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Human Resource Management Strategies to Improve Freelancer Performance In Online Media Companies

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Abstrack: The growth of the GIG economy has changed the employment landscape globally, including in Indonesia. PT Ayo Media Network is one of the online media companies that relies on freelancers such as reporters, editors, and content writers. However, the performance of freelancers in this company is considered low and inconsistent. This study aims to analyze the main causes of the low performance of freelancers and devise effective human resource management (HRM) strategies to improve their performance. Using a qualitative approach, data was collected through in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with freelancers and company management. The results showed that low financial motivation and perception of unclear roles were the main causes of freelancers' performance decline. Meanwhile, ability and situational factors also influence indirectly. This study recommends HRM strategies based on the MARS model (Motivation, Ability, Role Perception, Situational Factor) to improve freelancers' performance through improving the incentive system, training journalistic skills, clear work communication, and strengthening quality content on media platforms.

Keywords: *GIG Economy, Freelancers, Work Performance, Online Media*

INTRODUCTION

The GIG Economy has been going on for decades and became popular in Indonesia with the arrival of multi-service technology platforms such as Gojek in 2015. Number of GIG Economy actors who are referred to as GIG workers are also increasing.

Referring to Data of BPS (Badan Pusat Statistik), the number of freelancers in Indonesia reached 46.47 million people or had a proportion of 32% of the total workforce of 146.62 million in February 2023. Based on data from BPS 2023, which can be accessed through bps.go.id, the average income of freelancers in Indonesia is Rp1,494,200 for the service sector.

Although these figures do not fully reflect freelancers' overall performance, the low income may indicate the difficulties they face in achieving the expected work performance. Another problem faced by freelancers in Indonesia is their job targets are too high. This is related to the job setting made by the company.

Behl at all (2021) say that GIG workers face major challenges that affect their welfare and productivity. There are at least six main barriers faced, namely inadequate payment systems, strict incentive requirements in work arrangements, high levels of competition, operational costs such as the internet, long working hours, and lack of social protection.

One of the most in-demand freelancers currently appears in the mass media industry. Many online mass media companies open freelance job vacancies for freelance reporter, content writer and freelance editor.

They work based on tasks given by the Chief Editor or Content Manager at an Online Mass Media. They are also bound by the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) from the company. However, the growth of the freelance workforce in Indonesia is not in line with their work performance. Many freelancers in Indonesia report a decline in work performance due to lower income and reduced incentives.

This research tries to solve the problem of low work performance of GIG Workers or freelancers by using the Human Resource Management (HRM) approach. The study will focus for analysing the work performance of freelancers in the online media industry, especially at PT Ayo Media Network as the object of research.

PT Ayo Media Network is an integrated digital marketing platform. One of the company's core businesses is mass media. Since establish in 2016, PT Ayo Media Network has developed 23 local news portals. Currently, the company employs more than 250 workers, include of staff and freelancers. PT Ayo Media Network also provide Media Social Consultant Service and Campaign Advertising Service such as Billboards.

Since 2019, PT Ayo Media Network has started to rely on programmatic (online advertising) as the main revenue. This advertising system makes pageviews of each article as the basis of income, one view will be multiplied by the rupiah value set by advertisers such as Google AdSense, Ads Native, etc. News writing guidelines have shifted from focusing on quality journalistic news to SEO (Search Engine Optimization) based articles.

The company's revenue from Programmatic grow continuously over time, with the highest value reaching Rp1.2 billion per month. Although PT Ayo Media Network already had freelance reporters (contributors), in 2021 PT Ayo Media Network decided to recruit Content Writers as additional writers to increase the number of articles published on news portal. Ultimately this strategy aims to increase pageviews and company revenue.

However, from 2021 to 2023 there were several events that had impact on the decrease in pageviews of the news portal, such as errors in the Content Management System (CMS) engine and changes in the Google algorithm. This also had an impact on the decline in programmatic performance which caused the company's revenue decline drastically, to only tens of millions per month.

