THE FACTORS WHICH DRIVE COMPANY'S PERFORMANCE BASED ON MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS AND HERSEY AND BLANCHARD'S SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP THEORY

SUWAT PHINHONGTHONG

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……………………….….....………......
Mr. Suwat Phinhongthong
Candidate

....
Assoc. Prof. Sooksan Kantabutra,
Ph.D.
Advisor

....
Assoc. Prof. Nathasit Gerdsri,
Ph.D.
Chairperson

....
Duangporn Arbhasil,
Ph.D.
Dean
College of Management
Mahidol University

....
Suthep Nimsai,
Ph.D.
Committee member

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SUWAT PHINHONGTHONG   5849191

M.M. (ENTREPRENEURSHIP MANAGEMENT)

THEMATIC PAPER ADVISORY COMMITTEE: ASSOC. PROF. SOOKSAN KANTABUTRA, Ph.D., ASSOC. PROF. NATHASIT GERDSRI, Ph.D., SUTHEP NIMSAI, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to investigate for the factor that affect the motivation level of the employees in a selected SME through Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory. The qualitative method of research is conducted by interviewing the employee that allows the researcher to collect the indirect information. Later on from the investigating result, another theory knows as Situational Leadership theory is also applied to obtain the most appropriate countermeasure for the SME's owner.

The result from the analysis is shown that how could SME can adjust and improve according to the requirement of the applied theories. At the end of the paper there are recommendations for SME to follow in order to improve the company's performance.

KEY WORDS: Business Performance/ Maslos's Hierarchy of Needs/ Situational Leadership/ Thai's SME

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Employee's motivation and satisfaction are the most to important factors which can leads the company to achieve the sustainable success. As compare to the large company, SMEs somewhat have a limitation in term of finance and people's management. This turn out to be the major problem and challenge for SME's owner in order to improve their company in long term perspective.

In this paper, a selected Thai SME is who started the business since 1987 as a baby cloths manufacturer. All of the products are exported to the Middle East countries with the annual sale approx. 10 Million Baht. During the past decade, the company has encountered with the problems from losing the market share to Chinese's manufacturer and increasing in cost of employees. To stay with cost competitive, the company decided to hire alienate worker from Myanmar with a lower cost as compare to Thai employees.

This change has turned the company into the multinational organization with Myanmar employees up to 60% of the total manpower. The difference in the culture and behavior has created the management problem for the owner and lower the product quality. Hence, in return from the cost saving issue, the company has encountered other problems which also need a quick countermeasure or in order to bring back the business competitive condition.

From the above problems encountered by the company, this study will use 1) Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory to analyze the employee's motivation and satisfaction level and 2) Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory to identify the most suitable leadership style for the company in order to solve for the current problem.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory

Maslow's hierarchy of needs states that every human being, there exists a hierarchy of five needs (Stephen P., Timothy A, 2013). The following five needs are Physiological, Safety, Social, Self-Esteem and Self-Actualization can be arranged in pyramid structure according to the priority as shown in figure 2.1. From the theory, it state that higher level of need could only be achieve once the lower need is fulfilled and satisfied.
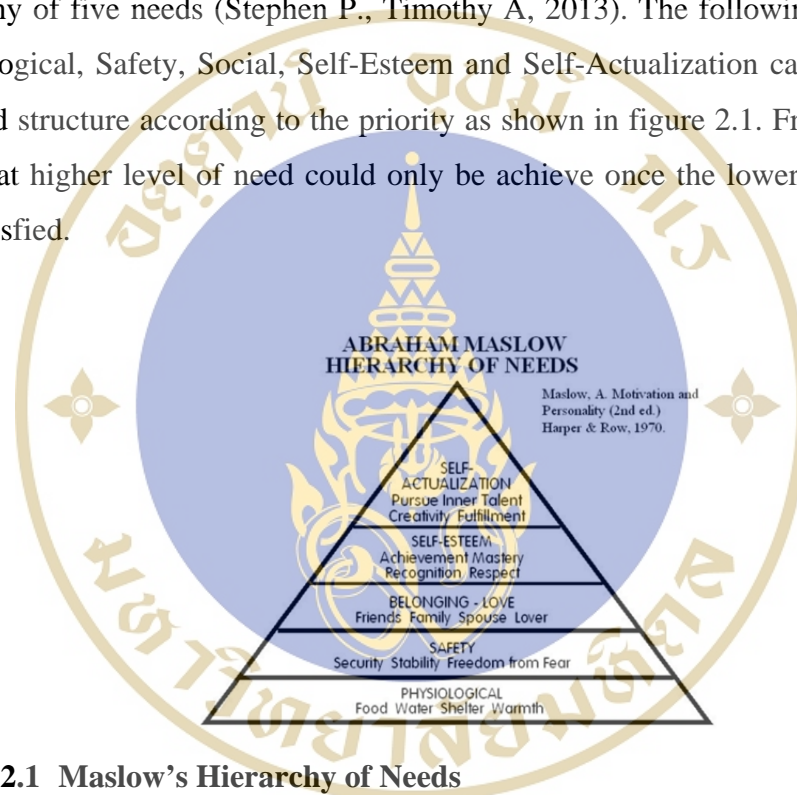
Figure 2.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

