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Motivation, Productivity and Change Management

Abstract

This article will focus on the importance for a manager to understand how to motivate employees and manage change within an organization, and how productivity is affected by the nature of the information-based organization. A summary of motivation theories is presented, including the needs-based, process-based, and reinforcement motivation theories. This is followed by an overview of the most mainstream change management models for creating organizational transformation. Finally, the paper presents a discussion on how productivity is affected by employee motivation, and how contemporary fast-paced information-based organizations can take advantage of motivational and change management theory.

Keywords Change; Change Management; Motivation; Productivity; Transformation; Innovation

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Overview

In the year 2000, the well-known management guru Peter Drucker predicted a changing organizational landscape; one that is centered around information rather than productivity, focusing on worker knowledge, information sharing, and task specialists. Looking at the state of contemporary organizations, one can conclude that Drucker was right. Contemporary organizations face the challenges resulting from exponential growth in global competition, short product life cycles and quickly changing consumer demand (Muthusamy, Wheeler, & Simmons, 2005). These factors, combined with information availability and accessibility described by Drucker, have led organizations to find success through innovative and creative thinking, employee empowerment, and the sharing and management of knowledge. This has created a significant paradigm shift in how organizations motivate employees, how much value they place on worker productivity and where it fits, and how organizations deal with change (the foundational basis of 'innovation' and 'transformation'—popular buzzwords for contemporary organizational practitioners). This paper provides an overview of each of these topics, and how they are interrelated with each other.

Motivation

Never before has motivation played such a critical role in the workplace. Employees, in general, have more freedom than ever in getting their jobs done. The idea of self-managed employees and a democratic workplace is no longer the organization of the future. Rather, companies are beginning to embrace these concepts in order to have a changing organization that can adapt to an unstable and increasingly changing work environment. Some suggest that a completely democratic workplace is inevitable (Collins, 1997). This is creating a shift in emphasis from managing to leading, of which motivation plays a big role. The best leaders understand how to motivate their employees, using a transformational leadership style that is inspiring, intellectually stimulating, and provides individual consideration for each employee (Bass, 1999). Leaders of modern-day organizations must know how to motivate each of their employees in order for them to thrive in dynamic work environments. Understanding the various motivation theories is the first step to putting them into practice.

Motivation Theories can be categorized into three areas; needs-based, process, and reinforcement (Kinicki & Williams, 2003). All three categories should be considered by managers and leaders in the right situational context.

Needs Theories

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory is probably the most widely recognized motivational theory. Maslow asserted that our needs are fulfilled in a progressively complex way—a hierarchy consisting of five levels. An individual's needs are prioritized by the position in the hierarchy, whereby certain needs cannot be achieved until the needs in the lower level of the hierarchy are fulfilled. The five levels (from bottom to top) are physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, self-esteem needs, and self-actualization. The physiological needs that one has are elements such as food shelter, clothing, and other most basic necessities. The safety needs include protection from physical and emotional harm, and the elimination of conflict. Clearly, in an industry such as construction, safety is a larger concern than it might be for computer programmers (Halepota, 2005). The social needs include the need for love, friendship, affiliation, and belonging. The self-esteem needs include job status, respect, promotion, and recognition. Finally, self-actualization is a level where all of the needs are met, and one is completely satisfied with one's surrounding environment. Organizational leaders should concentrate on where their employee's needs fit within the hierarchy. For example, it would not make sense to promote an employee without first offering an adequate salary.

A second widely-used needs theory was developed by David McClelland (Kinicki & Kreitner, 2006). McClelland suggested that individuals have three needs: a need for achievement, a need for power, and a need for affiliation. He suggested that every individual is different with regards to his or her needs, and in order to adequately motivate someone, a leader should have a clear understanding of their own employees' needs with regards to these three areas. For example, someone with a high need for affiliation might be well-suited for a human resources position, while someone with a high need for achievement might be well-suited for a sales position. A leader can make a critical mistake by exclusively using motivational techniques that concentrate in the wrong area, such trying to fulfill affiliation needs for a group of engineers that enjoy working in solitude.

