

Career Preparation

JOB SEARCHING – WHAT DO YOU WANT IN A JOB?

The Story

The lesson here is

“Don’t take a job that doesn’t give you what you want.”

Andy Lester

The author of “Land the Tech Job you Love”



The Story

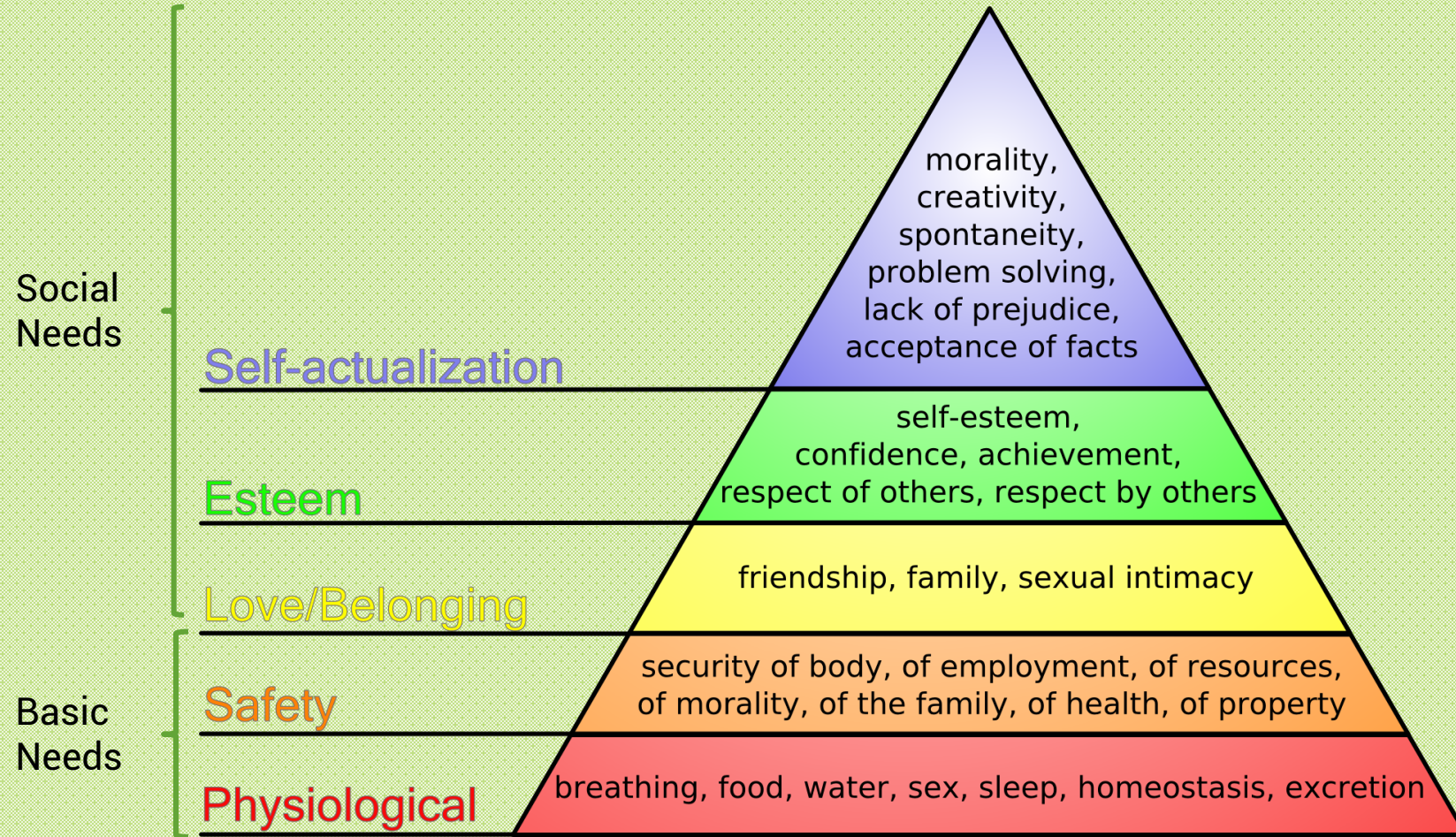
“You can’t get what you want ’til you know what you want.”

But how do you know what you want, what’s important, what matters?

A Crash Course in Work Motivation Theory

In 1943, psychologist Abraham Maslow popularized the concept of a hierarchy of psychological needs for humans.

He proposed that humans have basic needs that motivate them, grouped into six categories.