The theory also mention that the Hierarchy needs can be classified into two major groups of need by consider from the factor of satisfaction. The Physiological and Safety needs could be acquired by the external factors such as food, shelter and salary. And the remaining needs i.e. Social, Self-Esteem and Self-Actualization could be acquired by internal factors such as relationship, respect and importance of one self.

2.1.1 Physiological need

It is the fundamental human needs which required in daily life such as food, accommodation and health. This basic need can be acquired by offering the salary, welfare and benefit to the employees to satisfied their need for living. It is the first level of basic need which must provide based on the agreement between the owner and the employees.

2.1.2 Safety need

Safety need could be acquired by creating a safe environment work place so that employees can concentrate fully on their duty rather than worrying about the risk from the accident. Beside safety from work place environment, the other concern is about the job security. The future planning like career path and retirement plan is also included in this level of need. The company direction toward the employee's career must be satisfy and understood by all employee, so each one of them feel safe with the job.

2.1.3 Social need

The relationship among employees is an internal factor which can build up only through the feeling of each employee. The company has to conduct various types of activities for example buddy game, dinner with CEO, etc to generate the bond and affection among employees. Once the relationship among the employee is created, each of them would feel that they are working with a family and can eventually work beyond the owner expectation.

2.1.4 Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is another hierarchy of need which acquired by an internal feeling of the employee. Most of the employees will respond well after the positive feedback. Therefore the managements and group leaders need to appreciate their subordinates every time after finish the task. From this action, the subordinate could realize for their existence and feel the respect by other. This will generate the positive thinking toward the company and in return it will increase the efficiency and quality of the work.

2.1.5 Self-Actualization

The highest level of Maslow's Hierarchy of needs is Self-Actualization. This is not commonly found in all employee of the company. To acquired this level of need, the company must involve the employee into the period of setting up the company's goal and direction after achieve one another. This make the employee to become a part of the company which he or she will become self fulfilled by becoming who they really are.

In conclusion, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is the theory which can be used to identify the employee's motivation by knowing their level of needs which is fulfilled. From the motivation, it general effect to the job satisfaction which again can lead to the company's productivity.

2.2 Hersey and Blanchard's Situation Leadership Theory

The Situational Leadership theory states that there is no perfect leadership style which can be universal or common for all the employees under different situation. The style of leader must be adjusted timely according to the situation. The successful leaders change their leadership style to suit a particular situation (Hersey-Blanchard, 1988). Under this theory, there are four leadership styles which can be selected by the leader in response to the four follower readiness levels.


Figure 2.2   Situational Leadership Model

2.2.1 Directing style

This leadership style is use for the follower with the lowest readiness level. This types of the follower mainly the freshmen or the new hire employee who do not have any working experience and also not willing to follow the company direction. Therefore, the manager or group leader need to define the goals and task to their follower, tell them how and when to complete the task. It is more likely to be one way communication or just give order with a regular feedback.

