

# A KEY TO IMPROVE WORKPLACES PRODUCTIVITY

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**Abstract:** *Employee productivity is a significant factor influencing the performance of an organization and ensuring the success of any business. The researcher conducted a literature review of the previous study to support the objective of this research in order to gain a better understanding of the topic of effective ways to improve productivity in the workplace. The objective of the study is to determine effective ways to improve productivity in the workplace and to identify the importance of effective ways in improving the workplace's productivity. Besides, trends of labour productivity by sectors in Malaysia have been determined in this research. In addition, this research discussed several effective ways to improve the workplace's productivity. Meanwhile, the second subtopic explained and justified its importance. Apart from that, this research also elaborates on the ranking country with the highest labour productivity worldwide. As a result, employers and employees need to pitch in together as a whole body to improve productivity in the workplace. Last but not least, the researcher made several recommendations at the end of the study for the organization in improving its productivity.*

**Keywords:** *Employees, Productivity, Effective Ways, Important*

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## Introduction

In the business world, productivity is a significant concept since it contributes to the success of the organization. Productivity is defined as the collaborative work done by management and employees with the purpose of enhancing individual performance (Almaamari & Alaswad, 2021). Besides, it includes comparing the input and output in all sectors. To illustrate, the input could be labor costs, materials, equipment, and so on, while the output might be the quality of the goods or services produced by the organizations in accordance with the standards. This means that employees' performance is their productivity (Alsaad & Almaamari, 2020).

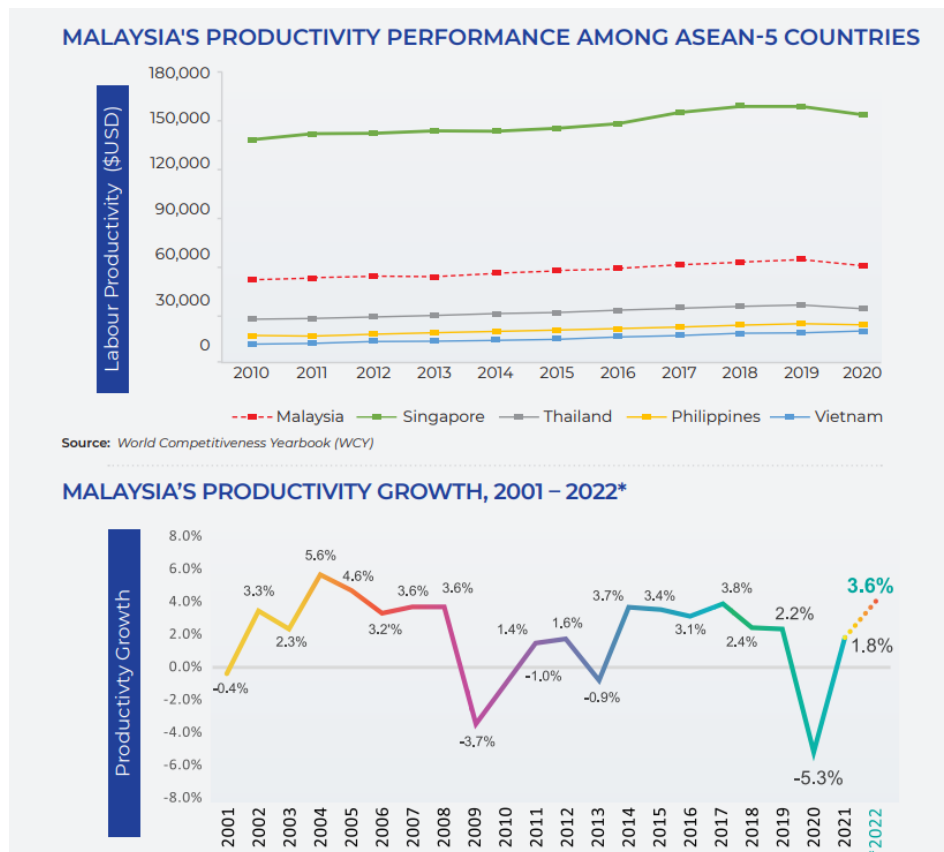
Over the past year, the workplace has seen some significant changes that could permanently alter the way we work. Employee performance and satisfaction are the most critical factors for every organization. This is due to the productivity of the employee will automatically improve with the employee's satisfaction (Padhi, 2022). Having a well-organized workplace is essential for keeping employees engaged and motivates to give their best in every task given. Therefore, this study will discuss the effective ways to improve productivity in the workplace by making small changes to habits that could have greatly improved the organization's productivity. As a

result, more effective work will be completed in less time and reduce the amount spent on unnecessary tasks.