The condition certainly caused a shock to the company, so the company had to layoff around 70 employees in the end of 2023, dominated by editors. However, the needs for editor positions are quite high, in March 2024 PT Ayo Media Network decided to recruit Freelance Editors to get cheap labour.

Since 2021 until 2025 PT Ayo Media Network has had approximately 77 Freelancers. There are three types of freelancers at PT Ayo Media Network: freelance editors, contributors (freelance reporters) and content writers. However, their work performance is low and most of freelancers is unable to meet their job targets.

Based on data from Human Resource Management Division, this is performance of freelancers at PT Ayo Media Network during December 2024:

Table 1. Performance of Freelancer at PT Ayo Media Network

Type of worker	Number of workers	KPI	Incentive	Percentage of freelance worker who do not reached the KPI
Freelance Reporter	6	Write 5 news per day + M	Rp25.000 - Rp35.000 per news	66% (4 person don't reached KPI)
Freelance Editor	11	Uploading 40 news per day	Rp4.500 per article upload	55% (6 people don't reached KPI)
Content Writer	60	Write 10 articles per day	Based on pageviews (fluctuating and no transparency)	78% (47 people don't reached KPI)

So, based on the freelancer's problem in PT Ayo Media Network, Research Question that will be answered are:

1. What are the causes of the low performance of Freelancers at PT Ayo Media Network?
2. How is the HRM strategy to improve the performance of Freelancers at PT Ayo Media Network?

METHOD

Based on Creswell and Poth's explanation in Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design Choosing Among Five Approaches (2018), appropriate data collection methods for case study research are in-depth interviews and observations. During interviews, it is important to apply triangulation concept, which is the collection of data from various sources to increase the validity and reliability of the research results.

So, in this research, the author uses two types of data collection, which are in-depth Interview and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) as a part of observation activity. These data collection methods are used to collect the primary data from freelancers, HR General Manager of PT Ayo Media Network and another similar company to compare the HRM strategies. Interviews and FGD have the purpose of finding out information about causes of low performance freelances and how the HRM strategy must be built to improve performance of freelancers.

Table 2. Informants Data

Informant Number (IN)	Gender	Age (years)	Job Position	Data Collection	Duration (Minutes)	Time
1	Male	22	Freelance Reporter in Bandung for Ayobandung.com	Interview	32.06	13 Mar 2025
2	Male	41	Freelance Reporter in Magelang for Ayosemarang.com	FGD	113.37	14 Mar 2025
3	Male	27	Freelance Editor of Ayoindonesia.com	FGD	113.37	14 Mar 2025
4	Male	28	Freelance Editor of Ayoindonesia.com	FGD	113.37	14 Mar 2025
5	Male	28	Content Writer of Ayobandung.com	FGD	114.35	18 Mar 2025
6	Female	33	Content Writer of Ayobandung.com	FGD	114.35	18 Mar 2025
7	Female	30	Content Writer of Ayoindonesia.com	FGD	114.35	18 Mar 2025
8	Female	45	Human Resource General Manager of PT Ayo Media Network	Interview	10.09	17 Mar 2025

Informant Number (IN)	Gender	Age (years)	Job Position	Data Collection	Duration (Minutes)	Time
9	Male	34	Operational Manager of Poskota (PT Media Antar Kota Jaya)	Interview	23.14	2 Apr 2025
10	Male	39	Pimred Detik Jabar (PT Trans Digital Media)	Interview	49.05	20 Mar 2025

The qualitative data obtained through the In-depth Interview were analyzed using content analysis. Referring to Hsieh and Shannon (2005) statement, content analysis is an effective method for identifying patterns, themes, and insights from qualitative data. The analysis process of the method includes the following steps; 1) Transcription of Interview; 2) Coding; 3) Theme Development; 3) Interpretation and Synthesis

After conducting Content Analysis, researchers then conducted further analysis to determine the best recommendations for improving freelancer work performance, Comparative Analysis. This analysis was conducted by comparing the results of in-depth interviews with external (Detik Jabar & Pos Kota) and internal (PT Ayo Media Network) parties. The purpose of this analysis is to compare two or more objects, phenomena, or concepts to identify similarities and differences and gain deeper insight into the objects being compared. This activity helps researchers make better decisions by providing a stronger basis of information.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

As explained in the previous chapter, data analysis begins with verbatim transcription of interview results, followed by coding, theme development, interpretation and synthesis.