2.2.2 Coaching Style

This style is match with the follower with has a higher readiness level i.e. the one who is willing to do but unable due to lack of knowledge or experience. Under this circumstance, the leader need to coach their followers, build up the confident and support in some problem solving issue. However, the leader still provide the goal and due date of each task.

2.2.3 Supporting Style

At the situation when the follower is able to do the task, but unwillingly. The manager and group leader must adopt the supporting style leadership which offers the high supportive action to the followers. The sense of job ownership must also be create and deliver to the follower, so he or she would feel the importance of their job responsibility. Therefore, the leader needs to listen to the follower's idea and suggestion. Then together engage in joint problem if needed.

2.2.4 Delegating Style

This leadership style is for the follower who has the highest readiness level. Manager or the group leader does not need to interfere in the action of the followers. However, the follower at this level must already obtain enough knowledge and experience that allow them to be able to handle their own responsibilities. At this readiness level, the follower has fully developed a sense of job ownership which requires only the direction from the leader. The best action for the leader to manage this type of follower is to follow up timely and encourage them to ask for support.

In conclusion, Hersey and Blanchard's Situation Leadership Theory is the useful tool for the leader to apply to their follower in according to the readiness level. Again this theory could set up the advantage for the company which has a vast variety of the employees.

CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research, the qualitative method is applied by conducting an in dept interview to all employees including the owner of the selected SME. A series of questions will be asked to two different groups of people. Group 1 is the owner and Group 2 is the management and subordinates. The purpose of an interview is to find out the facts about the employee's motivation and satisfaction toward the company. Therefore, the selected questions are related to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in order to identify the employee's motivation level. The finding from interview will be summarize and conclude for the next action to solve the current problem based on the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Situational Leadership theory.

To be able to elaborate the answer with the interviewee's feeling, the open-ended questions will be asked to seventeen interviewees, five of them belong to management level and the remaining twelve are the subordinates.

The list of open-ended questions is provided below;

Table 3.1 list of question for **Group 1**

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs	Question
Physiological Need	- How is the basic need of the employee important for your company? - Do you have any criteria for making decision when it comes to the employee's welfare and benefit?
Safety Need	- How did you ensure that all the employees are safe at work place? - Do you have a well define career path for the entire employee?

Table 3.1 List of question for Group 1 (cont.)

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs	Question
Social Need	- How is the relationship among the employees? - How do you manage the employee's relation? - How managements involve and participate in social activity?
Self-Esteem	- How do you feel about the people development? - How did your employee get train? (externally or internally) - How frequently did your employees get train?
Self-Actualization	- How did the employee participate in the company's decision making? - How did you develop the action plan?

Table 3.2 List of question for Group 2

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs	Question
Physiological Need	- How much do you get the salary? - How does that affect your motivation to come to work?
Safety Need	- How do you feel about the working facilities provide to you by the company? - Do you feel secure while working for this company for both short and long term?
Social Need	- How is the relationship among the employees? - How managements involve and participate in social activity?
Self-Esteem	- Do you get any training to improve your skill? - How is the training being conducted? - How is it affected to your motivation? - How is your performance being evaluated?

Table 3.2 list of question for Group 2 (cont.)

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs	Question
Self-Actualization	- Do you involve in decision making toward the company direction? - Do you feel the importance of yourself in this company?

