

# Technical Staff Motivation in Nigeria: A Strategic Imperative

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**Abstract.** The paper is focused on the strategies to motivating technical staff in Nigeria. Nigeria is an emerging economy with various challenges imposed by globalisation and climatic change agents. Strategies adopted and their efficacy in motivating technical staff are expected to result in better appreciating and handling of environmental/climatic changes, satisfaction and improved productivity of the staff. The study investigated the peculiar characteristics of technical staff, the effects of monetary rewards on the technical staff, the effects of ‘private practice’ and non-provision of work on technical staff. A sample of 110 technical staff was selected. The findings indicate that junior technical staff (artisans and foremen) preferred monetary rewards, while senior technical staff (technical officer cadre) preferred non-monetary rewards. More of the technical staff preferred provision of work and ‘private practice’ as motivational strategies/tools. It is concluded that a technical staff who is provided with work and who is allowed ‘private practice’ is more likely to be committed to his/her job and would avoid strike. It is recommended that technical staff should be given time of their own to engage in ‘private practice’ and should always be provided with job to avoid loss of skill.

**Keywords:** Emerging Economy, Monetary Reward, Private Practice, Climatic Change.

## 1 Introduction

Technical staff are odd bunches. [15] posits that their mentality, view of life and history are uniquely different from most other career people. [17] believes that one of the major differences is that technical people are into technology because they love it, and many have been doing it all their life, being able to get paid to do it is just a huge bonus. The above comments notwithstanding, getting technical people to link their desire to focus on projects related to the goals of the business can be a challenging task. Knowing how to properly motivate employees often does not come easy for technical staff.

The employee has his/her aspirations just like the firm or organization has its objectives. There may be conflict, where organizational goals and personal goals are incongruent, and therefore, makes employee motivation an uphill task. The productivity of an average worker in Nigeria has dropped [4], as most workers hardly find meaning in their jobs. Despite the incursions made by globalization and information and communication technology across the globe, the average Nigerian worker still lags behind in productivity. Researchers have argued that the Nigerian worker is inherently lazy [19]. Others have compared an average Nigerian working in Nigeria and another working abroad. The productivity tilts in favour of the Nigerian working abroad. This has been attributed to environmental factors [5]. In realization of the impact of environment on productivity of the workforce, many programmes have been developed by administrators and business managers to motivate workers. There has been piece rate system of payment, profit sharing arrangement and share or stock allotment to improve the productivity of workers.

However, a group of workers- the technical staff- seems to exhibit the same trait irrespective of the country of operation. Weinstein [17] in aggregating motivational strategies for technical staff isolated change management, creation of acceptance and excitement across the organization for funded projects, inspiring laggards as well as tech superstars. The implication is that abilities are not evenly spread and the manager should understand this and carry everybody along. Weinstein [17] finally contends that understanding what makes your people 'tick', such as encouraging downtime, considering formal motivational programmes, applying the same standards to everyone, and creating ideal leadership career paths for those that understand both their work and the company's business interests, are panacea for motivating technical staff, which leads ultimately to improved productivity. It is clear here that understanding the workers interests and the business interests is primarily necessary in the motivation this rare breed of the workforce namely, the technical staff.

The crux of entrepreneurship development plans has been the acquisition of basic skills. The technical aid corps scheme, the industrial training fund, the establishment of colleges, polytechnics and universities of technology accede to not only the importance of technical staff, but the urgency in coping with liberalization and internationalization swooping across nations for which Nigeria joined in 1986 when she accepted IMF conditionality. Motivating technical staff seems not an option, but an imperative. Today, nations develop nuclear power, launch rockets on the moon and grapple with harsh environmental and climatic changes across the globe. Only a trained and well-motivated technical staff can lead Nigeria to a higher level of progress. The study therefore has become imperative to find the best ways of motivating technical staff and to determine the pitfalls from such motivational strategies with particular reference to technical staff in Nigeria.

## **2 Statement of the Problem**

There have been incessant strikes by workers in Nigeria especially at the state university of science and technology, Enugu. The Project Development Institute and

other research institutes were also at one time or the other on strike; the argument and agitation being terms and conditions of employment. No doubt productivity cannot be at its peak with the spate of work stoppages ravaging the nation's industrial sector and institutions of learning. With frequent interruptions, the technical man, the scientists can hardly perform. The grand challenge for scientists is to focus on discoveries that reduce poverty rather than on winning prizes. Discoveries and inventions that increase wealth and reduce poverty are the 'heroes' of science and technology.

