Employee Motivation

Student Manual
Corporate Training Materials
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Module One: Getting Started

Welcome to the Employee Motivation workshop. Employee Motivation is becoming ever more important in the workplace as time goes on, and everyone agrees that a motivated workforce is far more likely to be a successful workforce. The happier and more professional an employee is, the better the results they will deliver for you. Of course, every employer wants to make sure that they have a workforce who will do their best, but this does not simply mean making the job easy for their employees. In fact, part of the problem of motivation is that where the job is too easy, employees become complacent.

There is therefore a challenge for all employers and management in delivering the right balance between a confident, motivated workforce and a workforce which is driven to attain goals. It can be described as a mix between the pleasure of a comfortable working environment and the fear of failure, although in honesty it is more complicated than that equation suggests. Regardless of how it is characterized, it is important to get the right balance in order to ensure that you have a motivated workforce. This manual is designed to show participants the way to get the best out of a confident, motivated set of employees, and to show them how to motivate that group.

"Motivation is the art of getting people to do what you want them to do because they want to do it." --Dwight D. Eisenhower
Pre-Assignment Review

The purpose of the Pre-Assignment is to get you thinking about the Employee Motivation strategies you are already using and where you need to improve.

A good pre-assignment in this case is to ask yourself how you go about motivating your employees at the moment. As well as this, it is helpful to discuss previous initiatives and why they worked or failed. This is best done in small groups, so if the group is large (more than ten participants) it may be beneficial to separate into two or more groups.

Allow the participants to take some time to consider the outcome of the discussion, and to digest feedback from other participants. The subject will be returned to during the day more than once.
Workshop Objectives

Research has consistently demonstrated that when clear goals are associated with learning, it occurs more easily and rapidly. It is therefore helpful to set out defined targets for the training period. With a view to learning the most about Employee Motivation, this should include:

- Defining motivation, an employer’s role in it and how the employee can play a part
- Identifying the importance of Employee Motivation
- Identifying methods of Employee Motivation
- Describing the theories which pertain to Employee Motivation – with particular reference to psychology
- Identifying personality types and how they fit into a plan for Employee Motivation.
- Setting clear and defined goals.
- Identifying specific issues in the field, and addressing these issues and how to maintain this going forward.
Module Two: A Psychological Approach

The importance of psychology in achieving and maintaining Employee Motivation is essential. A message can be repeated over and over to a group of employees but unless they believe it and believe in it, the words are empty. The following are some of the key psychological theories which aid employers in their end goal of producing a motivated workforce.

"Money was never a big motivation for me, except as a way to keep score. The real excitement is playing the game." --Donald Trump
Herzberg’s Theory of Motivation

Herzberg’s theory is that Employee Motivation is affected both by the employee’s level of satisfaction and dissatisfaction and that, importantly, these two elements are independent of one another. That is to say that although an employee can be satisfied by the elements of their job which are intrinsic to the job itself, such as achievement and recognition, while at the same time being dissatisfied by the elements which are secondary factors of the work – pay and benefits, job security and relationships with co-workers.

This was described by Herzberg as the Motivation-Hygiene Theory. Elements which are done because they are essential to the job were considered the “motivation” part of the theory. They were done because they had to be done; therefore the worker was “motivated” to carry them out. Carrying these tasks out was considered to be the motivation of the employee, because they were required or compelled to do them. By having work to do which demanded that the worker rose to – and met – a challenge, their motivation was set in stone?

The “hygiene” element, rather than a reference to personal hygiene and cleanliness as one might assume, was actually a reference to the upkeep of personal determination. They were things that needed to be constantly maintained because they were not intrinsic to the job. Herzberg’s assertion was that the opposite of satisfaction was not Dissatisfaction, but rather an absence of satisfaction. Similarly, the opposite of dissatisfaction was an absence of dissatisfaction rather than simply satisfaction. In terms of motivating employees, it is important to encourage satisfaction on the one hand, and avoid dissatisfaction on the other.
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Abraham Maslow’s pyramid detailing the hierarchy of human needs is actually a more general listing of things on which every human should be able to rely, but is applicable to the issue of Employee Motivation. In any job, from the most basic to the most specialized, the employee should be able to rely on the employer and their co-workers to uphold their access to the most basic needs – those which are essential and without which a human’s health will suffer. The absence of access to these needs is the basis for everything else. As we go up the pyramid the needs become less essential but arguably more decisive.

A sense of security and of belonging is also important to any employee. Knowing that one’s physical safety is ensured allows a person to do their job without fear. Security, though, is not merely a physical concept; it also refers to the security of a person’s job and the conditions that allow them to do that job. Giving a person tasks to do is an essential part of motivation, but providing them the environment in which to carry out those tasks is no less important for motivation. Allowing a level of interaction and encouraging a team ethic will further a person’s intent to do their job and do it well.