Since there is exponential growth in the amount of digital data, the world has undergone significant change. Additionally, adaptable, knowledge-based, and flexible duties have replaced repetitive ones in office work over the past ten years. When employees engage in a productive working environment and have timely access to pertinent information, it has been demonstrated that they spend less time and organization resources (Attaran *et al.*, 2019).

Besides, most organizations have placed a high priority on enhancing employee productivity in the past decade. Derera (2022) determines productivity among employees ensuring the organization’s effectiveness and profitability. Previous researchers determine, 79% of workers in the UK stated that they were not productive the entire workday. In other words, this demonstrates that only 21% of UK workers believe they are productive for an entire workday. Approximately 2 hours and 53 minutes per day are spent productively by the average worker (Vouchercloud, 2018). Hence, the organization should identify effective ways to improve the productivity.

Moreover, Figure 1 shows that Malaysia is making a strong recovery in productivity growth in 2021 after battling with the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the report of Malaysia Productivity Corporation. It indicates that Malaysia will fare better in 2022. The data shows that the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Malaysia increased by 3.6% in 2021 and productivity growth grew by 1.8%.



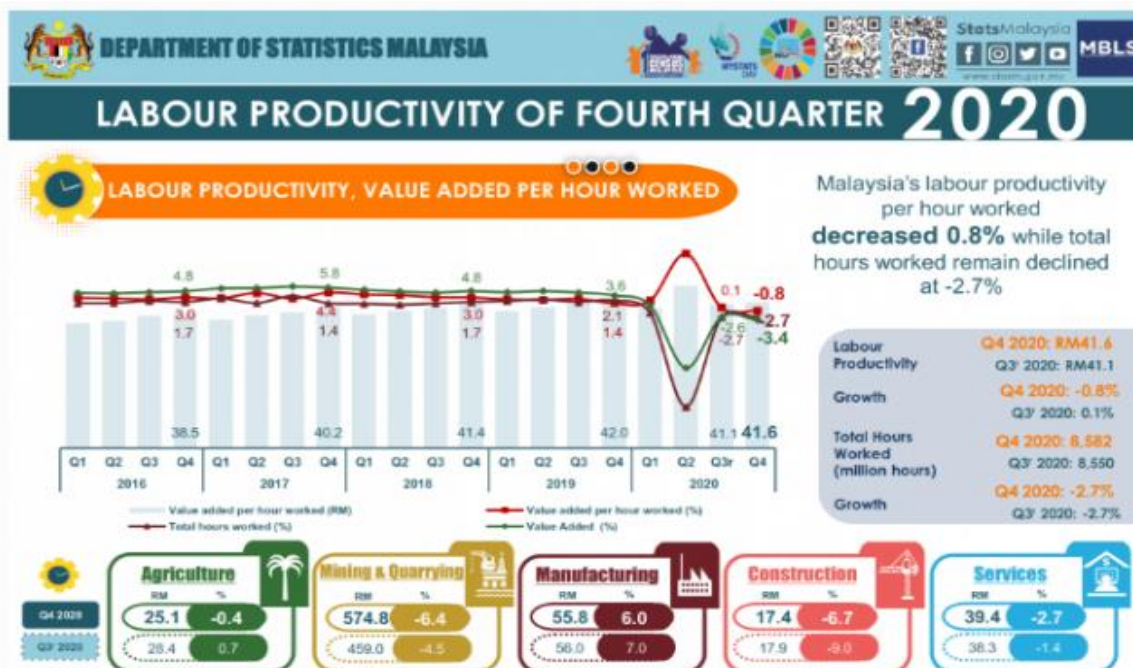
**Figure 1: Malaysia’s productivity growth from 2001 to 2022.**

Source: Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM)

### Trends of labour productivity by sectors in Malaysia

According to data supplied by the Department of Statistics Malaysia, in the fourth quarter of 2020, the value added per hour worked slightly decreased by 0.8%, indicating a decline in Malaysia’s labour productivity as shown in Figure 2 below. The decrease in labour productivity provides meaningful insight for the researcher to investigate the effective ways to improve productivity in the workplace and its importance. Overall, labour productivity in Malaysia by value added per hour worked increased by 3.4% with RM42 per hour. While value added per employment, which measures labour productivity decreased by 5.3%.