The third needs theory that is often embraced was developed by Frederick Herzberg, and is often referred to as Hygiene Theory of Job Satisfaction (Kinicki et al., 2006). Herzberg suggested that organizations have elements that can be classified as satisfiers and dissatisfiers, and that in order to satisfy and motivate employees, a leader/manager should remove the elements that dissatisfy employees and improve the elements that satisfy employees. Such elements as rules and regulations, salary, work environment, and supervisors are classified as dissatisfiers, or hygiene factors. Promotion opportunities, learning opportunities, job recognition, and challenging work are classified as satisfiers. While both are important to motivating an employee, oftentimes organizations only concentrate on removing the dissatisfiers, which does not intrinsically motivate the employee, especially in the long run. Take the employee who is not happy with his or her career progression and attempts to resign, only to be tempted to stay with an increase in salary—a short-term solution that does not create the desired satisfaction.

Process Theories

There are three predominant process theories of motivation: Victor Vrooms Expectancy theory, Equity theory, and Goal setting theories.

The expectancy theory of motivation has three components (Kinicki et al., 2003). First, the employee has an expectation that his or her efforts will lead to high job performance. Second, the employee understands that if he or she performs at a high level, there will be a positive outcome. Finally, the employee understands the value of the possible outcome. These components—expectancy, instrumentality, and valence—are three

elements of Vroom's theory. An example to demonstrate this needs process might be a commissioned salesman who is preparing for a sales call to a potential new customer. The salesman knows that in order to get the sale, an effort must be made, rather than having the purchase order just "drop in his lap." He spends half the night preparing his presentation, knowing that he will not present well without adequate presentation (effort leading to expectancy). He knows that if the presentation goes well, he will likely get the sales order (performance leading to instrumentality). Finally, he knows that an order will lead to a sales commission, and he'll be closer to his monthly sales goal (outcome leading to value or valence). He is motivated to prepare and get the sale.

Another process needs theory is Adam's Equity Theory. Adam asserted that the employee/employer relationship was a two way street where the employee has a number of inputs into the organization, and expects a number of resultant outputs that are fair and equitable. For example, an employee might bring past job experience, educational accomplishments, and might work 10 hours per week more than the average. To make these inputs feel equitable, the employee is motivated by good pay, promotional opportunities, and a good working environment. When there is an imbalance between input and outputs resulting in a feeling of inequity, the employee will have a feeling of dissonance—something is not right in the relationship. As a result, he or she won't be motivated towards achieving high performance. To remedy this, an employer might consider the individual's inputs separately, and compensate them accordingly to satisfy the inequity. Ramlall (2004) suggested that the Equity theory also considered the comparison to others. In other words, employees are motivated by positioning themselves against their fellow employees through their work inputs, and expect to be rewarded accordingly.

A third process theory is the Goal Setting theory. Drucker (as cited in Hoopes, 2003) asserted that the manager/employee relationship was immoral due to the power imbalance between the manager and the subordinate. His solution was the process of Management-By-Objective (MBO), where the employee has control over his or her work goals and tasks, which result in varying compensation levels and gives the employee a perception of being in control of their performance. Locke and Latham (Kinicki et al., 2003) formalized the Goal-Setting theory as a motivational construct, and this led to the birth of the SMART goals acronym (Smart, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time bound) that is commonly embraced by organizations, organizational practitioners, and management scholars.

Reinforcement Theory

Reinforcement theory is based on the reasoning that actions lead to consequences, which then lead to future behaviors. In this realm, there are four ways to reinforce behavior: positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, extinction, and punishment (Kinicki et al., 2003). Positive reinforcement uses rewards to encourage continued behavior, such as a bonus for performing well. Negative reinforcement is the removal of consequences after a positive change in behavior has occurred, such as a sales manager who no longer calls three times a day to check up on a new salesperson. Extinction is the reinforcement process by which rewards are withheld or eliminated due to poor performance, such as the engineering manager who does not offer public recognition of an employee who does not have good performance, while publicly complimenting everyone else in the department. The last way to reinforce is through punishment, such as the manager that docks an employee's pay for coming in late to work on several occasions.