Initial Coding

In the constructivist Grounded Theory approach developed by Charmaz (2014), the initial coding process is the first step in qualitative data analysis. Initial coding is the process of breaking down data into small parts and labeling (coding) each part based on what the informant says. The goal is to capture actions, processes, and meanings from the informant's perspective, not based on the researcher's assumptions. As an overview, here is an example of the initial coding process on some informant statements:

Table 3. Example of Initial Coding

Quotes	Sources	Initial Coding
What I like here is the flexibility. In addition, there is also the proximity factor with a supportive work environment.	IN 2	Work flexibility is the main reason workers choose to be freelancers
Incentives are important, Mbak. It's like if the incentive is big, it will increase other motivations very easily.	IN 7	Increased incentives can improve work performance
Maybe the target can be lowered, but maybe it's the same as what you said earlier.	IN 4	The work targets of freelancers are too high, making it difficult for them to achieve their KPIs.
Here (Detik Jabar), we pursue quality. So there is no work target at all. But there are always trainings to improve contributors' skills.	IN 10	Work targets must be eliminated if Company want to focus on the quality of freelancers' productivity.
Contributors and content creators (Content writers) are given two kinds of incentives, there are fixed incentives, but there are also those based on the number of news for contributors and based on pageviews for content creators. And this is enough to motivate them to achieve their daily targets.	IN 9	A combination of incentives can support and maintain the stability of freelancers' work performance

Table 3 shows some examples of initial coding done by the researcher. From the table, it can be seen that each informant's statement was labeled with a code to capture the explicit meaning conveyed by the informants without making assumptions or other conclusions. Each segment of the informants' statements was coded in as much detail as possible to reflect the respondents' perspectives as accurately as possible.

Focus Coding

After conducting the initial coding process, the researcher then grouped the codes into the most significant codes that often appeared in the statements of all informants. This process is called focus coding. The function of focus coding is to refine and organize these codes to identify patterns, categories, and relationships that recur in the data.

In simple terms, focus coding can be understood as a process of synthesizing the results of initial coding to find stronger conceptual categories. This becomes an important bridge to the thematic analysis or theory development stage in qualitative research. The following are the results of focus coding made by researchers:

Table 4. Focus Coding Result

Focus Code	Related Initial Code
Incentive influence motivation and work performances	Increased incentives can improve work performance
	A combination of incentives can support and maintain the stability of freelancers' work performance
	Decreased incentives can reduce freelancer work motivation
	High incentives can guarantee the quality of freelancers performance
Allowance increase work performance	Health or safety benefits can make freelancers feel safe and improve their work performance.
Skill of freelancers influence their work quality and revenue of company	Skills of freelancers determine the quality of their work
	Training for skill enhancement can improve freelancers' work quality
	Increased freelancer skills have an indirect impact on company revenue through increased website pageviews.
Skill enrichment strengthen the quality and creativity of work	Mastering digital skills can improve freelancers' work creativity
	Mastering journalistic skills is key to the quality of media company products
Clear task delivery make sure to achieve work target	Work flexibility is the main reason workers choose to be freelancers
	Lack of clarity in task delivery can reduce freelancers work motivation and impact on low performance
The right job setting improve the quality of work	Setting work targets that are too high results in low freelancer work performance
	No work targets can guarantee the quality of freelancers' work
Facilities support the work performance	Providing supporting facilities can improve the work performance of freelancers
Work environment support work performance	Working remotely can provide flexibility and comfort for freelancers
	Networking, big company name, and stable pageviews can influence freelancers' work performances

