

LET'S GET MOTIVATED

by **Sean Purcell**

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This article looks at ways in which staff motivation can be improved and also shows how some of the management theories that you may have come across in your study texts can be applied to a workplace situation.

With regards to management theories and motivation I guess that almost all students will have come across Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Herzberg's two-factor theory. However very few students actually ever understand how Maslow and Herzberg can be applied to the workplace and simply learn the examples given in the examination textbook.

To enlighten those of you who are not familiar with either Maslow or Herzberg they are ideas on what motivates people as a result of observation of workers' behaviour. Maslow talked about people having a hierarchy of needs. Each need is important until it is satisfied and then the next need becomes important, i.e., once one has obtained shelter and food that no longer becomes a priority and one aspires to a need for security and so on.

How then, can these needs be translated into the workplace? Maslow never really intended his theory to be directly applied but gave it as an example of how people may behave in ideal conditions. However, for the purpose of exams it's a worthy theory to apply.

In the modern developed world most of us are fortunate to have no real problem with lack of physiological needs or safety needs. We can normally buy food and drink and provide shelter as a result of earning a regular salary.

Security is provided through contracts of employment and pension and medical insurance provision. However, it is attention to the rest of the needs in the hierarchy, which distinguishes an organisation that has a highly motivated workforce, from one that is less so.

In order to fulfil social/love needs companies with motivated workforces will encourage teamworking which leads to better relationships for both managers and subordinates which often translates into higher work output. Together with company parties and outings, staff social clubs and sports societies are also likely to be heavily subsidised to encourage good relationships outside the workplace.

Esteem needs are fulfilled through satisfying the individual. The military were probably one of the initial exponents of this idea through the awarding of medals for bravery.

A modern day equivalent can be seen in McDonalds where hard work and high levels of customer service result in the employee being awarded stars which they can

proudly wear on their uniform. A very simple way of esteem being fulfilled is to simply recognise good work through saying thank you.

Many companies now take this a stage further by giving regular feedback through performance appraisals.

Richard Branson of the Virgin group is a master at getting the most from his entire workforce. Despite the number of employees being in the thousands they are all regularly invited to barbecue's or drinks parties at his house (not all at the same time of course) and he will be there to welcome them and thank them for all the hard work they do for the company.

This leads to many staff having a much higher level of commitment to the organisation than is present in other similar organisations. Financial recognition in forms of bonuses are another way of recognising performance although provision of only financial incentives can often create more problems than they solve and hence successful organisations use more innovative ways of motivating.

Self-actualisation is achieved when an employee is able to fulfil their maximum potential. Companies satisfy this desire by providing no ceiling on promotion and enabling employees to improve themselves through education and training. More senior roles may give employees discretion in how they interpret their job roles thus enabling the individual to put their own stamp on a job.

Hopefully now you are able to see a little bit beyond the textbooks theoretical view and I would encourage you to think of the ways in which your employer improves your motivation together with colleagues in other organisations.