

APPLICATION OF EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION THEORY TO THE WORKPLACE

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This paper has as objectives the highlighting of motivation theories applied in real situations and also the tendencies noticed at the workplace. We used as methods comparison between some theories and also between theory and practice and also some statistics got by different institutions. In conclusion, of all the resources available, the human resource is clearly the most significant, but also the most difficult to manage. Excellence can only be achieved through excellent performance of every person, rather than by the high-pitched performance of a few individuals. And motivation is, undoubtedly, the crux.

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. The leadership quality is that which leads to the success of a company through team building and motivating its people.

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Theories regarding employee motivation

Management literature is replete with actual case histories of what does and what does not motivate people.

1. '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.

2. 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 for motivating the team 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 - see outline team building program);
- job enrichment;
- good communications;
- financial incentives.

These are arranged in order of importance and it is interesting to note that cash is way down the ladder of motivators. Let's look at a couple of examples taken from real life situations. 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. At Western Electric there was a dramatic improvement in output after the supervisors and managers started taking greater interest in their employees.

3. 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. More contemporary 'persuaders' used by advertising and marketing people include:

- faster talk is found to be more effective, since it is remembered better;
- brain emits fast beta waves when a person is really interested in a particular presentation; These waves can be detected by an instrument.
- subliminal approach using short duration presentation, whereby the message is transmitted below the level of awareness.

Can these findings be used in actual work conditions? AT&T (The American Telephone and Telegraph Co.) recognizing the importance of hidden needs, at one time succeeded in promoting long distance calls by use of the simple phrase: 'Reach out, reach out and touch someone'. Managers will need to adapt this persuasion / motivation technique to their own situation.

4. Job satisfaction - is there a trend?

This is the title of a study carried out by the US Department of Labor among 1500 workers, who were asked to rate the job factors, from a list of 23, which they considered important starting from the most important factor.

Their findings are contained in the table below:

| Job Satisfaction Findings | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| White-collar workers | Blue-collar workers |
| A. Interesting work | A. Good pay |
| B. Opportunities for development | B. Enough help and resources |
| C. Enough information | C. Job security |
| D. Enough authority | D. Enough information |
| E. Enough help and resources | E. Interesting work |
| F. Friendly, helpful coworkers | F. Friendly, helpful co-workers |
| G. See results of own efforts | G. Clearly defined responsibilities |
| H. Competent supervision | H. See results of own work |
| I. Clearly defined responsibilities | I. Enough Authority |
| J. Good pay | J. Competent supervision |

It is interesting that out of the 23 job factors listed for the survey, yet with the exception of two items (white-collar workers' choice (B) and blue-collar workers' choice (C)) groups selected the same top ten factors, although with different rankings. It is significant that good pay was

considered as the most important factor by the blue-collar workers, but it ranked as the least important for white-collar workers.

5. Individualize motivation policies

It is well known that individual behavior is intensely personal and unique, yet companies seek to use the same policies to motivate everyone. This is mainly for convenience and ease compared to catering for individual oddities. 'Tailoring' the policy to the needs of each individual is difficult but is far more effective and can pay handsome dividends. Fairness, decisiveness, giving praise and constructive criticism can be more effective than money in the matter of motivation.

Leadership is considered synonymous with motivation, and the best form of leadership is designated as SAL, situation adaptable leadership. In this style of leadership, one is never surprised or shocked, leadership must begin with the chief executive and it is more a matter of adaptation than of imparting knowledge. Ultimately, it is the leadership quality which leads to the success of a company through team building and motivating its people.

6. The one-minute manager'

To start with, the manager sets a goal, e.g. one page read in one minute, and it is seen to be achieved by 'one minute' of praising or reprimand as the case may be. But to be effective, these must be given (a) promptly, (b) in specific terms, and the behavior, rather than the person, should be praised or reprimanded.

The concept is basic and it makes sense, although the book seeks to 'dramatize' it. 'One minute' praising is seen to be the motivating force. Everyone is considered a winner, though some people are disguised as losers, and the manager is extolled not to be fooled by such appearances.

7. Lessons from America's Best-run Companies'

Several criteria, including analysis of annual reports and in-depth interviews, were used to pick 14 'model excellent companies' out of an initial sample of 62 companies. As expected, most of the action in high-performing companies revolved around its people, their success being ascribed to:

- productivity through people;
- extraordinary performance from ordinary employees;
- treating people decently.

Personnel function and in particular leadership were considered the most critical components. If the leaders in an organization can create and sustain an environment in which all employees are motivated, the overall performance is bound to be good. The three essentials for creating such an environment are:

- fairness;
- job security; and
- involvement.

Of all the resources available, the human resource is clearly the most significant, but also the most difficult to manage. Excellence can only be achieved through excellent performance of every person, rather than by the high-pitched performance of a few individuals. And motivation is, undoubtedly, the crux.

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. Human resource remains the focal point and leadership the critical component, and motivation has to be 'tailored' to each individual.

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