Office stability can provide psychological security for freelancers

Theme Development

Theme Development is the final result of the data analysis process. At this stage, focus coding is synthesized into larger themes to capture patterns from the data. Based on the results of the previous focus coding, there are eight focus codes that have been abstracted from various initial coding that emerged from the results of FGDs and indepth interviews. After the researchers conducted further analysis, the eight focus codes were narrowed down into four theme developments in accordance with the following MARS Model perspective:

Table 5. Theme Development

Theme	Description	Key Insight
Financial motivation improve work performance	Financial factors in the form of incentives and allowances can increase the motivation of freelancers who ultimately improve their work performance.	Incentives are important, Mbak. It's like if the incentive is big, it will increase other motivations very easily. (IN 7)
Ability improvement improve company revenue	Increased ability can strengthen product quality and improve freelancer work performance. This ultimately has an impact on increasing company revenue.	Training to improve work quality is necessary. Because if the quality of news is good, usually pageviews also increase, and the company's revenue is boosted. (IN 10)
Clear and proper Role Perception support freelancers to achieve their work target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear task delivery can eliminate miscommunication in task execution, so this can support freelancers' ability to achieve work targets. In addition, proper job settings for freelancers also provide more flexibility so that freelancers can explore themselves at work and achieve the targets set. 	<p>Sometimes when the Editor-in-Chief gives directions, it's not clear, so I'm also confused. Honestly, things like that make me less motivated to work. (IN 1)</p> <p>Maybe the current work target can be reduced (IN 4)</p>
Situational Factors improve work performance of freelancers	Situational factors such as facilities and work environment (Website Pageviews) are able to support freelancers' comfort and sense of security while working, so that this can encourage improved work performance.	If there are supporting facilities, it would be even better. But actually it's enough with the company's stable condition, good website pageviews that also make me feel comfortable (IN 5)

So, the causes of the low performance freelancers at PT Ayo Media Network are two type factors. First, the causes that have direct effect to freelancers, include of Financial Motivation and Role Perception. Second, the causes that have indirectly effect to freelancers, include of Ability and Situational Factors:

1. Financial Motivation

Freelancers, especially content writers and freelance editors, consider financial motivation at PT Ayo Media Network to be currently low. This signal can be picked up from several informant statements such as "Incentives are important, Mbak. It's like if the

incentive is big, it will increase other motivations very easily," from IN and "If possible, the proportion of profit sharing should be 60:40. So 60 percent for us (Content Writer) and 40 percent for the company," dari IN 6. On the other hand, while the variable incentive scheme is considered fair, freelancers also hope for a mixed incentive scheme consisting of fixed incentives and variable incentives.

Meanwhile, freelance reporters do not complain about the current variable incentive scheme. According to them, an incentive of Rp25,000- Rp50,000 per story is still considered fair and the income they receive is still enough to fulfill their daily needs.

2. Ability

Although PT Ayo Media Network has provided skill enrichment for freelancers on a regular basis, these activities are only limited to SEO and writing training. Meanwhile, journalistic and digital skills training has not been neglected. This is in accordance with the statement of IN 6 who said, "The writing and SEO training provided through Promedia is quite supportive," and the statement of IN 1 who said, "For the improvement of journalistic skills, I learn directly from seniors in the office and in the field. There is no training from the office."

This condition makes the ability of freelancers at PT Ayo Media Network limited to short-term technical matters, such as mastering SEO. Whereas mass media platforms must rely on news quality if they want to have a long-term competitive advantage. This is in accordance with IN 10's previous statement about the importance of enriching freelancers' skills on the quality of the news produced.

3. Role Perception

Role perception at PT Ayo Media Network seems to be one of the main problems complained about by freelancers, especially by freelance reporters and editors. This Role perception problem comes from the unclear task delivery carried out by the user (Top Management), as explained in Focus Coding. This problem is very urgent to be resolved immediately, because it has been going on for too long and repeatedly. If this task delivery problem is left unchecked, the decline in motivation and performance of freelancers will continue to occur.