The statistics in the figure may be further understood by looking at labour productivity from the five (5) separate sectors: agriculture, mining and quarrying, manufacturing, construction, and services. During the fourth quarter of 2020, the value added per hour worked for the agriculture sector dropped by 0.4% (Q3 2020: 0.7%). Meanwhile, labour productivity as value added to employment fell by 0.3% compared to the prior quarter. Apart from that, the data shows that labour productivity per hour worked for the mining and quarrying sector dropped by 6.4% as against negative 4.5 from the preceding quarter. However, labour productivity per hour worked reported an increase of 6.0% (Q3 2020: 7.0%) in the manufacturing sector. The labour productivity of construction sector per hour worked decreased by 6.7% in Q4 2020 (Q3 2020: -9.0%), which shows a continuing downward trend. Additionally, labor productivity per hour worked in the services sector increased at a slower rate, stated at -2.7%. In short, the only manufacturing sector stated rise in labour productivity by hours worked while other sectors indicated a downward tendency. The decreasing number in Malaysia’s labour productivity is believed to be influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, which had a significant impact on businesses and even organizations worldwide. This statement is supported in the research done by Gibbs *et al* (2021), average output dropped slightly and employee productivity decreased by 8-19% despite an increase in hours worked.



**Figure 2: Labour productivity of fourth quarter 2020.**

Source: Department of Statistics, Malaysia (2021)

## Discussion

### Effective ways to improve productivity in the workplaces

A systematic literature review done by Attaran, Attaran & Kirkland (2019) proposes that future workers will be more capable and productive than ever before due to the advancements in communications and lifestyle trends. The adoption of smart workplace technologies has increased dramatically in recent years. Smart offices and the use of digital workspaces are growing in popularity, and deployments are accelerating. As a result, the traditional office should make some changes to avoid being outdated and affecting the productivity of the organization. Based on the study by Attaran *et al.*, (2019) stated that digital workplace technologies have been shown able to reshape and decentralize the traditional office. The digital workplace offers more efficient working methods, improves productivity, and enhances employee engagement when effectively planned and implemented. Therefore, it can be concluded that organizations with adopted digital tools were getting higher productivity and rising the revenue.

Furthermore, the demographics of today's workplaces are changing as well. According to the study of Berland (2016) conducted across nine different markets, the report analyzed that 44% of workers globally think that their workspace is not technologically advanced enough, whereas over half of respondents expect could work in a modern workplace within the following five years. Employees who lack the necessary equipment for the job reported higher levels of employee frustration and decreased productivity. Hence, the organization should provide digital tools in the workplace to increase employee engagement, improve productivity, and educate employees to reduce costs and increase efficiency. For example, the organization may use some digital tools by categories in the workplace namely collaboration and productivity tools, communication tools, and time-tracking tools. Collaboration and productivity tools like Asana assists employees work together effectively although not in the same place. This can make sure the project runs smoothly. Apart from that, common examples of communication tools such as email and WhatsApp help employees retain communication with clients and external stakeholders with the use of these tools. While employees will benefit from using time-tracking tools as keeping monitoring the amount of time spent on each task and ensuring the project's progress and timescales. Additionally, Cloud Computing Technology (CCT), Big Data Analytics, and Software-as-a-Services (SaaS) could enable employees to backup storage and can have better document management.

Other than that, no one can deny the role of online project management software in improving teamwork and productivity. The use of the proper project management tool can assist in effective work management and foster greater teamwork. For example, ProofHub is one of the software examples which includes discussion and group chat that unites team members, clients, and projects in one place (Kashyap, 2022). With the technology required to execute their duty in an efficient manner, providing employees tools they need to succeed is an excellent first step in raising employee productivity.

The flow of information throughout an organization is a vital part of the effective implementation of a business strategy. "Team collaboration" is defined as a communication system among an organization's employees. It might involve using some collaboration platform, an organization's intranet, social networking tools, and the public internet. On the other hand, when the organization promotes team collaboration, employees will work together to brainstorm new ideas, build better solutions, complete challenging projects, and accomplish

their objectives. This is because employees have honest communication and open discussions when working together toward their goals and improving productivity (Asana, 2021).

Apart from that, team collaboration allows employees to share information and work together on projects remotely through the use of software technologies, network capabilities, and collaborative methods. Collaboration tools that provide audio and video conferencing, file sharing support, group messaging, and other features such as Workplace, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams, concentrate on improving employees' productivity when they're not in the same place. This is because these tools enable both in-house and remote employees to easily communicate and share information with one another, as well as with clients and business partners (Attaran *et al.*, 2019).

