

## ROLE OF MOTIVATION IN DEVELOPING A PRO-INNOVATION ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

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**Purpose:** The aim of the research is to develop a set of good motivational practices for the development of an organization's pro-innovation culture.

**Design/methodology/approach:** A bibliometric analysis and an analysis of publications on such topics as motivation and related methods, techniques and tools, organizational culture, and innovation and pro-innovation culture were conducted. In order to understand the factors shaping innovation culture, it was necessary to interview executives – in particular, the leaders of innovation projects implemented in the Opolskie Voivodeship. The research made it possible to draw conclusions, to identify some good practices and, most importantly, it provided a rationale for conducting more extensive research in which motivation is one of the key factors in the development of an enterprise's innovation potential (along with the leadership function, cooperation with the environment of the enterprise, trust, etc.).

**Research limitations/implications:** The main limitations are the number of interviewed individuals and the focus on a single factor shaping a pro-innovation culture in an organization – motivation.

**Practical implications:** The research resulted in a set of guidelines for creating a pro-innovation culture in an organization. It can serve as a journal of good practices, especially for less experienced leaders.

**Originality/value:** The main contribution of the article is the opportunity to learn the opinion of managers/leaders on the effectiveness of using selected methods and tools to build a pro-innovation culture in an organization.

**Keywords:** innovations, motivation, pro-innovation culture, innovation-oriented culture.

**Category of the paper:** research paper.

## 1. Introduction

Motivation is a powerful factor that has a considerable impact on the functioning of companies. However, deciding which tools are effective and which methods to select is not an easy task. These decisions require experience, knowledge, and intuition. Numerous studies have been carried out to uncover the complexity of this phenomenon, particularly in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, tangible and intangible motivation, and, finally, the role of motivation in management functions. However, an analysis of related literature indicates that there is a need for further research in the field of motivation for the development of an organization's pro-innovation culture. This is a research gap.

If companies want to withstand intense competition, increasing consumer demands, and, finally, the changing environment, they must develop the creativity of their employees and invest in innovative activities.

This article is an attempt to systematize knowledge on pro-innovation culture and the tools of motivation that shape it. The research conducted is aimed at developing a set of good practices in the field of motivation for the development of an organization's pro-innovation culture. This research is a prelude to a more extensive study. In the subsequent stage, it will be supplemented by observations made in individual organizations. This will make it possible to examine other factors shaping the innovative potential of an enterprise, for example: the leadership function, cooperation with the enterprise environment, or trust.

The article is structured into five main sections: a bibliometric analysis, which assesses the current literature; a theoretical background, which provides the theoretical framework of the research; a description of the methodology, which details the research approach; the results – a presentation of the empirical findings; and conclusions summarizing the key outcomes and implications.