The poverty level has attained unprecedented height in the last ten years. Flood and other natural disasters remind man of climatic change oozing from man's industrial activities, which also cause disequilibrium in the ecosystem. There are intense heat, intense rainfall, melting of ice and ravaging disease, which seem intractable. The scenario points to the failure of the technical staff to either make environmentally friendly inventions or foresee the adverse effects of their inventions. The middle class has literally collapsed owing to non-motivational efforts by industries and even universities of technology to make technical jobs attractive. The establishment of universities of technology aimed at arresting the collapse of the middle class and technical education does not seem to have yielded the desired result. There seems to be little efforts presently at the university level to lead in research on these technical issues. No doubt a hungry man cannot effectively defend his master.

Motivating technical staff to operate at their maximum level to make inventions and counteract adverse environmental effects that have resulted in poverty, diseases and deprivation of essential things of life will definitely be a right step in joining in improving the standard of living of the people. There have been incidents of collapsed buildings, unprecedented floods, dams overflowing and epileptic power supply. Motivating technical staff therefore seems not an option but an imperative; a study in that area has become necessary to help restore the middle class in Nigeria and counteract the environmental challenges. The problem of the study therefore is the increasing environmental challenges and the paucity of technical staff in Nigeria.

### **3 Objectives of the Study**

The study had the main objective of determining the tools for motivating technical staff in Nigeria. The sub-objectives were:

1. To ascertain the peculiar characteristics of technical staff.
2. To find out the impact of monetary reward on technical staff motivation
3. To find out the effect of 'private practice' on technical staff motivation
4. To ascertain the effect of non-provision of work on the skill of technical staff.

### **4 Research Questions**

To effectively achieve the above objectives, the following questions were asked:

1. Are there peculiar characteristics of technical staff?
2. Has monetary reward an impact of technical staff?

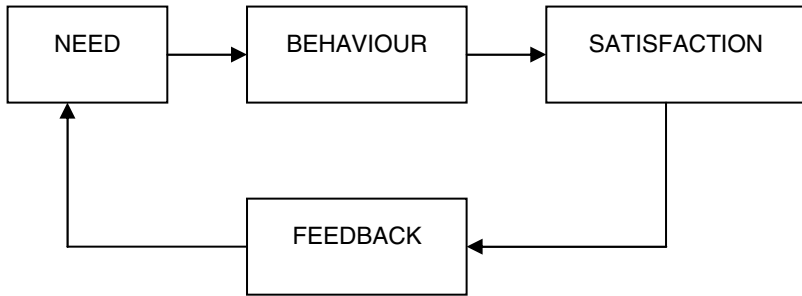
3. Has 'private practice' an effect on technical staff?
4. Does non-provision of work affect skill of technical staff?

## 5 Literature Review and Conceptual Framework of the Study

The directing function of management is made possible using three tools, namely leadership, communication and motivation. It is well known that no two human beings are the same; the enormity of the directing function therefore cannot be overstated. [12] asserts that aspirations differ, temperaments are not alike; they differ intellectually and physically. The job of confidence building is important and can be achieved through leadership, communication and motivation. [12] further defines motivation as the energizing force that induces or compels and maintains behaviour. Behaviour, of course, is motivated and is also goal directed. [12] opines that motivated behaviour is sustained, goal directed and results from felt deprivation (need). The urge to act or move is usually propelled. To invent a drug for HIV, to invent machine for a by-pass operation, etc., result from the scourge of AIDs and death from pains due to professional mistakes of doctors.

Motivation may be define the drive or readiness of an organization or man to work hard towards greater performance needs; the desire of an individual at a point in time is to achieve objectives, the broad intention as well as defined growth. The above indicates that both the individual and the organization can be motivated. The need however, may not always be the same. This is the reason for integration of interests in the workplace. The objective to be pursued and the growth to attain put pressure (tension) on either the organization or the individual. [13] see motivation as the conscious efforts to consider the needs and wants of workers by management geared toward eliciting compliance through the satisfaction of these needs, wants and desires. [13] further define need as a state of felt deprivation. No doubt, a satisfied worker is a fulfilled worker and is a productive worker. The need makes the worker to look for want-satisfiers. These want-satisfiers put tension on the worker until the needs are satisfied. A process of need – want-satisfaction chain exists which is repeated if the feedback makes it necessary. Why we do things cannot be observed directly; it can only be inferred from goal-directed behaviour.