CHAPTER IV
FINDING

In this chapter, the result of the interview will be shown and indentify for the motivation problem exist significantly in what function of the company. Also the information from the interview, it can be predict for the type of follower and leader present in this company. Therefore the situational leadership theory could be selected as the tool for the analysis and recommendation.
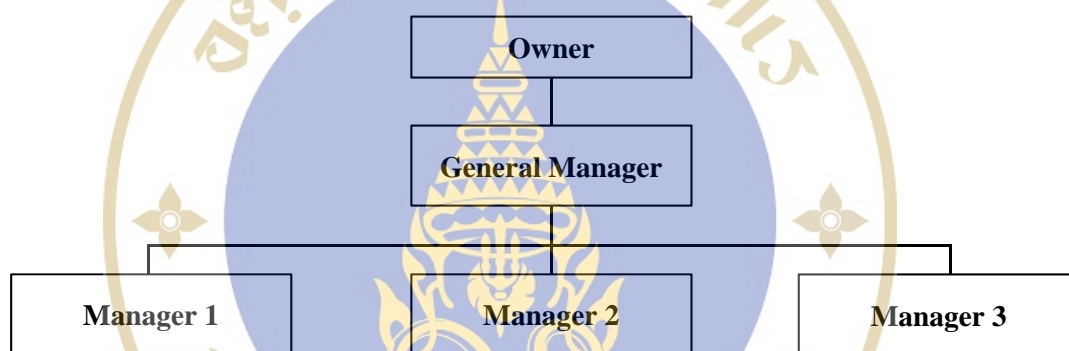
Figure 4.1 The company's organization structure

4.1 Result from interviewee of group 1 (The Company's owner)

4.1.1 Physiological Need.

The owner realized and do feel the important of the employee's basic need which need to be fulfill up to the standard which is accepted by the employees. As the company provide free accommodation and food for all permanent employees. In term of salary, before signing the contract agreement, the owner allows the employee to negotiate for the amount that he offered. It was the win-win situation for both the owner and the employees under the Physiological need.

"I do provide the basic need to all of my employees like free accommodation and cooking facilities. All they need to spend money on is the raw ingredients. My company also offered them an overtime payment with a standard rate as other company" said the Owner.

4.1.2 Safety Need

In term of the Safety need, the owner also provides all the necessary safety facilities at the work place. For example, the equipments and machines at the company are qualified with quality standard and with a proper maintenance timeline. Therefore, there is a very less chance for the employee to obtain risk from the equipment and machine. Regarding to the human fault, the company also provide the training for basic operation procedure of the for the equipment and machine to the related employee. With these actions, it is confirm that the company can fulfill the safety need to its employees.

"My company invested in good quality standard of equipments and machineries, the first benefit is the product quality and also could minimize the risk from hazardous environment at work place. All employees are register with social security which he or she has a right to get treatment from the government hospital in case of sickness" said the Owner.

4.1.3 Social Need

There is a daily communication session among the employees in each level. As it is a SME company, therefore, the owner himself involved with a face to face communication every day. However, there is no special bonding activity among the employees, but the owner always buys small stuff and eatable to his employees all the time. From this practice, the owner can develop a good relationship with the employees.

"Every day I have to inspect each department performance and identify the problem by communicating with the management. I respect them as a family member; therefore all the activities are conducted in informally as to make them feel relax and friendly" said the Owner.

4.1.4 Self-Esteem

With the information from interview, there is no special training course provided to the employees. When the company hires a new employee, there is only on the job training available as there is less number of the employee who could spend an extra time in just teaching to the new employee. From this issue, there could be the difficulty for the employee to realized their ability and maybe create the wrong decision by putting the wrong employee under the wrong department.

"We are just a SME, therefore we cannot utilize the specific skilled member to be the trainer all the time. This limitation, we only overcome by introducing on the job training session for the new employee" said the Owner.

4.1.5 Self-Actualization

At this level of Maslow's Hierarchy of need, the owner is the only person who could reach the motivation at this level. As the owner, he develops the action plan for each department and allocates the job responsibility to the management. Therefore, there is not much involvement from the employee like subordinate level.

"As the company owner, I am the decision maker and rarely allowing the employee to take part in the action. This is to avoid the conflict and reduce the time taken for every move" said the Owner.

4.1.6 Leadership Style

The information from the interview shows that the owner controls his employees with the Delegating style. As he only gave order to the management to complete the job. Even though he listens and communicate with his employee, but still not allowing them to take part in decision making and problem solving. This could be the problem in case there is different type of employees present in the company.

4.2 Result from interviewee of group 2

4.2.1 Physiological Need

All employees do enjoyed the existing facilities and basic need from the company. From the interview, there is no significant evident which support for the lacking of this level of need. The employee's motivation level concerning to the physiological need is under control and satisfied by the basic need provided from the company.