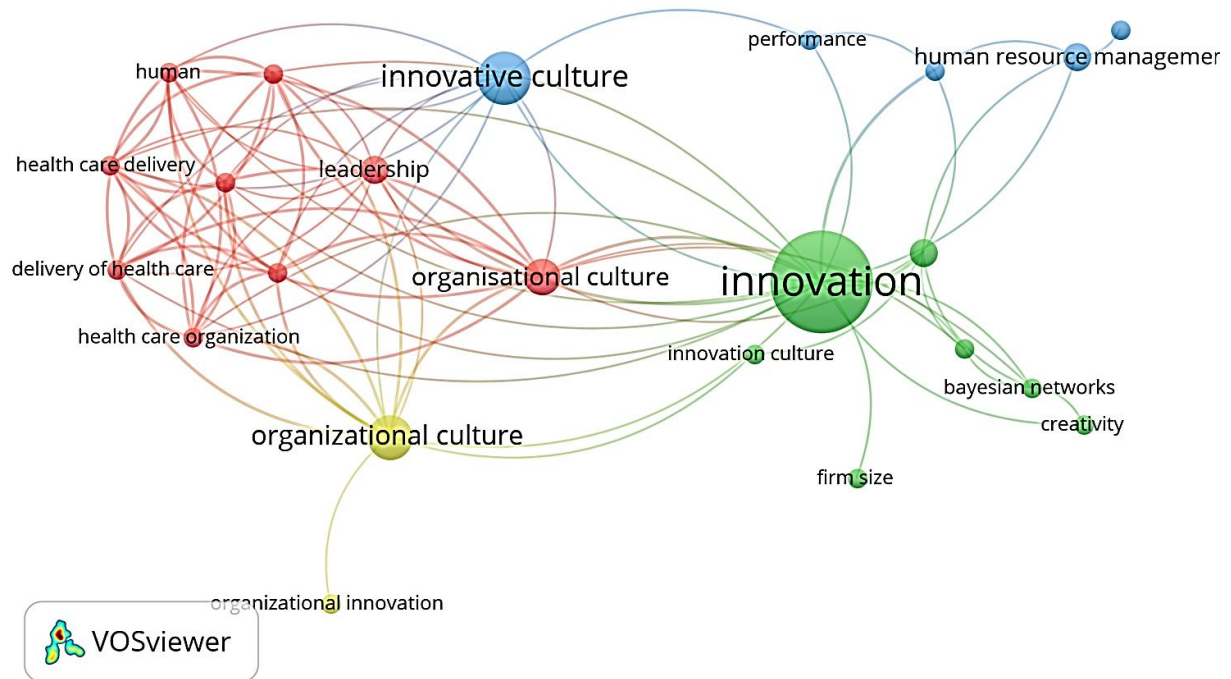
## 2. Bibliometric analysis

In the last quarter of 2023, an analysis of scientific publications was conducted using the Scopus database. Publications with the keyword “innovation culture” were searched. The results were limited to English-language articles in the field of “Business, Management and Accounting,” yielding 55 publications. After limiting the results to the most up-to-date research, i.e., from 2020 to 2023, a database of 35 publications was obtained.

The Scopus database was also queried with keywords such as “proinnovative culture,” “innovation-oriented culture,” and “innovative organization culture.” Ultimately, due to the number of publications searched, it was decided to download the database for “innovative culture.”

The database sourced from Scopus included keywords and abstracts of publications. The results are shown in Figure 1 and Table 1. Figure 2 illustrates the relationships between “innovative culture” and other keywords. Four main research areas (thematic clusters) were identified and color-coded in Figure 1: healthcare (red), human resource management (blue), innovation and creativity (green), and organizational culture (yellow).

Table 1 shows the keywords along with their total strength of association (an indicator of the strength of associations between keywords). The table also contains “occurrences”, which represents the number of times a specific keyword appears in the retrieved database. The main keywords are “Organizational culture” (total link strength: 25) and “Innovation” (total link strength: 24).



**Figure 1.** Results for innovative culture (VOSviewer).

**Table 1.**  
Results for innovative culture (VOSviewer)

Cluster	Keyword	Occ	Tot	Cluster	Keyword	Occ	Tot
<b>Healthcare</b>	Delivery of healthcare	2	21	<b>Innovation and creativity</b>	Bayesian networks	2	5
<b>Red cluster</b>	Healthcare delivery	2	21	<b>Green cluster</b>	Creativity	2	2
	Healthcare facility	2	21		Firm size	2	1
	Healthcare organization	2	21		Innovation	12	24

Cont. table 1.

	<b>Health facilities</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>21</b>		<b>Innovation culture</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
	Leadership	3	13		Innovative culture	3	8
					Transformational leadership	2	4
<b>Human resource management</b>	Developing countries	2	1	<b>Organizational culture</b>	Organizational culture	4	25
<b>Blue cluster</b>	Human resource management	3	4	<b>Yellow cluster</b>	Organizational innovation	2	1
	Industrial performance	2	5				
	Innovation culture	2	2				
	Performance	2	3				

Occ – Occurrences; Tot – Total link strength.

