Ideas for research topics

Reward and Performance

It doesn’t matter what you do in an organisation – salary, money, pay, motivation and performance will touch you in one way or another. Most of what we know is hearsay. This is an opportunity to do some of your own empirical research. **These are just some ideas; please feel free to amend as you wish. Or it might trigger an idea of your own.**

The research focus of this programme is to generate a better understanding of successful reward and performance management practices and strategies and to identify opportunities for enhancements. A clearer understanding of the critical success factors and drivers of attraction, motivation and retention of employees is required. The following topics are not exhaustive and should trigger further thoughts in terms of research questions.

**Research Themes**

**Theme 1: Strategic remuneration**

Getting this right is one of the things that set high performance organisations well ahead of the rest. A good insight is required as to what to do differently and be effective. Related research topics are:

1. A demographic analysis of reward preferences. Replicating research by previous authors
2. Influences on reward mix determination – replicating research by Jonathan Chapman and Clare Kelliher
3. The reward challenges facing SA businesses
4. A SA perspective for attracting and retaining top talent (could also focus on top Black Talent)
5. The future of reward as a strategic competitive advantage for SA organisations
6. How does SA remain competitive in the global market: A reward perspective?
7. Measuring return on investment - A reward perspective
8. Exploring the link between employer branding / EVP and reward practices
9. Rewarding innovation
10. To develop or understand what factors play a role in the pay ratio (Gini coefficient) from country to country
11. What Remuneration practices does Africa have that could be “exported” as best practice to the developing world?
12. What are the differences between developing / emerging market remuneration practices and the developed world?
13. A study of government versus private sector remuneration. Are there any differences in approach, structure, quantum, perceptions

**Theme 2: Variable pay and other incentives**

This is the number 1 global remuneration trend. Getting it right is critical for morale, business, legal, relationship and motivation reasons. Related research topics are:

1. How to bridge the dichotomy in short-term incentive design between targets based on line of sight considerations and governance considerations from a shareholder perspective
2. Designing performance hurdles for long-term incentive schemes that drive appropriate behaviour
3. Incentives and the labour force – what really works in SA – do they really feel that they are part of the team?
4. A SA perspective on long-term incentives: Does it drive appropriate behaviour?
5. Flexible reward practices – in or out? Flexible employment practices
6. Do incentive schemes work?
7. Identify factors that have contributed to the change in reward mix over the past 10 years – a SA perspective
8. Agency theory and incentive compensation
9. CEO Remuneration and share options in IPO firms
**Theme 3: Remuneration and performance**

Linking Reward to performance requires a good line of sight, robust measures and sufficient reward to motivate. Few organisations concede to doing this well or getting it right, yet it is one of the most powerful levers for driving business strategy.

Related research topics are:

1. Establish a correlation between organisation performance (e.g. profit) and CEO short-term incentives
2. The relationship between a CEO’s impact on the organisation and their reward. (Background: Do CEO’s still have a direct impact, given they are so removed from operations, and hamstrung by governance issues? - Try and prove what the CEO’s impact is – given corporate governance constraints. Board influence, Chairman’s role etc – on the core business. Does the CEO really make such a difference or is success really a factor of good market conditions, exchange rates, etc. outside the CEO’s control)
3. The relationship between CEO pay and sales turnover, or any other prominent metric (e.g. try and establish a model that says a CEO gets paid X% of turnover with a factor for Group / Subsidiary)
4. Exploring the influence of organisational culture on reward practices
5. How to avoid compensating the CEO for luck: the case of macroeconomic fluctuations
6. Executive compensation and pay for performance in SA

**Theme 4: Reward and motivation and performance**

Some say – “when people enjoy what they do, don’t ruin it by rewarding it”.

1. If you pay people more, will they work harder?
2. If you pay people more, will they be more motivated?
3. If you pay people more, will it increase employee morale and decrease labour turnover?
4. Is there a link between motivated employees and employee performance?
5. Are engaged employees more likely to stay in an organisation?

**Theme 5: Remuneration and base pay management**

The salary bill can make up 50% of expenses for most large organisations. It is critical to get the best return on every remuneration rand spent.

Related research topics are:

1. Remuneration for Productivity Enhancement
2. Is there an alternative to Job evaluation?
3. To research the correlation between the main job evaluation systems used in South Africa
4. What are the requirements for a Gender and Race free job evaluation system?
5. Equal pay for work of equal value – what are the world trends?
6. What is “fair pay”? What methodology can we use to determine pay levels fairly?
7. Why did companies move to the concept of Total Package? Are companies still moving across to Total Package?
8. President’s compensation in SA
9. Top executive pay in China/SA
Theme 6: Governance

Research suggests that good governance attracts as much as a 30% premium. Remuneration committees have been set up to oversee remuneration strategies, policies and practices and competent committee members are highly sought after. Shareholders and analysts scrutinise annual remuneration reports to find reasons to criticise reward practices. Related research topics are:

1. The status of remuneration committees in South Africa
2. Research the link between disclosure of Executive pay and the increase in pay as an unintended consequence, i.e. the influence of increasing disclosure on reward practices
3. The relationship between Corporate governance and variable remuneration scheme outcomes
4. Are South African Executives overpaid?
5. What influence does the apartheid wage gap have on reward practices in SA?
6. Salary surveys – a self-fulfilling prophecy?
7. How should we manage the wage gap? Are we on the right track?
8. How should Non-Executive pay be set?
9. Executive pay and corporate governance—what has been achieved?
10. Regulating executive remuneration after the global financial crisis: common law perspectives
11. Institutional investor preferences and executive compensation

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