"I am still OK with the current salary and all the benefit received from the owner. He is a kind person who always likes to buy stuff to all the employees. This is how I felt motivated to work in this company" said the Manager of dept no.1

"I am totally satisfied with the free accommodation and cooking facilities provided to me, as it could reduce my living expense which eventually allow me to save more money and send it back to my family" said the Operator no.1

4.2.2 Safety Need

The employee's motivation level for the safety need is also under the expected level. Based on the facilities provided by the company, they are more than happy to work for the company under the current situation. For the job security, even though there no well-defined career path for the employees, but the company's could maintain the motivation level of the employee's toward the safety need by providing the substitution such as no layoff policy.

"I am felt somewhat secure when working for this company, because it provide me all the basic needed and I am quite confident that I won't get fired unless I have done something stupid" said the operator no.2

4.2.3 Social Need

The advantage from providing free accommodation to the employees is the good relationship is being developed among them. As most of the employees in subordinate level have an interaction with each other. For example sharing of food and spending time together after the working hours. And for the management level, they also get the direct support from the owner which helps to increase the level of motivation toward social need.

"I got good colleagues by spending time together during and after working hours. As we stay at the same accommodation facility, we develop our friendship by sharing our food and help each other when is needed" said the Operator no.2

"The owner supports me every time when he assigns the new task. He respects my idea and never makes me feel like he is the Boss. This interaction generate relaxing mode for at the working environment and easy to build up the relationship." Said the Manager of dept. no.2

4.2.4 Self-Esteem

In this level of need, the employee made some comment about the training for skill development. Especially the newly hire and the one who need a specially skill to perform the task. As there is no specific training course provided to the employee, they face some difficulty to maintain the product quality. For example the tailors who need to upgrade his or her skill every time when there a new design of cloth being order by the customer. The only training they got is the on the job training. Under this circumstances the significant problem is observed from the group of employees who deal with stitching (the tailors), where the other employees do not face as such problem significantly.

"I need to spend more time on each piece of cloth that I stitch because it is a new design with a different material. There must be a specific external training cause to get us ready for this type of product." said the tailor no.1

4.2.5 Self-Actualization

From the employee's point of view, this motivation level also still lacking as the owner did not allow the employees to participate in decision making and the development of action plan. However, before considering this level of motivation, the employees need to be fulfill with the Self-Esteem level first.

"My job responsibility is to complete the task given by the management on daily bases. Why would my idea be required for when it is never being ask for" said the operator no.5

4.2.6 Follower Readiness level

As observed from the interview, the employees can be classified into two major groups in respect to their readiness level. There are 1) High readiness level that is able and willing to do the task and 2) unable and willing to do the task. For the high readiness are the employees under management level and the experienced subordinates. For the moderate readiness are the newly hire employees and the tailors.

For high readiness employees, basically these people are the old member who has the enough experience and knowledge to perform their job. This seems not to be the significant problem for the company to solve as the leadership style already matches with this level. However, for the newly hire and the tailors, who need a specific measure to manage in term of skill development. It might not be appropriate for the owner to lead this group of people in Delegating style.

4.3 Recommendation

From the result of this research, the company must focus on the motivation level of the employees at the Self-Esteem level. The owner should start providing the external training for a specific course which can upgrade the employee's skill to handle new type of product. Also redesign the current training method for the newly hired employee. For example the owner can set up the special development or training course during the over time so it will not disturb the current production process.

Another point of recommendation is for the leadership style which needs to be more flexible in according to the follower's readiness level. From the research, the readiness level of the employee is already being identified in to two major groups. Therefore, it is highly recommended for the owner to adjust his management style to become Delegating style and Coaching style.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

In the research, the qualitative questions are develop and used to interview employees in order to grab for the current situation. The result form interview is then analysis using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to investigate the employee's satisfaction in Physiological Need, Safety Need, Social Need, Self-Esteem and Self Actualization. As a result from the analysis, the significant problem could be indentified and allow the owner to make some countermeasure.

Beside the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs which is used as a tool to indentify the problem, Hersey and Blanchard's Situation Leadership Theory also being used to investigate for the follower readiness level in order to justify for the proper countermeasure from leadership style of the owner.