The task delivery problem is related to the leadership and communication skills of the user that must be improved. If users are able to do task delivery well, freelancers will no longer experience confusion at work, so they will be able to achieve the work targets and assignments that have been set.

On the other hand, although freelancers at PT Ayo Media Network consider their work targets as something normal, the researcher captured a signal that they hoped the targets would be lowered. Especially the freelance editors, they hope that the news upload target can be reduced. "Especially if the demands are to write good articles, it's a long process. So yes, the work target must be reduced," said IN 3.

4. Situational Factors

Based on the existing focus coding, there are no significant problems related to situational factors within PT Ayo Media Network. Because the company is considered to have a fairly stable internal situation. However, external factors such as Google's algorithm affect the company's website pageviews. The instability of website pageviews apparently affects the work motivation of freelancers. Therefore, another solution must be found for the external factor problem.

As an effort to solve the four problems above, researchers conducted a comparison related to Freelancers management policies in three mass media companies, namely PT Ayo Media Network, Detik Jabar (detik.com) and Pos Kota.

Comparative Analysis with external parties

This comparative analysis is done as a benchmarking to find what kind of GIG workers management model can be used to fix the performance problems of freelancers at PT Ayo Media Network. By benchmarking, researchers can find which systems are suitable for implementation at PT Ayo Media Network and have proven successful in other media.

Table 6. Comparative Analysis

Element	PT Ayo Media Network	Detik.com Jabar	Pos Kota
Business Models	Programmatic and direct selling	Direct selling, Programmatic and Event Organizer	Programmatic and Newsletter
Focus Productivity	Pageviews	Quality of Journalistic content	Pageviews and local content quality of DKI Jakarta
Incentives	Based on pageviews and number of articles	Based on number and quality of article	Based on pageviews and number of article
	Incentives based on pageviews and article productivity (Variable)	Based on productivity and quality article	Combination between fix (FI) and variable incentives (VI)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freelance Editor (FE) : Rp4.500/ Article Freelance Reporter (FR) : Rp25.000- Rp50.000/Article Content Wrtter (CW) : Pageviews 	Rp50.000 – Rp95.000 per article	FI : Rp1-2 million VI : based on pageviews and number of article
Allowances	None	Work safety allowance	BPJS Kesehatan
Skill Enrichment Training	Focus on writing SEO and digital skill from mitra (Promedia)	Jurnalistic skill and digital skill from internal and external company	Writing and jurnalistic skill by internal company
Job Setting and Work Target	Flexible but binding	Flexible	Flexible
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FE : 45 articles per day FR : 7 articles per day CC : 10 articles per day 	None (focus on news quality)	No for freelance reporter and 10 for content creator
Facilities	None	None	None
Work Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible schedule Remote Strong SEO but Unstable Pageviews Medium Local Branding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible schedule Remote Strong SEO and Stable Pageviews Big Company Name and national branding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible schedule Remote Strong SEO but Unstable Pageviews Strong local (DKI Jakarta) newspaper branding

Based on the results of the comparative analysis above, it can be seen that the most fundamental and striking difference lies in the incentive system (Financial Motivation) and job setting (Role Perception). From the three mass media companies, Detik Jabar is the company that provides the highest incentive, which is Rp50,000 to Rp95,000 per news content. IN 10 explained that the large incentive amount given by Detik Jabar is a strategy for freelancers to focus on news quality, not news quantity. This is also related to the job setting of freelancers at Detik Jabar. Where they are not given any work targets. They are given the freedom to explore news production activities to produce quality news. On the other hand, large incentives motivate freelancers to produce more news. According to IN 10, Detik Jabar has never set a daily news quantity target. However, they require criteria attached to the writing results, one of which must be a long news story and consist of several sources.