Productivity

Productivity is closely related to motivation. For employees to be effective and efficient in their job tasks, having the technical knowledge and ability is not necessarily enough. The employees also need the resources required to do the job. They need supportive management and leadership with a vision that is aligned with their own goals and objectives. Most importantly, an employee needs to be driven (or motivated) by some means to achieve high performance.

Employees are significantly influenced by the leadership and management styles employed by their managers and supervisors. In a time where innovation and change is expected, the transformational leadership style can be closely tied to employee performance. Much research has indicated that behavior and performance are positively influenced by transformational leadership (Caillier, 2014). Inspiring employees is a major element of that leadership style.

Kouzes and Posner (2003) also discussed how motivation and inspiration could affect employee performance. They claimed that leaders who routinely engaged in their five recommended practices—model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart—are not only more productive in their jobs, but they are viewed as better leaders and have higher job satisfaction. They clearly established a link between a motivational style of leadership and employee performance.

Another model of performance was presented by T.R. Mitchell and D. Daniels (as cited in Kinicki et al., 2006). The creators of this model asserted that an employee's motivated behavior results from three things. First, the employee brings certain skills, such as job knowledge, traits, emotions, and beliefs to the workplace and the job setting. Second, the workplace employer provides the job context, such as the environment, support, rewards, task types, and work culture. Third, the manager of the employee uses processes that motivate the employee, such as giving them attention and direction, creating arousal, or being intense or persistent. These three things (employee inputs, job context, and motivating processes) result in the motivating behavior or drive that employees have towards completing tasks or achieving goals. The resulting motivating behavior includes employee focus, effort, strategy, and persistence in accomplishing the desired objectives or tasks. The model is based on the assertion that performance and productivity is directly related to motivated behavior, and that managers and leaders need to understand how to motivate their employees, in addition to providing the technical skills and an accommodating work environment.

In all three instances, performance is directly related to how motivated employees are.

Change Management

With an emphasis on creativity, innovation, and transformation due to the new information-based organizational (Drucker, 2000) and transformational leadership environment (Bass, 1999), understanding how to manage change is critical to the organizational strategy and process. Goodstein and Burke (as cited in French, Bell, & Zawacki, 2005) put it this way, "American corporations are accepting the 'New Age' view of organizations as a 'nested subset of open, living systems, dependent upon the larger environment for survival'" (p. 388). The fast-changing business environments of the twenty-first century, especially due to globalization and increased competition, have resulted in a significant need to not only be open to organizational change, but also to understand how to manage the change process. There are several theories of change that exist, and they all have much in common. Some of the more popular change theories are Kurt Lewin's three-step change theory, Appreciative Inquiry, and John Kotter's 8-step model of change.

Kurt Lewin's 3-step Change Theory

Kurt Lewin is considered the father of understanding organizational change by most. His model suggests that there are three steps one should take when undergoing organizational change: unfreezing, moving, and then refreezing. Through this process, the group undergoing change can first be destabilized—that is, allowing behaviors to move away from the status quo. The second step, moving, allows the change agents to implement the different processes or desired behaviors to the point that seems most desirable. Once this is achieved, the third stage is to refreeze, which stabilizes the change, making it the norm in terms of actions and behaviors (French et al., 2005). This model is one of the more popular change models, but also one that many consider outdated. However, Lewin's work should not be discounted as his theory continues to influence emerging thought, such as complexity theory (Burnes, 2004).

Appreciative Inquiry is a change model that is gaining in popularity and acceptance. Using this model of change, organizational change agents focus on the successes rather than the failures in order to pinpoint areas in which to change. The positive essence of the methodology makes it attractive to those who are generally concerned with employees' natural resistance to change. Johnson (Johnson & Leavitt, 2001) stated, "Appreciative inquiry is an approach that is uniquely suited to organizations that seek to be collaborative, inclusive, and genuinely caring for both the people within the organization and those they serve" (p. 129). In the field of organizational development, where major transformations take place, appreciative inquiry is the most common and most preferred method used by contemporary organizational practitioners (Rita Williams, as cited in French et al., 2005). The appreciative inquiry method not only serves as a catalyst for change, but is also the most easily accepted transformation process for those that resist change. The appreciative inquiry process, by means of looking at possibilities rather than problems, provides a different perspective for those involved in an organizational transformation.