Motivation can be extrinsic or intrinsic. [10] sees extrinsic motivation as the motivation to encourage an activity as a means to an end while intrinsic motivation is the motivation to be involved in an activity for its own sake. It should be noted however, that a learner can be high in both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and high in one and low in the other. [8] informs that the type of motivation learners or workers experience depends on the context they are in. This means that motivation can change overtime. [8] also suggests that challenge, control, curiosity, fantasy, and aesthetic value are all sources of intrinsic motivation. It is obvious that people do things, such as go to school, in order to improve themselves to avoid being illiterate people. Why they improve themselves and don't want to be illiterate people is a mystery. It is a black box and it has not been fully uncovered. The perspective on motivation could be as below:



**Fig. 1.** Perspective on Motivation

Certain needs and wants cause one to do certain things (behaviour) which satisfy these needs, and which can change thereby determining which needs and wants are primary.

The subject of motivation is favoured with many theories and we could only analyse a few to select the suitable one for the study. Hierarchy of Needs Theory in which the needs at the bottom are the most urgent and need to be satisfied before certain attention is paid to the others. The most famous example [7] assures, is the Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which accepts that needs are hierarchical and only after satisfying the lower levels of needs that a person is free to progress to the ultimate need of self-actualization. The needs are arranged from bottom as physiological needs, safety needs, belonging and love needs, esteem and the self-actualization needs. A compact classification sees the first two as fundamental needs, the next two as psychological needs and the last one as self-actualization need. Arguments still persist as to whether sex is a basic or psychological need.

Alderfer's ERG Theory [cited in 16] classifies needs into three categories as against Maslow's five categories. Alderfer's needs theory also is hierarchical. Its bottom up approach shows needs as existence needs (physical well-being), relatedness needs (satisfactory relations with others) and growth needs (development of competence and realization of potential). This is similar to Maslow's hierarchy except that Alderfer believes that sex should not be in the bottom category. Alderfer [cited in 16] believes that as you start satisfying high needs they become more intense (e.g. the more power you get the more you want power) like an addiction. The Maslow and Alderfer theories of hierarchy of needs suggest that not everyone is motivated by the same things. It depends where you are in the hierarchy. The needs hierarchy mirrors the organizational hierarchy to a certain extent because some people are still motivated by needs much lower than their position.

Another type of need theory is the Acquired needs Theory. This was made popular by David McClelland and states that some needs are acquired as a result of life experiences. He identifies need for achievement, need for affiliation and need for power to control others. [10] outlines the McClelland theory and suggests managerial behaviour or implications to managers as below.

**Table 1.** McClelland's Theory

Style	More effective	Less effective
n <sub>arch</sub>	Seek: to excel, may avoid both low and high risks as a result, in order to pursue meaningful success.	Work alone or with other high achievers
n <sub>power</sub>	Seek: either personal or institutional power; either way they want to direct others, but the constituent power is in service to the institute's success, of those with that focus tends to make better managers.	Direct orders
n <sub>aff.</sub>	Seek: harmonious work relationship to accept, to be accepted and to include others. They can be more comfortable conforming to group norms.	Work in settings with significant personal interaction.

Source: [10].

He finally submits that, you can motivate people. You can provide environment where people motivate themselves. Apply what you know about people's styles to strengthen their individual work environment. Add along the way is focus; focus in inelastic motivation factors by building strong work relationships and expend those relationships so that more is possible try and build healthy vibrant work environment and remember that work is as valuable as building any other relationship or one's life.

Cognitive Evaluation Theory is yet another theory of motivation. The theory suggests that there are actually two motivation systems: intrinsic and extrinsic which correspond to two kinds of motivations. The intrinsic motivations are achievement, responsibility and competence. They come from actual performance of the task or work. The extrinsic factors of motivating according to the theory include pay, promotion, feedback, working conditions and they come from a person's environment, controlled by others. The intrinsic factors are the higher order needs of Maslow's hierarchy.