From the above two concept theories, it is proof that the theories can be applied practically for the real case scenario. As the company is now able to acknowledge for the most significant problem and also received the most suitable action to improve the company's performance. Therefore, other company should consider using the essence of the academic theories to solve the company's problem and gain the benefit from the reasonable countermeasure.

5.2 Limitation of study

There is a limitation from this study, as the motivation level of each person could be different in respect to the environment and the individual personality. Therefore, the result obtain from this company could be divert from the other study.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: List of Question

Question for group no.1

Q1. How is the basic need of the employee important for your company?

Q2. Do you have any criteria for making decision when it comes to the employee's welfare and benefit?

Q3. How did you ensure that all the employees are safe at work place?

Q4. Do you have a well define career path for the entire employee?

Q5. How is the relationship among the employees?

Q6. How do you manage the employee's relation?

Q7. How managements involve and participate in social activity?

Q8. How do you feel about the people development?

Q9. How did your employee get train? (externally or internally)

Q10. How frequently did your employees get train?

Q11. How did the employee participate in the company's decision making?

Q12. How did you develop the action plan?

Question for group no.2

Q1. How much do you get the salary?

Q2. How does that affect your motivation to come to work?

Q3. How do you feel about the working facilities provide to you by the company?

Q4. Do you feel secure while working for this company for both short and long term?

Q5. How is the relationship among the employees?

Q6. How managements involve and participate in social activity?

Q7. Do you get any training to improve your skill?

Q8. How is the training being conducted?

Q9. How is it affected to your motivation?

Q10. How is your performance being evaluated?

Q11. Do you involve in decision making toward the company direction?

Q12. Do you feel the importance of yourself in this company?

Appendix B: Interview Memo

The company's owner

I started the business around thirty years ago, since then I always treat the entire employee like my own family. I provide them accommodation, meals and so on. However, there is a limitation for the welfare which I can provide due to the profit from the business. The company does not have a big profit margin like other SMEs. In term of safety at work place, I provide all the necessity need of personal protected equipment. Also the business is not involved with the heavy machine, so I think my employees feel safe when they are working.

As mention earlier that I always treat all employees as a family, therefore the relationship among employees is one of the important key of my objective. Without proper teamwork there will be no effective output. In doing so, I have conduct many activity which build up the relationship among the employees such as sharing and caring. As a result, all employees seem to be happy to work together and never have any conflict with each other.

For the employee's development program, as our company is SMEs, we only train the new employee with the experience's one. So no such specific training from external is required. More over by utilizing our own resources can also build up the relationship among the employees and increase the training skill of the experienced employee.

Regarding to the decision making, I allow the management to take action which can bring the benefit to the company. For example, the manager of the packing department can take any action which can ensure that the product is being pack and deliver to the customer on time. But for the subordinate, I do limit their decision and action which need to be considered and control by their superior first to avoid the defect with the product.

General Manager

Our company is the SMEs which run as a family business, the owner and I stared the company thirty years ago with the object to gain the maximum profit and bring a good living standard to our family. In this company, my responsibility is to ensure that the entire three departments can manage their own productivity and the quality of the product.

We treat all employees as our family to build up the trust and so they can help us to run the business smoothly with the least conflict. Therefore, we provide them all the basic need such as free accommodation with meals allowance. The relationship among the employees is also our key concern. As to stay productive, all employees must collaborate and support to each other to develop and produce the quality product in a given time. That why we really care about the employee's relation.

So as for the training, we always use our own experience employees as the trainer to the new employees. Seeing there is some limitation for the ability of the trainer, we still don't want to use the external trainer. In our point of view, developing trainer is also one of the good opportunities for the manager to gain alternative skill in training the new member. Hence, then only the thing from my concern is the quality and the willingness of the manager to withstand the reaction of the trainee.

Manager no.1

I joined this company since the very first day which the owner started the business. I am quite satisfied with the current salary and welfare received from the company. As we are more like a family which work together since a very long time already, so when there is any issue which made me feel uncomfortable, I just discuss with the owner right away.