John Kotter, a Harvard University professor, is well known as a leader in change management theory. His most famous work was his eight-step model for creating change (Kotter, 1998). The eight steps in his model were:

1. Establish a sense of urgency
2. Form a powerful guiding coalition
3. Create a vision
4. Communicate a vision
5. Empower others to act on a vision
6. Plan and create short-term wins
7. Consolidate improvements and produce even more change
8. Institutionalize new approaches

This model provided organizational change agents with a logical, action-oriented formula for implementing change, and as such has become popular on most bookshelves of modern managers and leaders. The first four steps are intended to change the status quo—perhaps building on Lewin's model. Steps three through seven allow the organization to introduce and begin implementing the change. The last step is intended to make the change permanently imbedded into the fabric of the organization.

Application

Motivating employees in a changing environment is no easy task. A leader in the twenty-first-century information-based organization is faced with a multitude of challenges (such as keeping productivity high) as information and knowledge-sharing is encroaching into the space that productivity once exclusively held at the top of the organizational priority list. The leader must engage in the leadership style that is most affective for an unstable and constantly changing environment.

Antonakis and House (as cited in Kinicki and Williams, 2003, p. 465) concluded that a combination of transformational leadership and transactional leadership styles, with an emphasis on the transformational portion, is the best method for leaders to motivate their employees. Leaders need to be aware of the individual needs of their employees, including the best way to motivate them. Every employee is different, and as such, leaders would benefit by considering the different types of motivating theories, some based on need, some based on process, and some based on behavior and reinforcement. However, understanding how to motivate each employee should not overshadow the need for the developmental and technical skills needed to perform job tasks, as well as making the appropriate and required resources available to the employees. Michaelson (2005) warns that where motivational theories are applied for the sole purpose of driving productivity, productivity will almost inevitably decline. Management that views workers paternalistically or as units to be manipulated, ultimately dehumanizes its workforce, however fair and beneficial the methods. In fact, respect, justice, and fair compensation may align with a worker's own idea of proper management, but if such reasonable treatment is transparently applied as "motivational" rather than humane, the worker may not respond in a positive way.

In addition to motivating employees, being a transformational leader also means that the leader is constantly striving for change through innovation and creative thinking. As leaders push for change, in order to keep up or stay ahead of the competition, they should expect to see significant resistance, unless an effective change management strategy is employed.

The bottom line is that the concepts of motivation, change management and productivity are intertwined and linked. All three should be a major consideration for a contemporary transformational leader.

Terms & Concepts

Appreciative Inquiry: A method for organizational transformation that focuses on the successes rather than the failures in order to pinpoint areas in which to change.

Change Management: Methods designed to help organizations successfully implement and sustain significant organizational transformation.

Equity Theory: Refers to an employee requiring fairness in the employee/employer relationship. Based on the work by Adams.

Expectancy Theory: Refers to how an employee is motivated to do a task by means of effort, outcome and reward. Based on Vroom's work.

Goal Setting: A motivating technique that allows employees to have a sense of ownership in their work, making them more committed to the organizational objectives.

Hierarchy of Needs Theory: Maslow's theory that proposes people are motivated by five basic needs, and that these needs are arranged in a pyramidal hierarchy.

Hygiene Theory: Herzberg's theory that motivation is a two-step process; first, eliminating the things that dissatisfy (usually context and environment related), and second, creating motivators or the things that satisfy (promotion, achievement, recognition, etc).

Motivation: An individual's internal drive required to complete a task (in addition to the skills and available resources).

Needs Theories: Motivational theories based on the individual's needs.

Process Theories: Motivational theories based on the process of completing job tasks.

Productivity: The output of an employee measured by their effectiveness and efficiency in achieving job tasks.

Reinforcement Theory: A motivational theory based on behavior and outcomes, consisting of positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, extinction, and punishment.

Transformational Leadership: A mainstream leadership theory that includes intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, inspiration, and idealized influence.

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