The authors examine enterprises belonging to different industries or focus on one, such as: healthcare organizations (Andersson, 2022), agribusiness (Kusnandar et al., 2023), banking (Govender, Maralack, 2022), the hotel industry (Sarhan et al., 2020), transportation (Sadiq et al., 2023), or the tourism industry (Hermawat et al., 2022). The publications also cover issues related to the public sector (Ashok, 2021; Dzvinchuk et al., 2021), or the SME sector (Hermawat et al., 2022; Kusnandar et al., 2023; Makanyeza et al., 2023; Ngo, 2022).

The analyzed socio-economic issues are related to: the digital transformation era (Troise et al., 2022), sustainability (Nabi et al., 2023; Sadiq et al., 2023), and the role of developing countries (Makanyeza et al., 2023; Ngo, 2022; Sadiq et al., 2023). Current trends such as ESG reporting are analyzed (Minsuck, Boyoung, 2022).

The authors focus on research problems in the following areas: knowledge-sharing (Ayestarán et al., 2022) and knowledge management (Arokiasamy et al., 2021). The problem of innovative culture is also analyzed from the perspective of HRM, for example: innovative culture of personnel management (Klipkova et al., 2022). Determinants of innovative culture are taken into account, such as: leadership (Hakiem et al., 2023; Nabi et al., 2023), interorganizational links (Wipulanusat et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2023), or trust (Krot, Lewicka, 2020).

Publications were then searched including the two keywords “innovation culture” and “motivation”. The results were limited to English-language articles in the field of “Business, Management and Accounting” from the period 2020 to 2023. In this manner, only two publications were acquired in the following areas: intrapreneurial leadership in education context (Hakim et al., 2023) and success factors in project (Santos-Vijande et al., 2021). It can be concluded that the number of publications retrieved as well as their content indicate the need for further research in the field of motivation for the development of an organization's pro-innovation culture – this is a research gap.

### 3. Theoretical background

The terms “proinnovative culture” (Lewicka, 2012), “innovation-oriented culture” (Bienkowska, 2013), “innovative organization culture” (Jin, Kim, 2022), and “culture of innovation” (Hermawat et al., 2022) refer to “the role of the organizational culture in the development of the ability of the organization to act innovatively” (Bienkowska, 2013). In view of the above, we understand pro-innovation culture as a system of values, norms, and practices that promote creativity, experimentation, and the implementation of new solutions in the organization. It is a set of beliefs and attitudes that make employees more willing to take risks and think outside the box.

To create an innovation-friendly environment, it is necessary, among other things, to (Jagoda-Sobalak, Lapuńska, 2018):

- foster a culture of learning and development – people who are open to new ideas are more likely to create innovations,
- give employees freedom and autonomy – people are more creative when they have freedom of action,
- build bonds and create an atmosphere of cooperation and exchange of information – innovations often arise from interactions between people representing different fields,
- create an incentive system focused on innovation, and
- give people resources and support.

Innovation is the key to success in today's world. Companies that are able to create innovations are more competitive and more likely to succeed. Innovations also matter to society because they can improve our lives in many areas, such as health, education, and the environment. Building creative teams is essential in developing a culture of innovation. A creative atmosphere is based on three pillars: personal creativity, team creativity, and organizational creativity. Each of the components should be developed through a creative management style and an incentive system that promotes creative attitudes (Czerwinska-Lubszczyk, Grebsli et al., 2022).