Communication and information sharing have altered as a result of the rapid development of Information and Communication (ICT) over the past few decades, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic period. During enforced working from home, technological affordances that were mostly ignored were taking the place of the environmental office affordances that formerly supported face-to-face communications. Based on the study of Waizenegger *et al.* (2020), team collaboration is important when employees work at home to maintain "business as normal". Employees should be familiar with working with tools for online collaboration, so there is easier in interacting with people who are separated by distance. Previous researchers determine personal contact, telephone contact, e-mail, and file sharing application are the most crucial tools for ensuring members are in good communication (Oliveira *et al.*, 2015). Employees are becoming more widespread in the usage of online collaboration tools due to their want to communicate and work remotely. Through team collaboration in the workplace, employees can discuss with one another to gather better outcomes than they do the task alone. In short, team collaboration is important to effectively improve productivity in the workplace.

Despite the fact that many people claim to be excellent multitaskers, but it's usually always preferable to concentrate on one activity at a time. Multi-tasking has now been discovered that reduces intelligence and hinder productivity. Many studies have shown that multitasking can decrease an individual's productivity by up to 40%. They found out that being focused on a task shows more productivity overall and avoid the employee from making simple mistakes that affect productivity (Slack, 2021). They could feel less productive as a result of not being able to finish a task immediately, which in turn can further affect productivity. Hence, the organization should ensure that the workload for the employee is roughly equal to minimize the effort. It can be concluded that the best work is produced by employees who can fully concentrate.

Furthermore, an organization should be designed and establish quiet spaces in different areas of the workplace since noise is a significant distraction-causing issue. This way enables an employee who is deeply contemplative can do their work in those no-talking zones. However, those who aren't affected by outside noise can continue working at their workstations and interact with other employees (Backman, 2019). Not only that, organizations should limit personal distractions in the workplace. A study done by CareerBuilder stated that almost half of the employees found out cell phones are the top deterrent to workplace productivity and following closely behind were the internet, idle workplace conversation, checking email, and social media.

Furthermore, an organization may minimize some ineffective meetings. Since meetings are frequently required for an organization's operation and essential for communicating, there might be a significant source of distraction for the employee who would prefer to spend that time working diligently on projects or completing their tasks. Therefore, the organization may set up no-meeting days or limit the meetings days to guarantee the employee have longer periods of undisturbed work time (Backman, 2019). A systematic literature review done by Infocom (2018) proposed that when one worker spends more than 30 hours per week in meetings, around 50% of meetings are thought to be wasted. Besides, this will also cost the organization on average \$9000 per employee per year. Hence, employees can save valuable time to reallocate their tasks and help in improving productivity by eliminating unnecessary meeting.

Wellness is a process of change and growth. There are several ways employees can naturally reduce stress and anxiety while enhancing workplace wellness, including relaxing the body, finding mental focus, getting enough rest, building social wellness, calming the mind, and so on. Many studies show a positive correlation between well-being and employee productivity. Previous researchers determine, physical and mental health are both aspects of wellness and can increase productivity (Slack, 2021). Based on the research of Harvard Business Review, people with strong mental health increase productivity by 23%, while physically healthy employees are 17% more productive (Kropp, 2021). Organization can improve their overall productivity by focusing on the whole person with benefits such as weight-loss programs, health tests, or on-site workout facilities (Slack, 2021).

Ding *et al* (2016) determine that lost productivity is caused by physical inactivity and unhealthy eating habits, which result from two sources: absenteeism (absence from work because of sickness or disability) and presenteeism (working with less efficiency). Promotion of physical exercise and nutritious eating habits at the workplace could be a coordinated effort that increases employee health and enhances productivity. Based on the existing research, employee sedentary and eating behaviour has typically changed significantly as a result of workplace nutrition and physical activity interventions that included education, counseling, and on-site group activities. These interventions have also enhanced physical and mental health and provided a significant return on investment by reducing healthcare expenditures and absenteeism overall (Grimani *et al.*, 2019). Researchers studied a wellness program and observed that all employees who were involved have seen an average monthly increase in productivity of one full workday. Hence, organizations may implement initiatives or opportunities to enhance employee well-being and improve productivity too (Harbour, 2018).