The Two-Factor Theory is also called the motivator-hygiene factor theory. The hygiene factors are factors whose absence have neutral impact on motivation and whose presence has no perceived motivation but simply placates subordinate. The motivators are factors whose presence motivates and whose absence does not cause any particular dissatisfaction; it just fails to motivate. Again the hygiene factors are the bottom of Maslow's hierarchy while the motivators are at the top of the hierarchy. The two scales of hygiene factors (dissatisfiers) and motivators (satisfiers) are independent and you can be high on both [10].

Other theories exist and include Equity Theory which states that it is not the actual reward that motivates but the perception, and the perception is based not on the reward in isolation, but in comparison with the efforts that went into getting it and the rewards and efforts of others. The Reinforcement Theory of B. F. Skinner indicates the effects of the consequences of a particular behaviour on the future occurrences of the behaviour which are positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, punishment and extraction. Vroom's Expectancy Theory brought quantitative analysis into motivation theory. It brought together many of the elements of the previous theories. It combines perceptual aspects of equity theory with the behavioural aspects of the other theories; it gives the equation:

$$M = E \times I \times V.$$

This shows that motivational force is related to expectancy, instrumentality and valence in a multiplicative manner.

The summary is that people tend to sustain behaviour that results in the satisfaction of their needs. The cognitive theory of motivation is adopted for the study because it best explains the innate and instinctive attributes of the technical staff.

## 6 Recognition and Reward in Organization

[3] states that the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires a holistic approach to recognizing and rewarding employees. It is possible to place too much emphasis on pay and other extrinsic rewards but the changing nature of the relationship between employers and employees requires a new kind of 'currency'. Effective systems of recognition and reward engage an individual's entire being. They also as, [20] put, encourage employees to unleash scores of productive energy while exhibiting regenerative qualities that foster creativity, emotional reserves that translate into passion and even spiritual attributes that result in the inspired performance needed to achieve a larger vision.

The implication of the above findings of [3] is that successful managers should have respect for both people and process and that relationship should be emphasized against command and control management. Such managers regard employees as part of their customer base, contiguously looking for ways to satisfy and retain employee commitment while ultimately inspiring them to peak performance. Peak performance of course is the desire of managers, even not-for-profit organizations.

However, the nature of the workplace may make for the pacing of workers and low relationship may be present without jeopardizing performance. The workplace diversity which has resulted in multiracial and multicultural organizations simply suggests that one size approach to human resource will not be it at all. Also the workplace diversity suggests the presence of different cadres of workers, namely academic, administrative, technical and operative. The rewards such as carrot, stick and motivational tools as [3] puts it, have left experts with one mistake or the other. Enlightened managers sue for total reward system that links direct and indirect payments to performance requirements tied to the organization's success; such an approach seems more effective than simpler more restrictive linear systems that function on a quid pro quo: produce this and you get that syndrome.

Successful companies in USA adopted holistic systems of reward and recognition [3]. The holistic system reward and recognition usually adopted included job design, decision – making process, pay equity, performance planning and management systems, self-direction communication, leadership styles and professional development. This incorporates anything that influences employees to unleash their motivation and passion, and has resulted in the making of free agents in the workforce. The lean size of today's organizations owing to downsizing to improve profit and sometimes to sustain itself has led to workers working to improve their skills and enhance their marketability, impedances and reputation and thus justify their continued employment [9]. This simply means that these free agents require and need flexibility to move through organizational systems without being locked into one

department. The technical staff hardly is this flexible because of the special nature of his function. [18] posits that smart managers understand the importance of respecting people's intelligence and telling it like it is. They work collaboratively with employees. They make conscious decisions to join force instead of subordinating or dominating. As nerve systems such as skill-based pay, total reward programmes, and management become more main stream, the challenge for management will be to avoid any suggestions that they are manipulative or disrespectful. In fact, placing too much emphasis on pay and pay system will distract for the intrinsic value of work "itself". [18] concludes by stating that skilled and technical workers are motivated more by the intrinsic value of work.

Clearly, having meaning in the work leads to non-monetary motivation. Some researchers however state that the intrinsic value becomes necessary only when the extrinsic or short term rewards have been reasonably achieved. McGregor insists that commitment to objectives is a function of the rewards associated with the achievement. [14] emphasizes that recognizing the short term nature of employment and the need to influence peak performance, organizations have generated elaborate programmes to motivate employees including informal and formal awards and providing recognition by means of factors external to the work itself. [14] further lists these awards as base-pay packages, variable pay, incentives, cash and cash equivalent benefits, gain-sharing plans, commission, stock options and alternative pay programmes. This indicates that intrinsic rewards are inherent in the nature of the work itself and context or environment in which it is performed. Such workers are intimately reenergized and satisfied either because it fulfils individual's desire to support the organization's mission or value system or their own relationship with co-workers.