Innovations require not only creativity but also resolve. It is especially incumbent on leaders and managers to develop the creativity of employees. In the literature, we can find numerous tips for developing a creative work environment. Leaders should first and foremost foster the following attitudes (Chodkowski, 2019; Czerwińska-Lubszczyk, Grebsli et al., 2022; Prońko, Wojtasiak, 2016):

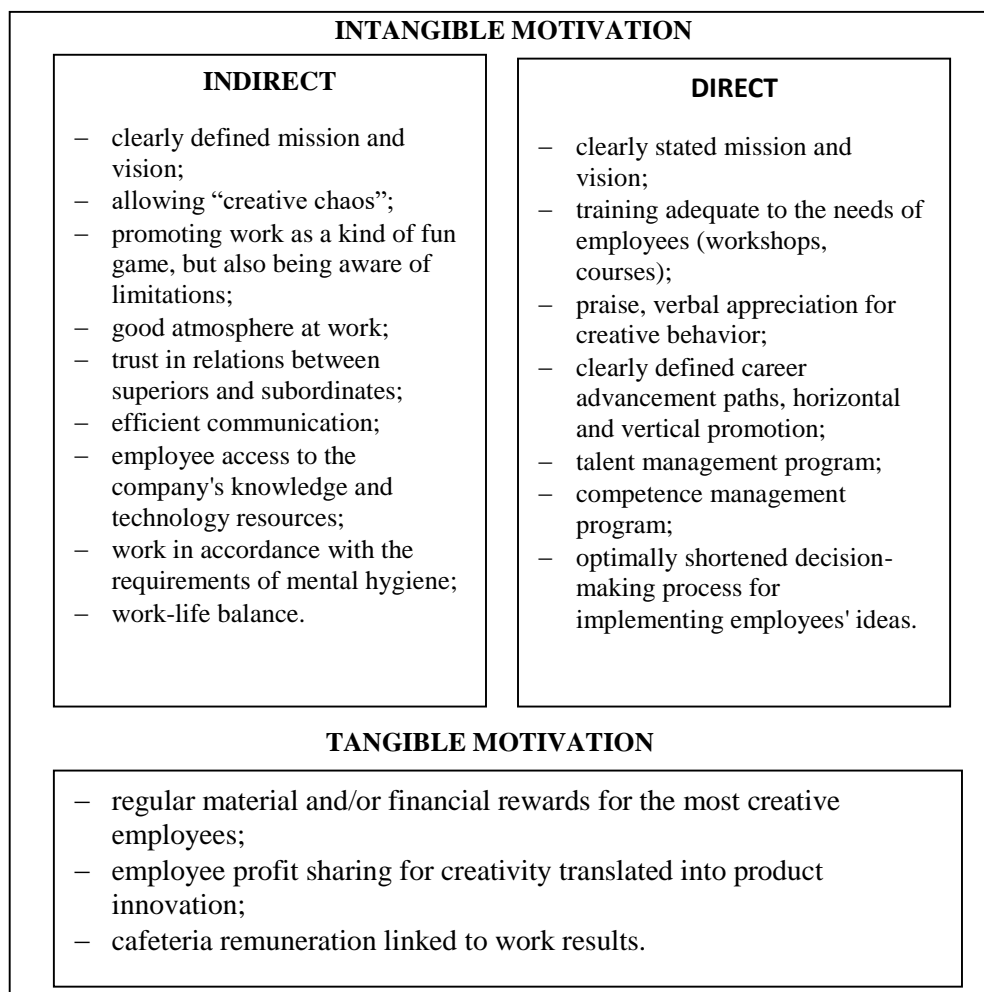
- an openness to new ideas, unconventional thinking, thinking outside the box,
- being curious, observing the environment, looking for new relationships and dependencies,
- a willingness to experiment, take risks, try new things,
- being patient, and not giving up.

Among the methods that promote the generation of innovative solutions are (Pęcek, 2018:

- brainstorming, a group technique in which participants exchange ideas in order to solve a specific problem,
- design thinking, a problem-solving approach that focuses on understanding users' needs and developing solutions that benefit them,
- lean startup, a method of developing products or services that relies on rapid iterations and testing ideas with customers, and
- group of invention methods, in which the choice of each method is matched to the stage of solving the problem.

Creating a pro-innovation culture and creative activities require strong motivation. The selection of methods and tools requires knowing: the team, the jointly developed rules and set goals (according to the SMART rule), and the availability of resources (Czerwińska-Lubszczyk, Grebsli et al., 2022; Prońko, Wojtasiak, 2016).

