable advantage in the long term; as it is simplified in figure 2.

Figure 2. Creation of competitive advantage in the short and long term



Source: Own preparation, 2018

Based on the criteria used by Barney (2007), human resources are a source of sustainable competitive advantage when they are valuable, scarce, difficult to imitate and have no substitutes. In this sense, some human resources are particularly important because they are socially integrated in the organization and, therefore, cannot be transferred to other

companies, since this would generate the loss of their value. Thus, one of the main functions of the human resources area must be to attract, retain and develop the human capital of the organization (Pérez *et al.*, 2017), in order to be able to contribute, through this capital and its own form of management, to the generation of sustainable competitive advantages for the organization. To this end, companies use various practices that allow them to manage their population, orienting and guiding their behavior towards the interests and objectives of the company (Elliot, 2003).

It can be said that companies have the possibility of creating and maintaining competencies based on their employees through human resources practices (Wright *et al.*, 2005). Within these practices, the main ones are: recruitment, selection, job design, training, promotion, performance evaluation, remuneration, internal communication, employee participation systems, leadership systems, motivation systems and other more current ones such as empowerment or work/life balance practices (Martin, 2011).

This type of strategy can lead to greater business performance and be a source of competitive advantage in itself, because these systems of practices are often unique, difficult to imitate and characterized by their causal ambiguity (Lado and Wilson, 1994). Similarly, Guest (2011) believes that human resource practices can improve company performance when they are internally aligned and geared toward behaviors that enable a particular competitive advantage to be achieved. Consequently, the choice of human resources practices system will depend on the competitive advantage that the company is trying to develop in each situation (Wright *et al.*, 2005).

Based on the above, organizations are obliged to design strategic tools that allow them to be innovative and influential in the market and as a differentiating element in the provision of service, they can base their improvement on the maximization of human talent as the basis of organizational success. Therefore, in the search for business competitiveness, leadership strategies and highly efficient administrative practices focused on work motivation must be carried out; since through various investigations, it has been demonstrated that motivation is a key factor that favors the achievement of both individual and corporate objectives (Herzberg, 2017).

In this sense, motivation is a characteristic of human psychology that contributes to the degree of commitment of the person; it is a process that causes, activates, orients, dynamizes

and maintains the behavior of individuals towards the realization of expected objectives (Igalens and Roussel, 1999). Thus things, despite the fact that behavior patterns vary, the process is the same for all people: the behavior is motivated, whether by impulses, desires, needs or tendencies, and the behavior is oriented towards some objective (Nyberg and Wright, 2015).

Within the work environment, motivation is understood as a process that activates, orients, dynamizes and maintains the behavior of individuals towards the achievement of expected objectives. For this reason, in the workplace it is important to know the causes that stimulate human action, since through the management of motivation, among other aspects, managers can operate these elements so that their organization functions properly and members feel more satisfied (Ramírez *et al.*, 2008).

According to Raineri (2017) approach, a person's behaviour is composed of motives (likes, preferences, needs, values); abilities (physical and mental skills) and knowledge (education and skills). The support of the environment, provided by the organization, is composed by information about strategies, objectives and current performance; instruments (tools, techniques, technology, work method); and incentives (monetary and non-monetary). Therefore, in the sense of causality, motivation consists fundamentally of maintaining corporate cultures and values that lead to high performance (Armstrong and Taylor, 2014). This process is presented in figure 3.

Figure 3. Motivation Process



Source: Own preparation, 2018

In spite of the above, in the organizational world, it is not enough simply to have job satisfaction or dissatisfaction, nor to conceive only the individual (and his personality) in the organization; it is necessary to analyze the tasks, the levels of autonomy, the perspectives of personal and human development, the psychological rewards of participation in teams,

therefore despite the fact that motivation is an important element, it alone does not have sufficient strength to achieve competitive advantage from the competencies and skills of each member of the organization, which is why it is considered that other factors must be integrated to achieve it (Armstrong and Taylor, 2014).

### *Strategies to motivate human resources*

The employee is considered as the resource that generates the essential knowledge in the development of business activities and processes; hence, for organizational growth requires incentive, motivation and training of their technical and personal skills, aimed at better management. Due to the above, it can be established that an increase in performance is influenced by benefits aimed at favoring the quality of life of employees, from the implementation of measures such as flexibility of schedules, or freedom of decision, which in turn generates a better development of their creativity and the availability of staff in the performance of daily tasks (López *et al.*, 2017).