Meanwhile, Pos Kota applies a mixed incentive scheme, between fixed incentives and variable incentives. As explained in Focus Coding, IN 9 said that the incentive mix was implemented to maintain the loyalty and motivation of freelancers. IN 9 claims this policy is successful, as evidenced by the low turnover of content writers and freelance reporters. Even so, the job setting for the two freelancers is different. Content Writer is still burdened with a work target of 10 articles per day. Meanwhile, freelance reporters are not burdened with the number of news every day. IN 9 said that the demands of writing news at Pos Kota lie in local and hyperlocal issues that are humanist in nature. Therefore, the demand to make longer feature writing is emphasized, rather than writing articles with an SEO approach. Moreover, most freelance reporters' writing is produced for newspaper needs.

Apart from these two things, the next striking difference lies in the policy for skill enrichment training. Detik Jabar and Pos Kota emphasize improving journalistic skills. This is a consequence of the work targets of both mass media that emphasize news quality. Although both companies also produce SEO-based news content, Detik Jabar and Pos Kota try to maintain the quality of their respective news as the hallmark of mass media. This is not done by PT Ayo Bandung Media Network. As explained in before, PT Ayo Media Network began to change its business model by focusing on Programmatic revenue based on pageviews. This made changes in the news production process, from previously based on in-depth coverage and local writings to SEO-based articles. In the first three years, the programmatic system was indeed able to generate huge revenue for the company. But in the fourth year or in 2023, the system actually looks fragile. This can be seen from the decline in revenue due to declining pageviews. The decline in pageviews itself occurred due to changes in Google's algorithm which continued to be updated rapidly.

From this case, it can be seen that the programmatic business model only provides short-term benefits, while the adverse impact on news quality and website brand is significant in the long run. After significantly implementing programmatic, PT Ayo Media Network's website, such as Ayobandung.com, experienced a decrease in trust from readers. News that is repetitive and considered unimportant is often considered as junk news which ultimately makes readers disappointed. This is evidenced by the number of reader complaints submitted to Social Media and Email editorial. Many readers complain about unreliable news content, click bait and intrusive website ads. Therefore, implementing this business model is not recommended for companies that want to create long-term business sustainability.

Business Solution

Based on the problems that have been formulated and the results of the previous comparison analysis, the researcher concludes the improvement solution in the MARS Model format as follows:

Table 7. MARS Table Solution

MARS Element	Existing Condition	Propose Solution on Program
Motivation	Low incentives and no benefits with a variable incentive system based on Pageviews and number of news. This condition makes Freelancer's work motivation low so that they work not professionally and do not achieve the specified KPI targets. Especially for Content Creators, their work performance will greatly decrease if the website Pageviews are low.	Create a mixed incentive scheme between fixed and variable incentives. Fixed incentives are intended to provide income certainty for freelancers so that their work motivation remains stable. Determination of the amount of fixed and variable incentives is adjusted to the company's ability.
Ability	Ability enrichment only focuses on writing skills and SEO. But it does not pay attention to understanding basic journalistic skills and digital skills that	Started to switch to enriching abilities that focus on improving news quality such as providing OSINT training, photography, data journalism and investigations.

	function to add to the quality of news such as photography and OSINT (Open Source Intelligence). This condition makes the abilities possessed by PT Ayo Media Network Freelancers have no impact on improving the quality of news so that the news produced tends to be boring and gradually decreases the number of readers and has an impact on decreasing company revenue.	
Role Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tasks delivery by users (Chief Editor) are often not understood by Freelancers and sometimes change. In addition, users often equate the status of freelancers with organic employees, so they often give work outside the terms of the contract. This makes freelancers feel uncomfortable, so work motivation decreases and has an impact on performance.• Work targets or KPIs for freelance editors are considered too heavy: 40 news stories per day. This is because there are few news sources available to upload. This condition makes many Freelance Editors unable to meet the KPIs that have been determined by PT Ayo Media Network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide leadership training to Chief Editor to improve leadership skills and communication delivery skills.• Applying Management by Objective (MBO) through joint agreement between freelancers and users regarding work targets that must be achieved, so that work targets are not made unilaterally only by users.
Situational Factors	Unstable website pageviews make freelancers' work performance unstable too. If pageviews are good, freelancers' motivation and performance usually increase. If the pageviews are down, freelancers' motivation and work performance will also decrease.	Focus on producing quality news as has been done in 2016-2019. This is very necessary to change the branding of the news portal and maintain the stability of pageviews, because based on the latest Google algorithm and Google Core Update, quality news is preferred to be displayed on page one of Google, Google News, and Google Discover. This shows the need for changes in SEO techniques that must be adjusted to the latest digital demands.

