

Case study

How can the manager in this case study use Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to understand his employees' motivation?

Read the Case Study Below and answer the case study questions that follow Questions:

Health-Time Matthew James was the manager at Health-Time, a small but popular fitness club in a mid-sized college town. Health-Time had found a niche in the local market, providing high-quality aerobics classes and lots of them. The instructors at Health-Time were superior to those at other facilities around town, and Health-Time offered high-impact, low-impact and step aerobics and body-sculpting classes. By offering more than 80 classes per week, Health-Time attracted members who wanted a variety of classes at all times of the day. The Health-Time facility also included exercise bikes, stair climbers, treadmills and a small weight room, but its “bread and butter” was clearly the aerobics program. Matt James had recently taken over as manager after working at Health-Time for five years as an aerobics instructor. Matt’s classes were popular, and he was justifiably proud of the aerobics program and his part in making it a success. When he took the job as manager, however, Health-Time was not in good shape financially. Membership was dropping slightly, and personnel costs were way too high. In his first month as manager, Matt worked to streamline the staff by eliminating the positions of assistant manager and weight room supervisor and cutting the membership

coordinator position to half-time. Though there was unavoidable unhappiness surrounding these changes, Matt was pleased that he had reduced the management staff to himself, Clarissa (a half-time bookkeeper), and Mei-Chen (a half-time membership coordinator). After a short month as manager, Matt felt that he had the “office side” of the club in order, and he turned his attention to the receptionists and aerobic instructors. He had noticed that many receptionists and aerobic instructors did not take their jobs as seriously as he would like. The receptionists spent more time chatting with members than on job tasks (i.e., checking people in, writing receipts, answering phones, and cleaning up during downtime). The aerobics instructors often ran into their classes with little time to spare and had to rush to get their cassette tapes ready for class. Instructors and receptionists were also accustomed to informally swapping shifts and classes when the posted schedule conflicted with other plans. Almost all of the reception staff and aerobic instructors were students at the local university. Receptionists were paid the minimum wage and aerobics instructors were paid about \$15.00 per class taught. Matt decided to hold a general meeting to let the aerobics and reception staff know what he expected now that he was manager. Though he had been their “buddy” when he taught aerobics, he knew that his loyalty now had to be with the financial success of Health-Time. He truly cared about the club and wanted to see it thrive for both professional and personal reasons. At the meeting, Matt told the instructors and receptionists that they all had to pull together for the good of Health-Time. To promote a family feeling, he provide them all with sweatshirts

displaying the Health-Time logo. He then explained why he thought they should shape up and change their behaviors on the job. As his employees slumped in their chairs, he laid down the law: "I know things have been lax around here," he said, "but the success of Health-Time depends on everyone pulling together to make this place work. I know you're all used to the way things used to be around here, but we have to change. There'll be no more idle chatter on the job, and every instructor will be prepared for class at least 15 minutes ahead of time. All changes in the schedule will go through me. When we do change and when this club is as successful as it can be, you'll feel proud to be a part of this place and what we've accomplished together!"

Three weeks later, Matt was perplexed. Three of his receptionists had quit, telling him that they could earn minimum wage elsewhere. Two aerobics instructors had decided to start teaching at the University Athletic Club rather than at Health-Time. Although the remaining staff members were now following his rules regarding job behavior and scheduling, morale seemed to be at an all-time low.

"You know, I just can't understand these people," Matt complained to a friend. "We've got a great thing going with Health-Time. We're the best aerobics program in town, and they should feel proud to be a part of it. I know I get a real bang out of making that place the best it can be – I always have, even when I was just an instructor. But these people just don't seem to care. And when I talk to them about the problem, it only gets worse. I even gave them sweatshirts to get them motivated, but they still quit on me! Is it me, or is it them? And what should I do now?"

Case Questions:

1. Describe the motivational problems of the staff at Health-Time using Maslow's Needs Hierarchy.
2. What strategies would you recommend to Matt to deal with the problem?

