

# THE SCIENCE OF MOTIVATION

Positive Leadership and Careers (Akira Wang, Student ID: 913391)  
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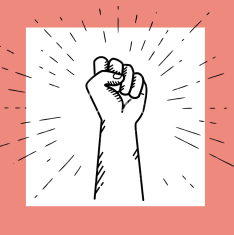
## THE BIRTH OF POSITIVE ORGANIZATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP

In this modern age, it has become evident that organizations have started to seek ways to increase profit margins or employee output. But the rampant growth of workplace stress levels, rate of employee burnout, and levels of engagement, make it evident that traditional methods of performance maximization can come at a costly price.

Emerging from the traditional cost-per-performance ideology in modern workplaces, **Positive Organizational Scholarship** (denoted POS) is the umbrella concept of positive psychology which concerns itself primarily with the outcomes and processes used to achieve positive states within the context of a workplace. Whether it be directly focused on the individual or the collective workplace, POS provides an alternative point of view which explores the dynamics and qualities that help foster and cultivate positive strengths. These positive strengths can be typically expressed in terms such as "resilience, excellence, thriving, flourishing, abundance, or virtuousness" (Cameron & Dutton, 2003).

As POS works with the dynamics and developments within the workplace, one can find that both the individual and organization concurrently develop positive strengths that promote virtuous qualities and positive states within all workplace levels. At an individual level, POS focuses on the wellbeing, happiness, and job satisfaction, allowing one to flourish in the workplace – a word best described as "goodness, generativity, growth, and resilience" (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005).

Complimenting this at a collective level, an organization can also expect to bring forth qualities such as creativity, innovation, or resilience (Hargadon & Bechky, 2006) from employees. Not only does POS include the more common positive outcomes from organizational studies, such as: organizational improvements, goal achievement, or increased profit, POS further extends the notion to include "life-giving, generative, and ennobling human conditions" (Cameron & Dutton, 2003).



## WHAT DOES POS STAND FOR?

- POSITIVE**  
The focus of achieving positive states of outcomes that exceed traditional performances in an individual.
- ORGANIZATIONAL**  
The investigation of the "positive" states within the contexts of a workplace.
- SCHOLARSHIP**  
The pursuit of credible and scientifically backed research, remaining consistent with previously published scholarly studies.

## THE FLAVORS OF MOTIVATION IN A WORKPLACE

When it comes to **motivation** (01) in a workplace, there are two contrasting notions - **extrinsic** and **intrinsic** motivation. Such flavors of motivation are best described by the "incentive theories" of motivation - the theory that Brown (2007) describes as the "certain behaviors that are exhibited not because of a need state, but because of environmental stimuli that attract us or induce us to action". Workplaces typically seek solutions to motivate their employees, often due to the positive impacts it can have on both the **performance** and **well-being** (02) at the individual and collective levels.

01

### Intrinsic Motivation

According to the definitions of Amabile (1993) and Giancola (2014), employees that were intrinsically motivated performed tasks because they were "interesting, challenging, and had personal meaning based on the satisfaction they received from performing the activity itself", displaying attributes of "seeking enjoyment, interest, satisfaction of curiosity, self-expression, or to be personally challenged in the work".

Overall, employees that were intrinsically motivated in a workplace achieved positive states of emotions, and a much better wellbeing and job satisfaction.

### 02 Extrinsic Motivation

Conversely, extrinsic motivations are impartial to the satisfaction an employee gains from performing the task, but instead comes from external outcomes such as monetary rewards in forms of bonuses, raises, or promotions (Giancola, 2014).

Although it was found that some individuals performed well with extrinsic motivators, most individuals suffered from decreased performance and degraded well-being.

This can be explained by the types of tasks performed, as those who performed well with extrinsic motivators were assigned simple tasks dependent on a clear set of rules, whilst the remainder of individuals were assigned tasks that required creativity and critical thinking.

### WORK MOTIVATION



Pinder (1998) defined work motivation as "a set of energetic forces that originates both within as well as beyond an individual's being, to initiate work-related behavior, and to determine its form, direction, intensity and duration".