About the employee's relationship, I got no problem with anybody. All the employees from different department were treated equally and have to live their life together. As many of us stayed together in the accommodation which is provided by the owner. Therefore, we enjoyed together after the working hour and spend time together during the holidays.

If talking about the training, I got trained mainly on the job training. I could say that, my skill and experience was developed by learning from the actual work. And

it is my responsibility now to train the new employees. So there might be some limitation for the effective training to all the employees. This is because some employee needs a special trainer skill to control and teach the lesson. Therefore, it takes a longer time for us to develop those special types of new employees.

For the decision making, we do have right to make the decision in order to accomplish the mission. But as a company direction, only the owner and the general manager who make the conclusion and share the idea to us to follow. With the overall job responsibility, I could feel the importance of myself in this company.

Manager no.2

Over the twenty years of experience in this company, I am fully satisfied with the company's welfare and benefit. This place is like my second home where I enjoyed working and staying with my colleagues. As a small company, each employee get to see each other and express their idea all the time.

I have learnt and developed my skill from the on the job training and now even become the trainer for the new employees. In doing so it helps me to develop myself for the trainer skill. The only issue which I am concern is the development for the skill of the new employee. As when there is a new type of product, the unskilled employees are the people who suffer. They need a special lesson to learn and upgrade their skill in order to produce the quality product within the due date. This is because I have a limitation in teaching ability, therefore could not fully train the new employee effectively.

I do feel that I am quite importance in this position, because after a long working period in this company. I am the person who manages the system and the other employees. However, some action still needs permission from the owner or general manager first.

Manager no.3

I am in charge for packaging department, and responsible for the packing the product with quality up to the standard. I joined this company ten years ago and quite happy to work with the people here. Sometimes we have to get the packaging done within the limited of time, so we need to do OT as well. The owner manages our felling well at the time when we need to work over night as he also come and stay with us till the very end. That is the thing which keeps this company running in my opinion. From that action, we really get in to the business and gain motivation to do or job.

In term of my subordinate, I gain the right to control the people under my department. Therefore, I have a control over them just to get the work done in time with minimum defect. In our department, I also treat everyone as a family member; we share our problem in life and in work. I myself conduct the training for the new employee during the first two week when they join the company. But still that particular employee some could not do their job effectively.

Employee no.1

I work as a tailor in this company from the past five years. The working style of the company does not change much since then. People get out and in as a normal routine, but I am happy to stay here anyway. The most positive factor that I found is the owner who really care for their employee's feeling. He support us most of the thing to keep our daily life simple and easy going.

Beside the welfare and benefit, the human development of this company is not that good as compare to other SMEs. Here we get training from the supervisor only. We have no change to get the training from the external source and this is the only thing which is lacking for me when I am working here. As the time when there is a new product design, it is very difficult for me to maintain the productivity and quality. So I think it will be better for us and the company if we get the proper training from the external source as well.

Employee no.2

   I join this company since 2000 and I have been relocating in the entire department. For me, I think this company give a suitable welfare and benefit as compare to other company which I heard from my friend. This is the reason why I still continue to work here. At present, I am working under packing department where the time is very crucial. This is because we need to pack the product within the limited time as to ensure that the product could be transport to the port in time of the export company. This problem occurred because of the delay from the stitching department. As when there is a product with a new design, the tailors always take a longer time to complete the stitching. Maybe they are not well trains enough to improve their skill of stitching.

Employee no.3

   I am working here as a designer and I am still ok with the company at present. In term of the salary, I am quite ok as just join the company with n experience at all. In this company we work like a family and my supervisor is very kind to me. As we live at the same place where the company provides to us, I think it is very advantage and the reason of why the employee's relationship is very good.

   In my position, I have a right to develop any design of baby cloth which I feel like. From those ideas, my supervisor will be the one who select and proceed on with the editing process. I am quite ok with this procedure, as there is no interruption during my designing stage.

   To sum up, I am quite happy to work here at the moment and might not find any other place to join, but in the future I need to consider for the percentage increase in my wage which is the key factor me and most of the employee.