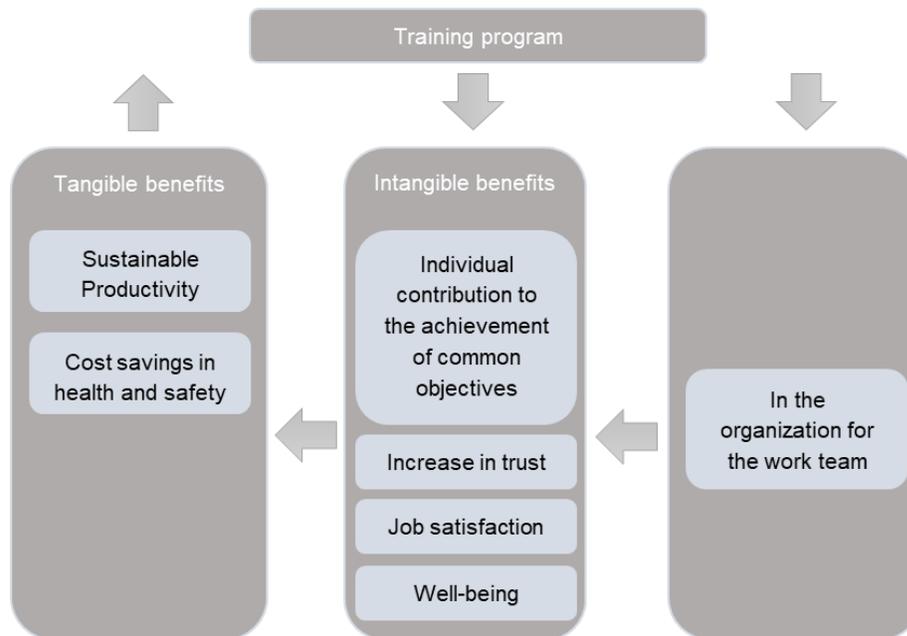
One of the first cases analyzed in the industrial sector, for the improvement of the employees' living conditions, was known in 1927, at the Western Electric Factory, an American industry that managed to improve its organizational climate with the intervention of Elton Mayo, pioneer of Human Resources. In this way, issues such as lighting in the workplace, working hours and production rhythm were analyzed to increase productivity; likewise, the company focused on the knowledge of its employees, feelings and collective interests, as variables that helped to deepen the working climate of the organization (Bernal *et al.*, 2015).

Other related works, such as the one carried out by Herzberg in the late 50's, studied the behavior of 200 engineers and accountants, who determined motivational factors related to their jobs, among which were responsibility, self-fulfillment, and progress; and it was also identified that their behavior was directly influenced, in 81%, by the mentioned factors. Other aspects described by the personnel, such as recognition by their employers, were later included as factors that motivated them in the execution of their work (López, 2005). On the other hand, the investigative work of López (2005) highlights the case study of the Peruvian workers of the city of Lima, emphasized in the factors of motivation related to Herzberg's work as the main promoters for the development of their tasks.

The quantitative results of the study conducted in this city show strong correlations of 0.99, 0.98 and 0.98 for factors such as responsibility, self-fulfillment and progress; additionally, other aspects, such as recognition and achievement, yielded values of less than 0.97 and 0.87; however, it is important to highlight that all the factors that were related in the work had an approximation to a perfect correlation of 1 (López, 2005). In relation to the above, apart from the need for employees to maintain their work and other factors that affect the need for personal growth, it is very important the support of the employee's environment, which includes the company and their co-workers; because of this, countries such as the United States, Canada, and other European nations, practice the methodology High Involvement Workplace for the incentive and participation of their work teams in decision making, because this practice provides resources for improving professional quality, directly impacting on work tasks and responsibilities (López, 2005).