In the upper two echelons of the pyramid, the needs are now more refined and specific. It is possible to do a job without self- or any other kind of esteem, but it is undesirable. Encouragement and positive feedback are important factors in ensuring that an employee does their job to the best of their ability. Without these factors, the likely outcome is a drop in performance and a reluctance to carry out further tasks completely and reliably. Self actualization needs such as creativity and spontaneity allow the mind to work to its optimum level, and actively motivate the employee. These theories fit in somewhat with Herzberg’s – that there are certain things which must be guaranteed as an absolute base, and then others which guarantee the effort of an effective employee through their desire to be part of something good.
The Two Models and Motivation

Abraham Maslow's theory on a hierarchy of human needs was an influence on Frederick Herzberg's later theory regarding the factors which motivate workers. While Maslow considered the needs of a person to all be on the one hierarchical list, Herzberg felt that there were two very separate elements of the plan. To look at Maslow's list, one would feel that as the requirements as set out in the pyramid were met, the level of satisfaction would rise while, at the same pace, the dissatisfaction would drop. It was Herzberg's contention that this is not the case. Herzberg felt that satisfaction and dissatisfaction were actually wholly separate and that both needed to be attended to.

Herzberg and Maslow created two separate theories, and while much of what is set out in the hierarchy of needs is backed up by the theories in the “two factor” theory, it is expanded upon and honed. While to look at Maslow’s model one would feel that as long as certain needs were met, satisfaction would rise and dissatisfaction fall in equal measure, Herzberg holds that one could have a high level of satisfaction from carrying out their tasks in an efficient manner and meeting their targets, yet if they were constantly worried that they could lose their job for reasons separate to performance, they would not be as motivated as they could be.

There is, however, something to be said of Maslow’s hierarchy, in that the pyramid as he set it out could be split into sections. In this case, the top sections (and particularly the peak) would correspond somewhat to Herzberg's “motivation” factors and the lower sections to his “hygiene factors. Herzberg’s theory is not a contradiction of Maslow’s, but at the same time is not a direct application of it. There are certainly differences between the two. They both have their part to play in employee motivation, however, and they have a lot more in common than to separate them.
Module Three: Object-Oriented Theory

Motivation is not all about philosophical needs, of course. A lot of people work better when they have the concrete facts in front of them – something to work towards, something to avoid. Different things motivate different people, and in any given team or workforce there will be a mix of these people. As Herzberg’s Theory suggests, what will motivate each individual will be a mix of satisfaction and non-dissatisfaction. This is similar to the old theory of the “carrot and whip” – based on the hypothesis of riding a horse and using the carrot to encourage it to speed up, and the whip to prevent it from slowing down too much. Then there is also the idea of the plant – seeing a worker as a “plant” who, given the right mix of the already-discussed factors, will flower beautifully. The carrot, the whip and the plant are united into the heading of “Object-Oriented Theory”.

“There’s always the motivation of wanting to win. Everybody has that. But a champion needs, in his attitude, a motivation above and beyond winning.” -- Pat Riley
The Carrot

The “carrot” as a theory takes its lead from horse-riding and dates back to the middle of the 20th century. The idea is that a cart driver would tie a carrot to a long stick and dangle it in front of the horse or donkey which was pulling his cart. As the donkey moved forward towards the carrot, he would pull the cart and driver forward, ensuring that the carrot always remained beyond his reach until such time as the driver slowed down and stopped, at which point – should he so desire – the driver could give the carrot to the horse as a reward for doing what it has been encouraged to do.

For the employer, this can perhaps be read in a number of ways. Looking at how the “carrot” theory works, it is quite easy to assume that the “carrots” offered to employees should be continually moved beyond their reach, and this assumes that the employee is as stubborn and witless as a donkey. This would be a rash assumption to make, and continually moving the point of reward away from the employee could be seen as a disincentive. Not delivering on a promise is always likely to annoy workers rather than stiffen their resolve to meet the new goals.

It could, however, also be argued that the carrot on the stick is something which should not just hang there within easy reach. The employee will need to keep testing themselves, but as long as they meet their challenges they will be rewarded at the end of their efforts. In the theory detailed in the first paragraph, there is a defined end point. The important element of the theory is that if someone has the promise of a reward at the end of their work, they are likely to keep striving for it. If that reward is continually denied them even at the end of their work, however, do not be surprised if it ceases to work.