Based on the MARS Model Solution Table analysis, there are five strategic programs that can be carried out by PT Ayo Media Network to improve freelancers' work performance. But of the five programs, there are three that have a direct effect on freelancers, including improving financial motivation by mixing incentives, Training for ability enrichment, and Implement MBO to make new Freelancers KPI. While the other two programs are not directly related to freelancers (indirect effect), there are Leadership Training for top-middle management and refocusing high news quality production. So, this is the framework of MARS Model Solution to improve freelancers performance in PT Ayo Media Network:

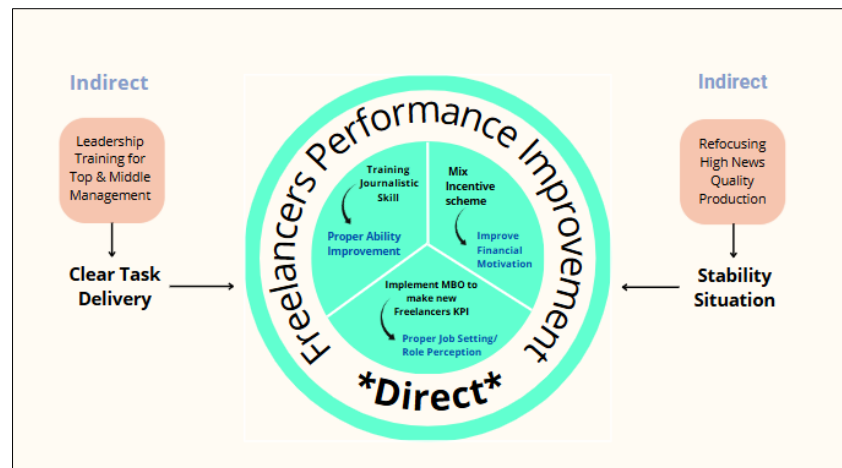


Figure 1. MARS Solution Framework

In order to get a clearer picture, the researcher developed the following four strategic steps that the company can implement in the short and medium term:

1. Mix Incentive Scheme

Based on the researcher's observation, the most suitable incentive scheme applied to maintain the loyalty and work performance of freelance content writers and editors. Meanwhile, freelance reporters can still apply variable incentives, because they still consider the amount of incentives in the scheme to be reasonable. On the other hand, PT Ayo Media Network has not been able to increase the variable incentives to the level of the incentives applied at Detik Jabar. This is due to the company's limited financial capacity.

Changes to the incentive scheme for freelance content writers and editors can be realized in the short term, with the earliest estimated time for incentive calculation being the next month. This policy only needs to be approved by the President Director and forwarded to the finance department, then socialized to freelance editors and content writers.

2. Focus on Journalistic Skill Training

The Editorial Division of PT Ayo Media Network must organize journalistic skills training for all division members, including organic employees and freelancers. This training can be conducted every two weeks to upgrade the knowledge and basic journalistic skills of each division member. The main goal of this training is to improve the quality of articles and news, so that the content published on the website is able to have high engagement. With increased engagement, news will be shared by many readers, and ultimately be able to increase article pageviews.

3. Leadership Training for Top and Middle Management

The provision of Leadership Training is intended to eliminate the problem of unclear task delivery that is often done by users to freelancers. By eliminating this problem, the effectiveness of assignments given by users can increase, so that freelancers are not confused in carrying out their duties and their performance is expected to improve.