### **The important of effective ways in improving the workplace's productivity**

Organizational success is heavily reliant on how productive its employees are because productivity and profitability are interrelated. Productivity measures the amount of output that can be produced with given inputs at any given time period or technology (Yao *et al.*, 2019). Higher productivity indicates the efficiency and effectiveness of the use of inputs that contribute towards lower costs of doing business and at the same time create a better standard of living and increase competitiveness (Al-Busaidi & Al-Muharrami, 2021). In a work environment, employees are motivated and trained to be productive, to be concerned about the success of the company, and to produce better results than those who are not as motivated and comfortable in their roles. On the other hand, productivity can refer to how effectively an individual or organization completed the task that has been assigned to them (Kalogiannidis, 2021). To take a look at productivity effectively, understanding why the concept of "productivity" is

particularly crucial for an organization. Generally, the higher the level of productivity in the organization, the greater its profitability. In other words, profits are produced by productive businesses in a variety of manners.

In the organization, profitability will rise when the cost of producing goods and services decreases. Less employee is needed to produce the same amount of goods and services when employees become more productive. As a result, the organization may gain from the higher output with keep the same staff or even a few employees. But it will gain from an increase in output if the company decides to keep using the same number of employees (Ciara, 2018). When the cost of producing a company's goods and services decreases, businesses become more profitable. Besides, the organizations may be getting the most from the existing resources in effective ways. Hence, it's very important to have effective ways to improve productivity in the workplace.

Organizations frequently fail to make the best use of their resources. Most of the time, workers find themselves busy for a while, but sometimes, they look for work to do. In dealing with such a problem, more effective ways such as a better human resource management strategy should be in the organization to increase productivity while lowering overhead (Thuda, Sari & Maharani, 2019). When organizations take the initiative to implement technology that keeps everyone organized or makes work more enjoyable, everyone benefits and morale is boosted (Sara, Saputra & Utama, 2021). Instead of traditional thinking about productivity as a way to maximize workers, what productivity really means is less human sweat. Besides, profitability and loss reduction result from more effective employees and better responsibility distribution.

With effective ways to improve productivity, organizations can minimize employee burnout due to employees may spend the appropriate amount of time on daily tasks and also manage their workload better (Masiko et al., 2022). When an employee has too much to do in a limited time, it can lead to stress, total burnout, and exhaustion. Thus, organizations must assign tasks and responsibilities to their employee in order to work more productively. This becomes a positive consequence between the organization and employees. Apart from that, effective time management results in more productive and organized employees who concentrate on completing their daily goals which directly increases productivity in the workplace. For example, if the company didn't organize and takes 10 hours to complete work that might be completed in six, there is wasted four hours of unnecessary electricity. Organization results in a waste of time, money, and resources in long term. It also means that they produce more in a shorter amount of time. In short, the agenda for change must include optimizing a company's worker utilization. In other words, organizations should identify areas where employees are underutilization in order to ensure that employees reach their full potential and come out with a solution. As a result, a more effective workflow system consequently identifies areas where duties overlap (Ciara, 2018).

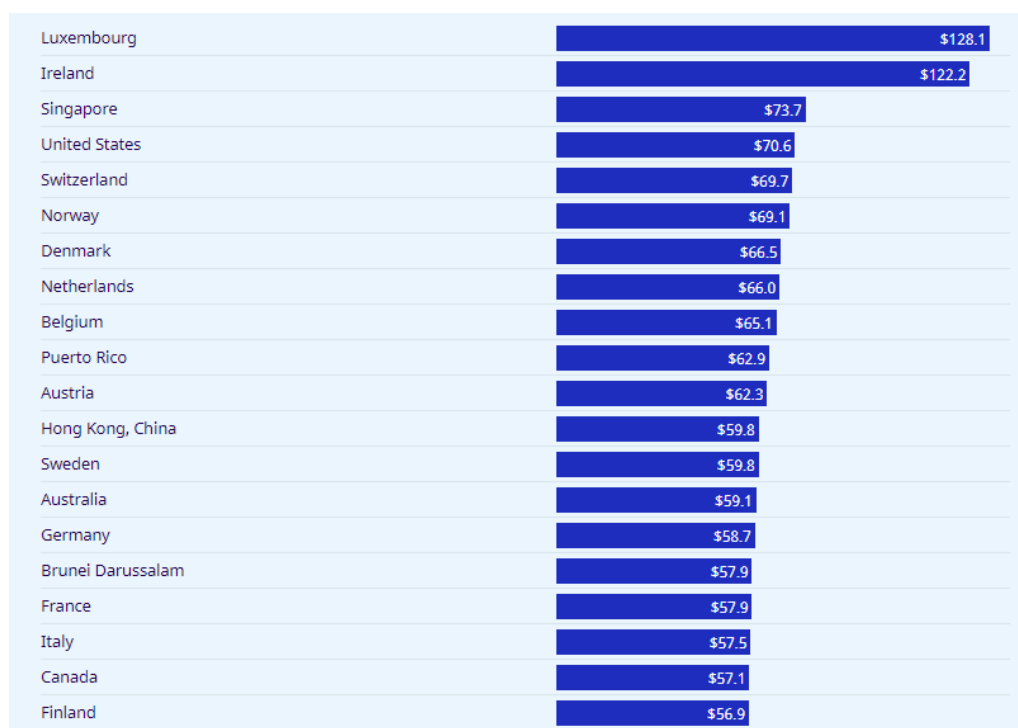
Many companies struggle to find the right balance between cost reductions and expanding their operations. Referring to the advantages of digital business, there is a wind of change in terms of competition both domestically and internationally. So, organizations need to use technology to increase revenue, reduce operating costs, improve customer, partner and employee satisfaction. An organization might save operational costs by utilizing particular strategies (Litvinenko, 2021). Employees who increase their workflow shorten the time needed to create a given output. Sometimes to save money, need to spend some. Investing in equipment and technology to improve productivity is a good idea. This is because investments in technology