Notes
The Whip

In different cultures it is known by different names, but the second part of the “Carrot” theory is the Whip. There is a long history of terms and sayings attached to the idea of having an element of threat involved in motivating a group of employees, or anyone for that matter. “Spare the rod and spoil the child”, for example, is an old proverb meaning that if you never punish someone for transgressing, they will come to believe that they can transgress as and when they wish. In the old “Carrot” theory, the way it works is that if the employee tired of chasing after a carrot that never seems to get any closer, simply slows down, a quick smack with the whip will make it speed up again.

The theory of motivation by threat of punishment is one which needs to be handled very carefully indeed. Not only is it absolutely illegal in many places to physically discipline workers, but other forms of threat can have a detrimental effect on the workforce. An employer, team leader or manager with a reputation for flying off the handle when things are not to their satisfaction may get results from some people, but this method can lead to a culture of fear within a company or department, and stifle performance in order to simply get the work done.

It is left up to the person providing the motivation to decide to what extent and in what way they will use the “whip”. There can be initiatives which combine the carrot and the whip – for example, in a one-off situation over the course of a day or so, the person or people who have performed worst in the team can be required to buy coffees or any other small reward for those who have performed best. A “forfeit” system can also be applied, but it is dangerous to apply anything too humiliating in this situation. The limits of the system need to be clearly defined. If it is something so meaningless that it won’t be taken seriously, the whip ceases to be a motivation. If it is too stringent it becomes the whole focus and can infringe upon performance.
The Plant

An element of objected-oriented motivation which, is essentially separate from the above, but not incompatible with them, is known as “Plant” theory. Take as your example a simple house plant. In order to ensure that a plant flourishes it is important to give it the best combination possible of different nourishing elements. Most plants will require sunlight, warmth, water and food in order to grow in the way you would wish. By the same token, employees will be motivated by a combination of factors.

The average employee will require motivation in many of the forms discussed by Maslow and Herzberg, and because humans are not all the same it will be a matter of judgment to ensure that each employee gets the right amount of each factor. This can be something as simple as getting the balance of “carrot and whip” motivation right. It is important, in many managers’ eyes, to get the balance right between the arm around the shoulders and the boot up the backside. Making an employee feel valued and supported without letting them become coddled is important, as is ensuring that they know they have to perform without making them feel like they have a gun against their head.

Taking three of Herzberg’s essential elements of motivation as an example, some employees work best with the prospect of challenge in their work, while some will work better with the goal of recognition. Others, equally, will want simply to get through as much work as they can while doing the work to a high level of quality. It is important to take into account the differing “buttons” that need to be pressed in each staff member to ensure that they do their job as well as possible. It is many people’s view that the team which will work best is the one that has a combination of people who work well under different motivations. This way, tasks within the team can be assigned in a balanced way and ensure the best performance from every individual, and consequently the best performance from the team. The “Plant” theory, as applied here, is about knowing which plant requires which type of nourishment in which measure. By getting the balance right you can ensure the best “greenhouse” arrangement.
Module Four: Using Reinforcement Theory

The concept of reinforcement theory is an old idea, which has been used in many different settings for many different purposes. If you have a pet dog, the chances are that you have used reinforcement theory in training it to behave the right way – a treat for sitting, rolling over and walking when you ask it to, and a punishment for climbing on the furniture or going to the toilet in the house. It is not, however, limited to dogs, although the way it is applied changes depending on whom the theory is being practiced on. For humans, something as crude as a piece of candy to reward a good deed will not be as effective, but the concept of rewarding good practice and punishing bad holds firm. Reinforcement theory has been established as successful and coherent, and it is a valid method of ensuring the best performance.

"People often say that motivation doesn't last. Well, neither does bathing -- that's why we recommend it daily." --Zig Ziglar
A History of Reinforcement Theory

We are all conditioned to act in certain ways based on certain stimuli. This is something that is visible in most things we do. From something as simple as waking up and getting out of bed when an alarm goes, to calling the fire brigade if we see a fire, our responses to certain situations are more or less instinctive – though, as we are not automatons, we do have some leeway in exactly how we respond. The knowledge of how we respond to stimuli was articulated in 1911 by E.L. Thorndike in what he called the “Law of Effect”. Essentially, this lays down that in a situation where normal results can be expected, a response to stimuli which is followed by something good will become more “right” in our minds, while a response followed by something “bad” will become more “wrong”.

To take this theory and apply it practically, as children we are still learning and our parents will usually use positive and negative reinforcement to apply lessons. Practically, if we eat up all our vegetable when we may not necessarily want to, we will be given a pudding after dinner. If we push our sister over, we may be sent to our room or to sit in the corner and think about what we have done. These reinforcement steps may be applied as often as possible until we always eat our vegetable and refrain from pushing our sisters over.