Motivation is the process that drives our actions (Moczyłowska, 2012). It is a complex phenomenon influenced by both internal and external factors (fig. 2).



**Figure 2.** Constituent parts of the system that motivate creative behaviors.

Source: Own elaboration based on Moczyłowska, 2012.

A different division of tools is related to the emotions that it evokes: positive and negative motivation. Negative motivation is more often used in practice. It is based on fear, and it is cheaper. To a certain extent, it devastates personality. In the long term it is ineffective, stifling the creativity so essential to the creation of innovative solutions (Wiśniewski, 2016; Żukowska, 2017).

In contrast, positive motivation leads to higher ambition. It is based on the assumption that people strive for success, social approval, and admiration, and that they want to gain this through action. It contributes to a creative atmosphere of work, support, cooperation, and communication (Wisniewski, 2016; Zhukowska, 2017).

Creating an incentive system requires a leader not only to know management theories but also to have experience and, above all else, to involve team members and know them.

It is worthwhile for a leader to be guided by the principles of motivation of McGinis (2005), which are still valid:

- Expect the best from the people you manage.
- Notice the needs of others.
- Set high standards of excellence.
- Create an environment where failure does not mean losing.
- If someone has the same goal as you, join them.
- Use role models and take pride in achievements.
- Show appreciation and praise achievements.
- Use a mix of positive and negative reinforcement.
- Make moderate use of the need for competition.
- Praise cooperation.
- Allow tensions to happen in the group.
- Try to keep your own motivation high.

Moreover, a leader should (Duda, 2021; Głowienka 2021):

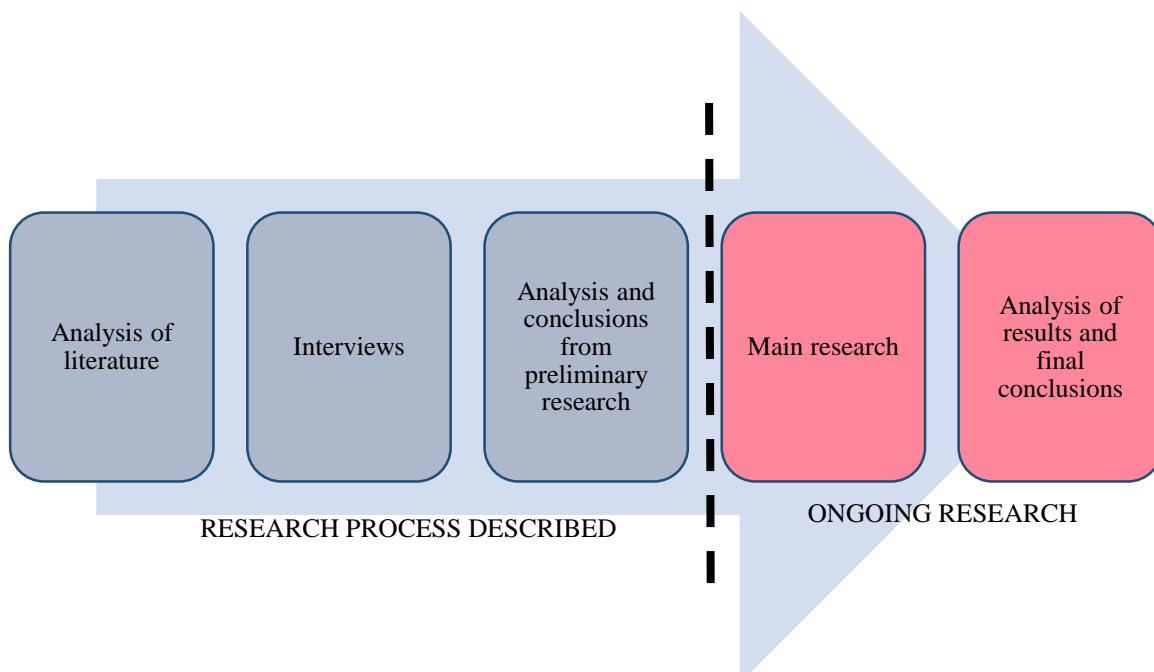
- Set realistic goals – Goals should be challenging but realistic. If goals are too difficult to achieve, they can discourage people and lower their motivation.
- Point to personal benefits – People are more motivated to do things that benefit them. Show how their actions will affect their personal development, career, or personal life.
- Assign tasks that give satisfaction – People are more motivated to perform tasks that they find interesting and rewarding.
- Reinforce a sense of being important – People feel more motivated when they feel appreciated and needed.
- Create a positive work environment where everyone feels respected and supported.
- Be a good listener, show interest in team members, in what they have to say.
- Be authentic and sincere, but also be positive and enthusiastic and inspire action.
- Be consistent – For motivation tools to be effective, they must be used regularly.