On the other hand, GM Hellas, a leading vehicle manufacturer in Greece, has been interested in the educational processes of its employees and to know their opinion regarding the degree of satisfaction generated by the trainings. Derived from this, and according to the opinions obtained from the training program of the company, the evolution of two fundamental aspects is highlighted, the first, related to the progress in the achievement of business objectives, and the second, in the improvement of principles such as ethics, peace, and solidarity, which strengthen moral conscience (Vasiliki y Konstantinos, 2013). Additionally, in the oceanic panorama, the trainings carried out in the Australian transportation and logistics industry bring positive and multidimensional results, due to the fact that different business aspects are worked (tangible and intangible) that promote the productivity, quality, and motivation of the workers, and whose benefits are detailed in figure 4.

Figure 4. Tangible and intangible benefits of training programs



Source: Chhetri *et al.*, 2018

As shown in the figure above, the dimensions worked through training programs include personal development, that is, greater knowledge and development of competencies that support the achievement of goals and objectives, both for teamwork and for the organization in general; and others related to tangible benefits such as monetary cost savings, awareness of health and safety issues at work, and greater efficiency.

Other positive psychological benefits include improved self-esteem and job availability as a result of the work of specialized professionals in charge of employee welfare, such as doctors, nurses, social workers, psychologists; in this way, the area of welfare within an organization increases the degree of confidence, motivation and performance of work activities (Chhetri *et al.*, 2018). Online training is another alternative highly valued by companies; by virtue of this, in Australia, where the use of the Internet as a tool for improvement is explored, small companies have taken advantage of government plans aimed at financing their personnel development activities through the use of technological means, and thus have a greater probability of participation and accessibility in management education (Webster *et al.*, 2005).

Starting from the need to generate a competitive advantage from skills and the development of personal competencies, it is proposed as a strategy for the strengthening of the individual and the achievement of competitiveness through empowerment, as a tool for maximizing human resources from the strengthening of concepts such as power, authority and delegation, which will allow to know how from the combination of these with values as the responsibility is generated in the personnel conscience of the influence that this one has in the quality, the service and the efficiency of the business, with the objective to generate sense of belonging towards the organization and commitment with the improvement of the same one (Zimmerman, 2000).

### **Discussions and conclusions**

Empowerment also has the function of mediator for the coupling between the objectives proposed by the company and the personal objectives of the employee, which include values, beliefs and behaviors, therefore predicting a good performance by employees, which also increases productivity, favoring autonomy, creativity and innovation in companies. Reciprocity in this strategy is a result of providing empowering environments that promote employee development (Zhong *et al.*, 2016).

Empowerment implies empowerment, which is the act of delegating power and authority, as long as control is not lost, to employees and giving them the feeling that they are creators of their own work and owners of the company. Empowerment is a process through which the ideas and desires of all the company's employees are captured, allowing them to develop all of their talents and skills in order to achieve the company's goals and their own work and personal development goals (Nankervis *et al.*, 2016).

This strategy promotes innovation under the consideration of empowerment culture, of trust and sense of belonging to the business organization, as a mechanism for unity, improvement or continuous change, competitiveness, positivism, creativity and collective collaboration (Petit and Gutierrez, 2007). Another of the relevant aspects in which empowerment emphasizes is the faculty to grant power, as far as possible, to the employees, since it is accompanied by benefits, but also by responsibilities, which increases the commitment with the fulfillment of the functions of the position, and therefore, with the organization.

For this reason, this power that leaders progressively grant to the personnel of subordinate workers allows them to use their intellect and their maximum potential to overcome labor obstacles, understanding the objectives of the goals and supporting the interests of the organization (Rabaah *et al.*, 2009). From the above, it can be concluded that the use of motivation strategies offers benefits to organizations in terms of increased competitiveness, productivity, efficiency and recognition in the market in which it operates. Likewise, the employees who belong to this type of organizations, are benefited in the feeling of labor satisfaction, which directly affects the personal, social and family aspect of each individual, generating retributive benefits for each one of the parts.

At the end of this article, it is considered that staff motivation strategies are key to achieve positioning within organizations, especially when they are directed towards competitiveness through continuous improvement. Certainly the motivation and promotion of personnel are an essential part of the development of innovation; characteristic element of the competitive area.

In this way, motivation strategies must be promoted by organizations that seek to move towards competitiveness, which, as García, Duran & Prieto (2017) contribute, who in their study also found important meeting points between the management of personnel and the development of competitiveness through innovation.

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