4. Implement Management by Objective (MBO) to arrange new freelancers KPI

Management by Objectives (MBO) is a management system that focuses on setting specific goals and objectives for employees and managers, which are then used as a basis for evaluating their performance. The application of MBO in determining new KPIs for Freelance can be started by involving freelancers in determining KPIs. When setting new KPIs, the HR Division must hold users and freelancers to discuss and mutually agree on the work targets they agree on. The KPIs that must be changed in this case are related to upload quotas for freelance editors and article creation quotas for content writers.

5. Focus to Produce High Quality News

To refocus on producing high-quality journalistic works, the Editorial Division can take several strategic steps, there are holding editorial meetings intensively once a week, redesigning criterion of article that are eligible to be published on the website, and evaluation meeting monthly.

1. Weekly Editorial Meeting to discuss journalistic content
2. Redesigning criterion of publishable article
3. Monthly Evaluation Meeting

On the other hand, there is one strategic program that actually impacts several other strategic programs. Refocusing product on high quality news will impact the determination of new KPIs for freelancers. With the change in SOP for publishable articles, the quality of news produced must also be high. Meanwhile, the time needed to produce high-quality news is also quite long, so there needs to be an adjustment of KPIs with predetermined criteria. The program to focus on high quality news also requires the company to provide strategic programs in the form of qualified journalistic basics training.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to find the cause of the decline in freelancer performance at PT Ayo Media Network (RQ 1) and provide solutions to solve the problem (RQ 2). Researchers have found answers to the two Research Questions as explained in Chapter V.

Research Questions 1: What are the causes of the low performance of Freelancers at PT Ayo Media Network?

Based on analysis result, the problem of declining performance of freelancers at PT Ayo Media Network is caused by two main factors, namely Financial Motivation and Role Perception. This two main factors have direct effect to freelancers.

After Financial Motivation, the next cause of decreased freelancer performance is Role Perception. There are two factors in this element. First, freelancers feel that the delivery tasks carried out by the user are unclear (Unclear Task Delivery). Second, they feel that they have a fairly high workload in terms of quantity, while on the other hand users also demand that the quality of their news article is also good (Improper Job Setting). This is burdensome for freelancers, resulting in less motivation and lower work performance.

In addition to the two main causal factors above, two other MARS elements also cause freelancers' work motivation to decline. However, these two MARS elements do not have a direct effect on freelancers, namely Ability and Situational Factors. In addition, ability and situational factors are also related to external situations outside the company.

Meanwhile, situational related to external factors is the stability of Pageviews. This is strongly influenced by Google's algorithm, so mass media must follow Google Core updates and Google Policy if they want to continue to be on the first page of the Google search engine and enter Google Discover. On the other hand, Google continues to update its algorithm towards more humanistic and quality content. Therefore, websites that rely on SEO-based articles only will not be enough to survive in today's digital mass media industry competition.

Research Question 2: How is the HRM strategy to improve the performance of Freelancers at PT Ayo Media Network?

Based on the causes of the decline in freelancer performance that have been mapped, the researcher recommends improvements to each element of the MARS model found in the company through five programs strategic. 1) Applied Mix Incentives to improve financial motivation; 2) Providing journalistic skills training to improve Ability that has impact to revenue of company 3) Provide leadership training for eliminate unclear task delivery; 4) Implement a Management by Objective (MBO) system in setting work targets for Freelancers

to create proper job setting; 5) Focus on producing high-quality journalistic content to stabilize situational factors.

Suggestion

As an answer to Research Question 2, the researcher recommends several improvements in the MARS Model approach that the company can do. But after analyzing more deeply using the comparison method, the author recommends a long-term solution for improving freelancer performance at PT Ayo Media Network.

The core of this long-term recommendation focuses on changing the business model from programmatic to a conventional mass media business model that relies on the quality of news on the website. Actually, the researcher does not recommend changing to something new, but rather suggests that company refocus on the old business model in high quality news production.

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