Equally important, the incentive system must be known and accepted by employees. Studies show [Pęcek, Walas-Trębacz, 2018] that not all team members understand and are familiar with the incentive system, which can definitely hinder its effectiveness. These systems are often too complex, formalized, and not aligned with the team's expectations.

So how does one create an effective system, and what tools and methods should be chosen? We attempted to answer these questions by conducting research.

#### 4. Research methodology

The primary goal of the research is to develop a set of good motivational practices for the development of an organization's pro-innovation culture. Specific goals included identifying the tools and methods of motivation used to build a company's pro-innovation culture. The research presented here is a selected part of a broader investigation into how innovative companies operate (fig. 3). In addition to motivation, this research will cover factors such as the role of leadership (Hakiem et al., 2023; Nabi et al., 2023), interorganizational linkages (Wipulanusat et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2023), and trust (Krot, Lewicka, 2020). It should be noted, however, that interesting conclusions and recommendations can already be drawn at this stage of the research, which will be presented in the article.



**Figure 3.** Research procedure.

The research covered a wide range of Polish and international literature. This was followed by interviews with innovation project leaders on the tools and methods of motivation used by them.



Interviews with individual project leaders lasted about 2 hours and were conducted in April 2023. A limited number of people took part in the interviews, with only 24 out of the 126 leaders invited agreeing to answer questions. Leaders participating in the study implemented projects funded under Priority Axis I, Innovative Economy, Measure: 1.1 R&D projects of enterprises (I Oś Priorytetowa Innowacje w Gospodarce, Działanie: 1.1 Innowacje w przedsiębiorstwach). To structure the interview process, main and supporting questions were prepared (Table 2).

**Table 2.**  
*Research tool*

Main questions	Supporting questions
Have employee preferences regarding the tools of motivation been explored?	List the main tools.
Was the incentive system agreed upon, accepted by the employees?	What kind of emotions did it evoke among employees?
What tools of tangible motivation are used during project implementation?	Which are the most effective or most desired by employees?
What tools of intangible motivation are used during project implementation?	Which are the most effective or most desired by employees?
Which forms of motivation – positive or negative – do you value most?	Why?
Which incentive tools or methods are most effective in creating a creative work environment?	List them, giving examples.
Are decisions made together with the team?	Give examples.
Do employees have the freedom to organize their work?	To what extent? Give examples.
What are your tips for creating a pro-innovation culture in an organization?	Give examples of their application.

Conclusions from the interviews can give a rationale for further research and are also a kind of collection of good practices.

## 5. Results

Despite widespread knowledge regarding the effectiveness of an incentive system that is developed together with employees, it is not a common practice. Only 4 leaders involved the team in the development of the incentive system, obviously within the framework adopted by top management. It is worth noting, however, that in informal conversations, at staff meetings, there were proposals from employees to introduce specific motivational tools, for example: a 4-day work system for the most effective team members, the introduction of flexible working hours, or the establishment of a budget for training and qualification improvement.

