

'Don't measure yourself by what you have accomplished, but what you should have accomplished with your ability.'

John Wooden

The job of a manager in the workplace is to get things done through employees. To do this the manager should be able to motivate employees. But that's easier said than done! Motivation practice and theory are difficult subjects, touching on several disciplines.

In spite of enormous research, basic as well as applied, the subject of motivation is not clearly understood and more often than not *poorly practiced*. To understand motivation one must understand human nature itself. And there lies the problem!

Human nature can be very simple, yet very complex too. An understanding and appreciation of this is a prerequisite to effective employee motivation in the workplace and therefore effective management and leadership.

We will provide you with a short insight into a number of motivation theories and show their practical application to organization and its people. Yet, as concluded above, it's a very complex subject and as such it may require a much wider and individualized investigation into the matter to suit the needs of managers and their teams.

Enjoy the reading!



Motivation is the key to performance improvement

There is an old saying: 'You can take a horse to the water but you cannot make it drink' - it will drink only if it's thirsty - so with people. They will do what they want to do or otherwise motivated to do. Whether it is to excel on the workshop floor or in the 'ivory tower' they must be motivated or driven to it, either by themselves or through external stimulus.

Are they born with the self-motivation or drive? Yes and no. If no, they can be motivated, for motivation is a skill which can and must be learnt. This is essential for any business to survive and succeed.

Performance is considered to be a function of **ability** and **motivation**. Ability in turn depends on education, experience and training and its improvement is a slow and long process. On the other hand motivation can be improved quickly. There are many options and an uninitiated manager may not even know where to start. As a guideline, there are broadly seven strategies for motivation.

- Positive reinforcement and setting high expectations
- Effective discipline and punishment
- Treating people fairly
- Satisfying employees needs
- Setting work related goals
- Restructuring jobs if required
- Satisfactory base rewards on job performance

These are the basic strategies, though the mix in the final 'recipe' will vary from workplace situation to situation. Essentially, there is a gap between an individual's actual state and some desired state that the manager tries to reduce.

Motivation is, in effect, a means to reduce this gap. It is inducing others in a specific way towards goals specifically stated by the motivator. Naturally, these goals and the motivation system must conform to the corporate policy of the organization.

Case Study:

In one of the most elaborate studies on employee motivation, involving 31,000 men and 13,000 women, the Minneapolis Gas Company in US sought to determine what their potential employee's desire most from a job. This study was carried out during a 20 year period from 1945 to 1965 and was quite revealing. The ratings for the various factors differed only slightly between men and women, but both groups considered **security** as the highest rated factor. The next three factors were;

- **advancement**
- **type of work**

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- **company to be proud to work for**

Surprisingly, factors such as pay, benefits and working conditions were given a low rating by both groups. So after all, and contrary to common belief, money is not the prime motivator. (Though this should not be regarded as a signal to reward employees poorly or unfairly.)

Main motivation theories:

Traditional theory 'X' – Sigmund Freud

This can best be ascribed to Sigmund Freud who was no lover of people, and was far from being optimistic. Theory X assumes that people are lazy; they hate work to the extent that they avoid it; they have no ambition, take no initiative and avoid taking any responsibility; all they want is security, and to get them to do any work, they must be rewarded, coerced, intimidated and punished. This is the so-called 'stick and carrot' philosophy of management.

Theory 'Y' – Douglas McGregor

This is in sharp contrast to theory 'X'. McGregor believed that people want to learn and that work is their natural activity to the extent that they develop self-discipline and self-development. They see their reward not so much in cash payments as in the freedom to do difficult and challenging work by themselves. The manager's job is to 'dovetail' the human wish for self-development into the organizations need for maximum productive efficiency.

Theory 'Z' – Abraham Maslow

Maslow's central theme revolves around the meaning and significance of human work and seems to epitomize Voltaire's observation in Candide: 'Work banishes the three great evils - boredom, vice and poverty'. A man's personality is the sum total of his works and that only his works survive a man at death. This is perhaps the essence of Maslow's **hierarchy of needs theory** as it is more commonly known.

Hygiene Motivation Theory – Frederick Herzberg

This is based on analysis of the interviews of 200 engineers and accountants in the Pittsburgh area in the US. According to this theory, people work first and foremost in their own self-enlightened interest, for they are truly happy and mentally healthy through work accomplishment. People's needs are of two types

Animal Needs (Hygiene factors)	Human Needs (Motivators)
Supervision	Recognition
Interpersonal relations	Work
Working conditions	Responsibility
Salary	Advancement

Unsatisfactory hygiene factors can act as de-motivators, but if satisfactory, their motivational effect is limited.

Expectancy Theory - Victor Vroom

Vroom's 'expectancy theory' is an extension of the 'contingency approach'. The leadership style should be 'tailored' to the particular situation and to the particular group. In some cases it appears best for the boss to decide and in others the group arrives at a consensus. An individual should also be rewarded with what he or she perceives as important rather than what the manager perceives good/appropriate for him/her.

Application of the employee motivation theory to the workplace:

Management literature is full of actual cases of what does and what does not motivate people. Here is a small selection of the practices that have been tried in order to draw lessons for the future.

'Stick' or 'carrot' approach?

The traditional Victorian style of strict discipline and punishment has not only failed to deliver the goods, but it has also left a mood of discontent amongst the "working class".

Punishment appears to have produced negative rather than positive results and has increased the hostility between 'them' (the management) and 'us' (the workers). In contrast to this, the 'carrot' approach, involving approval, praise and recognition of effort has markedly improved the work atmosphere, leading to more productive work places and giving workers greater job satisfaction.

Manager's motivation 'toolkit'

The manager's main task is to develop a productive work place, with and through those he or she is in charge of. The manager should motivate his or her team, both individually and collectively so that a productive work place is maintained and developed and at the same time employees derive satisfaction from their jobs.

This may appear somewhat contradictory, but it seems to work. The main tools in the manager's kitbag are:

- approval, praise and recognition
- trust, respect and high expectations
- loyalty, given that it may be received
- removing organizational barriers that stand in the way of individual and group performance (smooth business processes, systems, methods and resources)
- job enrichment
- good communications
- financial incentives
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Case Study:

The Swedish shipbuilding company, Kockums, turned a 15 million dollar loss into a 100 million dollar profit in the course of ten years due entirely to a changed perception of the workforce brought about by better motivation.

Yet another example - at Western Electric there was a dramatic improvement in output after the supervisors and managers started taking greater interest in their employees.

Don't coerce - persuade!

Persuasion is far more powerful than coercion, just as the pen is mightier than the sword. Managers have a much better chance of success if they use persuasion rather than coercion. The former builds morale, initiative and motivation, whilst the latter quite effectively kills such qualities. The three basic components in persuasion are:

- suggest;
- play on the person's sentiments; and
- appeal to logic.

Once convinced, the person is so motivated as to deliver the 'goods'. The manager will have achieved the goal quietly, gently and with the minimum of effort. It is, in effect, an effortless achievement.

Conclusion

There is no simple answer to the question of how to motivate people. Can money motivate? Yes, but money alone is not enough, though it does help. We have discussed some of the pertinent theories bearing on human motivation and this is balanced by some of the practical factors which can lead to excellence. Human resource remains the focal point and the leadership its critical component and motivation has to be 'tailored' to each individual. Being a good motivator is a skill worth developing by every manager and leader!

Good luck!

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