[11] identifies seven ways to motivate a technical staff which include:

1. Getting the tools that are needed to do the job.
2. Making sure that they have the right skills and providing opportunities to learn.
3. Getting a viable work environment
4. Giving people as much information as they need to do their job.
5. Shielding the team from office policies, and
6. Making sure each member remembers he is part of a team
7. Meing there when needed and responding to problems and concerns.

Quite a litany of options or rewards! While all the options are necessary in every organization, the stage in the life cycle of the staff determines the degree and application. An employee may need little relationship and little supervision as he ages in the organization and to do the opposite may be counterproductive.

## **7 Characteristics of Technical and Professional Staff**

The appreciation of the power of organizational members has led to the separation and development of the management function of direction. The existence of good plans no longer assures of undertaking of assigned tasks. The manager is not only left with the responsibility of controlling the activity that develops from plans but also tries to get the organization members to go to work willingly and enthusiastically.



This, as [6] posits, is because of such factors as the increasing educational level of employees, greater utilization of professional personnel, advancing technology and the power of labour organizations. The manager in charge of human resource in realization of the above, and in clear understanding of the needs of the employee, designs a programme to elicit the right type of behaviour from the employee. [6] further sees motivation as the skill of aligning employee and organizational interest so that behaviour results in achievement of employee wants simultaneously with attainment of organizational objectives.

The wants of employees range from pay, security of job, congenial associates, credit for work done, a meaningful job opportunity to advance, comfortable, safe and attractive working conditions, competent and fair leadership, reasonable orders and directions to a socially relevant organization. The technical staff characteristics, [11] reiterates “are clear from their tendencies or inclinations, which include: tend to be introverts, tend to think more logically than emotionally, tend to be problem solvers and tend to be technical creative”.

The nature of technical work, which most often confines the worker to solitary conditions, no doubt will make them introverts. The logic involved in the execution of their job, the sequence of operation and the time-centeredness also make an average technical staff think logically and avoid emotions as much as possible. The job of many technicians lies in the actualization of the objective or work at hand. He/she therefore is a problem solver. To say that he/she is technically creative simply states the obvious. The creativity of the technical staff at both the design and implementation stages is an expected outcome. He/she is therefore a techno-determinist who believes that technological progress is inevitable and avoids technology laggards, who are slow to adopting new technology.

In summary, the technical staff is hardly singled out for rewards or motivation. However, the scanty literature reveals that rewards that are intense could motivate the technical staff. Avenues for creativity, self-expression and logical thinking seem the best for the technical staff. It is however to be realized that basic needs should be fairly satisfied before any staff, the technical staff inclusive, gives his/her best. The available literature however did to show the effect of private jobs, a method which allows the technician or technical staff to get a job, cost it and produce it without accounting to the organization.

## **8 Research Methodology**

The survey design was adopted. The area of the study was the Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu, South East, Nigeria. Both primary and secondary sources of data were adopted. The population of study was 151, consisting of all engineering technical staff of the university. A sample of 110 was adopted using the Taro Yamane formula. The stratified random sampling technique was employed in selecting subjects for the study. A semi-structured questionnaire was utilized for the

study. Also personal interview and personal observations were utilized as methods for the collection of data. The reliability of the instrument was tested using cronbach's alpha coefficient, which yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.88. The content validity was tested using product moment coefficient of correlation which yielded a coefficient of 0.85, which was good. The data were presented and analysed using frequency tables and simple percentages.

## 9 Results and Findings

**Table 2.** Distribution of Respondents on the Personal Characteristics of Technical Staff

Characteristics	Staff		Total	%
	Artisans/ Foremen	Technical Officers		
Introversive	53	37	90	91
Logical thinking	51	39	97	98
Creativity	47	38	85	86
Problem solving	56	39	93	94
Fun seeking	2	0	2	2
Philanthropy	1	0	1	1
Emotional	0	0	0	0

Source: Field Survey, 2011

From table 2 above, 90 (91%) indicated that technical staff are introversive 97(98%) indicated they are capable of logical thinking, 85 (86%) indicated they have creativity, 93 (94%) indicated the personal characteristics included problem solving. However, 2 (2%) indicated that technical staff are not fun-living. None indicated that they are emotional. Only 1 (1%) indicates philanthropy as a characteristics of technical people.