can frequently minimize operational costs, and if procedures are improved over time, labour costs can also be lowered. As technology advances, better technology continues appearing on the market. Thus, investing in this modern equipment will eventually result in lower production costs (Arjun, 2017).

### The ranking country with the highest labour productivity worldwide

Gross domestic product (GDP) is the term used to describe the entire monetary value of the products and services produced inside a single country. GDP (PPP) per hour worked evaluates how effectively labour input, the total number of hours worked by all those involved in the production, is integrated with other production factors and applied in the production process. Besides, GDP (PPP) per hour can also be referred to as productivity per hour. Figure 3 below are the ranking of the most labour productivity countries.

Based on the International Labour Organization 2022, Luxembourg tops the list, with Ireland and Singapore in second and third places. Luxembourg’s labour productivity per hour is the highest of any country at \$128.1. The financial sector in Luxembourg is believed to be the main driver of the country’s high levels of productivity, but cross-border workers are also quite important (Walder, 2017). Additionally, productivity is predicted to rise even more if Luxembourg adopted the Scandinavian work-life balance. In addition, Ireland is the second-most productive country in the world at \$122.2 per hour worked. The majority of Ireland’s productivity increase is attributed to the country’s strong concentration of multinational corporations. Furthermore, Singapore shows the third highest labour productivity among the world’s most mature economies in 2022 with \$73.7. This is due to employees enjoying high incomes, a good work-life balance, and relatively low inequality because of their strong skills and high levels of education. Other than that, improvements in labour quality and a rise in total factor productivity contributed to the overall productivity growth as well (Ministry of Trade and Industry Singapore, 2020).



**Figure 3: The ranking country with the highest labour productivity worldwide.**

Source: International Labour Organization (2022)



### Conclusion & recommendations

In conclusion, productivity has now very important in a competitive market. Productivity is seen as a crucial element for an organization's success because it drives improvements in worker performance. Therefore, improvement of productivity becomes an important objective of any organization to achieve price competitiveness. The most significant thing for an organization is the performance of employees, and productivity will automatically rise when employees are satisfied. Prior research has been done to identify ways to increase labour productivity. According to the findings of this study, various effective ways to improve productivity in the workplace have been identified. Besides, this research also determines the importance to have effective ways to gain better productivity. Thus, the organization may eliminate unnecessary tasks to increase output.

As for recommendations for the organization to improve their productivity, first and most important, the organization should take feedback from all employees, either conducting a meeting or giving feedback form to their email. It is very important to take feedback since this has a great impact on the productivity of employees. It is necessary to create an environment that is friendly to them for employees to communicate their perceptions of the workplace. This is because employees are the individual that spent a lot of time in the workplace and production process. For example, there was a distraction in the workplace such as background noise which affect the employees' could not focus on the tasks and affected productivity. Through this feedback, the organization may have a better understanding of the factor and can solve the problem in a short time. Apart from that, good communication between employee and employer also encourages new ideas, allows brainstorming, and gather new solutions where the organization needs them. In short, good communication has an unending advantage that drives employee engagement to its core and enhances the overall improvement of the organization. Last but not least, the organization may promote some additional benefits for the employees when the company hit the annual productivity target such as giving a bonus, additional five days of annual leave, or making a company trip. By using this way, the employee will be more focused on their daily tasks and attempt to achieve the targeted productivity.

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