All leaders responded that the incentive systems implemented were understood, accepted, and widely known by employees. Importantly, almost all pointed to the need to modify the system during the project and to adopt it to the changing environment and employees'

expectations. Among the examples repeatedly mentioned were a supplementary healthcare system (during the pandemic), and the possibility of switching to remote work. Interestingly, leaders unanimously said that changes to incentive systems were implemented smoothly and quickly. In only one case these changes led to a conflict among the team, which, however, was relatively quickly resolved (for example, MultiSport cards for employees, objection by those who do not participate in sports).

The most popular methods and tools of tangible motivation included (in order of prevalence):

1. high salary,
2. performance bonus,
3. healthcare benefits,
4. promotion opportunities (higher salary),
5. Employee Welfare,
6. paid training courses/sessions,
7. company car,
8. free or subsidized lunch,
9. team-building trips, and
10. multiSport card.

The most popular methods and tools of intangible motivation included (in order of prevalence):

1. good, friendly atmosphere at work,
2. flexible work system,
3. opportunity to work remotely,
4. autonomy in organizing work,
5. praise, recognition,
6. participation in management processes,
7. sense of community,
8. good relations with superiors,
9. allowing trials and errors, and
10. no dress code.

The leaders unanimously noted that positive reinforcement creates team spirit and a supportive atmosphere, and contributes to the achievement of expected results. It also facilitates self-development of employees and encourages their commitment; therefore positive reinforcement should dominate the process of motivation.

According to the leaders, the tools particularly contributing to a creative work environment included:

- organizing workshops and training sessions on stimulating creativity and generating innovative solutions,
- creating mentoring programs in which experienced innovators support beginners,

- offering rewards and recognition for innovation,
- creating platforms for sharing ideas among employees, and
- supporting employees in taking risks and experimenting.

Subsequent questions showed that as the maturity of the team increases, the autonomy of individual team members grows. Not all employees value the opportunity to participate in management processes; sometimes it is an additional burden for them. However, each of them appreciates the autonomy of action, the ability to organize their tasks and work time.

## 6. Conclusions

High work motivation is the basis for employee loyalty and commitment to their job duties. The process of motivation is inextricably linked to the culture of the organization. To create the conditions and space for innovation, it is necessary to create a work environment in which mistakes encourage further efforts, where communication and cooperation are prioritized, and where the exchange of ideas and creative sessions are standard.

The research resulted in a set of guidelines for creating a pro-innovation culture in an organization. This set can become a book of good practices, especially for less experienced leaders:

- Consider incorporating a high salary, performance bonuses, and healthcare benefits as motivational tools.
- Pay attention to creating a good, friendly atmosphere at work.
- Consider implementing a flexible work system and explore the possibility of remote work.
- Create space, place, and time to exchange thoughts and insights. This is how innovation is born.
- Allow mistakes, tolerate risk – this is the way to innovation.
- Ensure team diversity.
- Do not be a control freak.
- Allow yourself and the team some rest.
- Celebrate successes, drive the team to action.
- Whatever worked yesterday does not have to work today.
- Ask for help, teach this difficult art to others.
- Be a cautious optimist.
- Constantly develop yourself, take care of the development of team members.
- Sports. It is important for everyone to be in good shape.
- Teach methods to stimulate creativity.

- Be consistent (reward and punishment is systematic).
- Constantly integrate the team, allow conflicts (this clears the atmosphere).
- Use external sources: demand innovation, clusters, blue ocean strategy.
- Make use of technological developments, keep up with novelties, and let them support the team.
- Foster communication.

The literature analysis carried out identified a research gap. The number of publications retrieved and their content indicate the need for further research in the field of motivation for the development of an organization's pro-innovation culture. The research should be further expanded and complemented so that its conclusions are complete and take into account the diverse characteristics of organizations.

Motivation is one of the key factors in developing a company's innovation potential, but it is not the only one. The main research is focused on, among other areas, the function of the leader, cooperation with the company's environment, and trust.

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