Behavioral conditioning is a subject which some consider controversial and even cruel, but there is a strong body of opinion which suggests that it is absolutely necessary. B.F. Skinner responded to arguments that human drives needed to be respected by saying that people learn behaviors based on what resulted from them. If somebody is of a mind to transgress because they enjoy transgression, but find that the result of their conduct is reduced freedom, they will become less likely to transgress so often. The thought of transgressing can become painful when associated with the idea of what will result. This theory is known as “behaviorism”.

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Behavior Modification in Four Steps

Once we have accepted that there is a truth to the theory of reinforcement, it is important to look at how the theory can be applied in terms of ensuring the desired behavior. The message of reinforcement theory is that it is possible to modify behavior in yourself or in others by associating undesirable behaviors with undesirable outcomes. In order to be fully “scientific” and guarantee the desired results from a program of behavior modification, it is worth following a strict pattern and recording the results faithfully. By referring to the results it is possible to see what patterns of modification work best. The following is a trusted four-step pattern for behavior modification:

1) Define the behavior to be modified.
2) Record the rate at which that behavior takes place.
3) Change the consequences which result from that behavior.
4) If this does not succeed in preventing the behavior, change the consequences to a greater or lesser extent

By working through this model as often as is necessary it is possible to change the behavior of an individual from being detrimental to being positive in most cases. The form that this pattern might take practically in a workplace is as follows. Person A has a tendency to leave their work station and go and speak to their friend, Person B. Person A is perfectly capable of delivering good work when they keep their mind on it. The distraction is infringing on Person B’s work, too, and they do not have the willpower to refrain from chatting with Person A. In order to ensure that both people’s work is as good as it can be, it is necessary to stop Person A from behaving in this way. Thus we have defined the behavior to be modified.
It is then necessary to see how often this happens. If it happens three times a day outside of scheduled breaks, and goes on for ten minutes at a time, then half an hour is lost to this behavior in a given day. If it is allowed to continue, this can build into hours lost in a given week – in fact, in a five day week, five “person hours” are lost to this behavior – half an hour each day for Person A and half an hour for Person B. As yet, nothing is being done. There are numerous things that could be tried here. Simply telling them to return to their workstation is one. If this works in reducing the amount of time lost, then a positive result has been achieved.

However, this may mean that Person A simply changes tack and goes to chat with their friend when you are not in the vicinity. Most offices now, however, have software which records the amount of time an employee stays away from their work station. By checking the time lost in a given day, and tallying the times that Person A and B were both inactive, it is possible to record how much time is lost when you are away from your desk. This can then be addressed in a number of ways. One way may be to stagger the lunch breaks of the members of the team, ensuring that Persons A and B cannot take lunch together as they would prefer. By checking how this affects the conduct of Person A you can see if this is working. As time goes on you can apply a number of different methods and settle on the one that works best.
Appropriate Uses in the Workplace

As things stand, it is really up to the employer, line manager or other supervisor to decide how to apply reinforcement and behavior modification in the workplace. The above example is one case where it can be helpful, but behavior modification is not limited to cases of deliberate transgression (although if the transgression is deliberate it will be more likely to build a clear, causal link in the mind of the individual). Behavior modification can also be used to aid a situation where an employee is working less effectively than they might for reasons other than rule-breaking. People have different ways of going about their jobs, but if one or more employees have a technique that is hindering their results, then behavior modification can form part of their coaching.

Reinforcement theory can also play a part in rewarding employees. If the members of a team have risen above and beyond what is expected of them, it is usually within the capability of a company to deliver some form of reward such as a team lunch. The knowledge that they can have a leisurely two-hour lunch break on the company if they consistently hit targets and exceed expectations is something that will remain in the minds of employees. They will be encouraged to continue the good work by the knowledge that their ability to exceed expectations has been noted and rewarded, and may be rewarded again.
Module Five: Using Expectancy Theory

While there are a number of theories which focus on needs as a driver of motivation, Victor Vroom’s Theory of Expectancy rather thrives on the outcomes. To clarify, while Herzberg and Maslow make the case for motivation being something that is dependent on need, Vroom suggests that the best motivation is to concentrate on the result of work as being the ultimate goal. He splits the process down into three sections – effort (for which motivation is essential), performance and outcome. The theory is that if the employee is sufficiently motivated to achieve the results, their performance will be better as a result, and the outcome will to some extent take care of itself as a result of improved performance – which will itself be a result of greater effort.

"Far and away the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing." --Theodore Roosevelt