### A MOTIVATED WORK FORCE



Several studies (Kahneman & Deaton, 2010; Smith & Macko, 2014; Harter, 2002; Paradise, 2008; Wellins, 2005) agree that the outcome of motivated workforce leads to a more successful collective job performance, bringing forth more competitive advantage and critical strategic assets.

## WHAT BUSINESS KNOWS, AND WHAT SCIENCE KNOWS

Often, the question whether money can buy motivation is raised in the higher echelons of businesses. Within the POS area of study, this is commonly related to as **extrinsic motivation** (02), and serves as the foundation of several work systems in place.

This is due to the incorrect assumption businesses make that their employees are unmotivated. Rather, it is more correct to say that individuals are naturally motivated (whether **intrinsically** (01) or **extrinsically** (02)(03)), and businesses should aim to make their staff **more compliant**.

But is this truly the right way of approaching workplace motivation?

## CASE STUDIES AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

Consider the study "High income improves evaluation of life but not emotional well-being" conducted by Kahneman and Deaton (2010).

- Their findings suggested that an **extrinsic motivator** such as **income** failed to provide any strong correlation to job satisfaction. For example, that those earning higher salaries >\$64k were only *slightly* more satisfied than those who earned *considerably less*. Hence it was suggested that the optimal income for job satisfaction and emotional well-being was approximately \$75k. On the contrary, it was found that significantly low-income jobs brought forth emotional pains associated to ill health, loneliness, and divorces.

From a different perspective, Grant's "Does Intrinsic Motivation Fuel the Prosocial Fire? Motivational Synergy in Predicting Persistence, Performance, and Productivity" (2008) sheds light on how intrinsically motivated employees claim to have better performance and well-being when compared to extrinsically motivated employees.

- The first study revolves around population sample of 58 US based firefighters – a job that is known for its intensive physical and mental strain. Findings suggest that those who were intrinsically motivated worked overtime without requesting compensation and were much more thorough and vigilant with their work. Many of these firefighters shared common internal values such as preventing bushfires, saving human lives, or even to protect their local area from minor accidents.
- On the other hand, the second study involved a population sample of 140 charity callers, but were also financially rewarded for reading a script in order to find potential charity donors. The study identified that those who called for the financial compensation failed to persuade potential donors due to a lack of care for the charity. As expected, it was found that those who internally wished to help the charity cause had better performance and productivity.



One can conclude from these diverse case studies that intrinsically motivated individuals had a more positive outlook onto work and genuinely enjoyed working their jobs. Extending the idea of job satisfaction and income levels, we can finally say that businesses using extrinsic motivators such as financial compensation do not work as expected. Rather, a more creative approach such as giving autonomy to employees (Atlassian's FedEx Day) or Google's 20% Workday (20% recreational research, 80% work) have been proven to be linked to a much higher performing workforce. Organizations looking to improve worker motivation should follow their lead, and create environments that foster creativity, flourishing, and employee well-being. In return, you'll be guaranteed to have a much more satisfied workforce, vastly improved performance, and stronger customer loyalty.

## HOW TO IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES INTO YOUR WORKPLACE

By unifying the findings of the studies presented with the strategies used by leading organizations, the strategies proposed below can extend this to any organization. These simple, yet effective strategies are the more popular ways that leading organizations have implemented into their workplaces.

### RECOGNITION

One of the more commonly misunderstood concepts.  
The proposed strategy is to provide consistent constructive feedback on work, and also praise work when acceptable. Recognition should be celebrated as a team (i.e social night), instead of financially compensating an individual.

### AUTONOMY

Give your employees some autonomy - it doesn't have to be total freedom, but allow your employees to choose the projects they enjoy.  
Work methodologies such as Agile can accommodate micro-managing practices, generating iterative goal based solutions and rewards.

### WELL-BEING SERVICES

You don't have to hire a psychologist 24/7, but at least aim to create a healthy working environment.  
It can be as simple as providing healthy snacks (i.e free fruit), having good natural lighting/window positioning, or even an occasional social awareness day to promote a caring environment.

### PROVIDE SECURITY

An employee may be thinking about paying bills during work, resulting in inefficient work practices.  
Providing a sense of a minimum financial security (such as increasing the salary to around the \$70k income band) will lead to an increase in job satisfaction, and help your employees focus on the work.

INNER  
DRIVE

POSITIVE  
MENTALITY





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