**Table 3.** Distribution of Respondents on the Reward Preferred

Reward	Staff		Total	%
	Artisan & foremen	Technical officers		
Monetary	49	8	57	58
Non-monetary	11	31	42	42
Total	60	39	99	100

Source: Authors Fieldwork.

Table 3 shows that 57 (58%) indicated that monetary rewards were necessary, while 42 (42%) indicated that non-monetary rewards were necessary. Majority of the technical officers preferred non-monetary reward while majority of the artisans and foremen preferred monetary reward.

**Table 4.** Distribution of Respondents on the Provision of Work

Opinion	Staff		Total	%
	Artisans & foremenn	Technical officers		
Provision of work	51	39	90	91
Non- provision of work	9	0	9	9
Total	60	39	99	100

Source: Authors Fieldwork.

Table 4 shows that 90 (91%) of the respondents preferred provision of work, while 9 (9%) preferred non-provision of work.

**Table 5.** Distribution of Respondents on their Preference to Private Jobs

Opinion	Staff		Total	%
	Artisan & foremen	Technical officers		
Private job	57	34	91	92
No private job	2	5	7	7
Indifferent	1	0	1	1
Total	60	39	99	100

Source: Authors Fieldwork.

Table 5 shows that 91 (92%) preferred private jobs as an alternative reward, 7 (7 percent) preferred no private job, while 1 (1%) was indifferent.

The study revealed the following:

- That technical staff of Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu, Nigeria exhibit peculiar characteristics. The characteristics included introversiveness, logical thinking, problem solving attitude, and creative tendencies.
- The artisans and foremen among the technical workforce prefer monetary reward, while the technical officers prefer non-monetary rewards.
- The technical staff members prefer provision of work.
- Majority of the workforce (technical) prefer private jobs they popularly called (PP) to other rewards.
- The staff will avoid strike, if given the chance.

## 10 Discussion of Findings

The findings of logical thinking, problem solving, creativity and introversiveness are in line with [11]. It was not exhaustive as people could be philanthropic and fun-seekers. However, the findings revealed that although it could all apply in other work

situations the technical people have 3 out of 99 chances for philanthropy and fun-seeking. The discovery that non-monetary rewards are preferred by technical officers, while artisans and foremen (also technical people) is in line with both Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Chris Agyris's mature and immature people. The earlier the lower needs of food, shelter and security are satisfied, the more the emergence of higher ones like social and self-actualization needs. The higher technical people – technical officers – present the characters of the mature people and theory of Y of both Agyris and McGregor respectively.

Subject of recent litigations has been whether or not the employer must provide work. The study here clearly shows that the worker who is technically inclined insists on provision of work. The reasons of loss of learning effect, loss of dexterity, and in cases of piece rate system as is common among technical people make provision of work a preferred option among the technical people studied.

The latest finding, and perhaps the addition to motivational literature, is the finding on private jobs. That was variously called "private practice", 'pp', etc. An average technical staff in the area studied prefers private jobs where he collects a job, costs it, produces it, gets the money and keeps it. For employers afraid of the free agents, this reward is an option. Where 'pp' is in practice, the average technical staff hates strikes.

## 11 Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, it could be inferred that all the technical staff in the area studied have peculiar characteristics which include introversiveness, problem-solving, logical thinking and urge for creativity. Artisans and foremen are more likely to be motivated by monetary rewards, while technical officers are more likely to be motivated by non-monetary rewards. A technical staff provided with a job, is more likely to stay and even improve on his performance than one without jobs provided. Where private practice is allowed, the staff is more likely to improve performance. Technical staff members dislike strike. From the foregoing the following recommendation are worth proposing:

1. Technical staff should be identified and employed based on possession of certain characteristics.
2. Artisans and foremen should be motivated using monetary inducements.
3. Technical officers should be motivated by non-monetary inducements.
4. To motivate technical staff, jobs should always be provided.
5. Technical staff should be allowed some elements of private practice in which the organization's facilities could be used solely for the benefit of the staff. This should however, be carefully done to avoid it being the rule rather than the exception.
6. A national, industry-wide, and university wide study should be made to further authenticate the findings in the study.

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