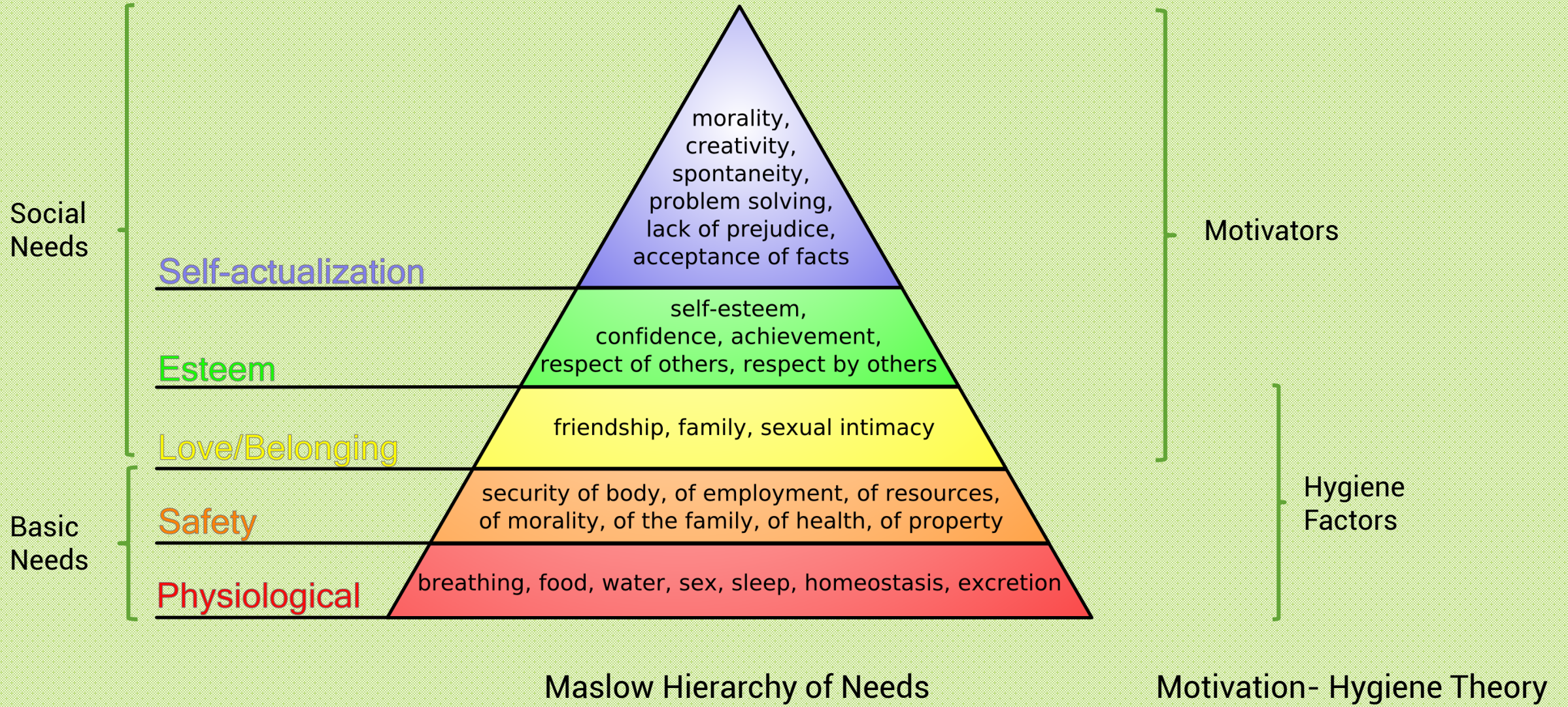
Maslow Hierarchy of Needs

A Crash Course in Work Motivation Theory

Similar to Maslow's hierarchy, Frederick Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory looks to explain what motivates workers.

He found that some aspects of a job are motivators; that is, they encourage workers to do more.

Other aspects are hygiene factors, such that their absence will result in dissatisfaction, but their presence is not a motivator.



A Crash Course in Work Motivation Theory

As you consider what is important to you in a job, consider each aspect of a job and where it fits in Maslow's hierarchy and whether it's a hygiene factor or motivator for you.

Dig In

Take the simple sentence “I should learn Java.”
Replace the word *should* with something more specific, more descriptive.

Positive

- I would like to learn Java.
- My career options get broader if I learn Java.
- I can make more money if I learn Java.

Negative

- I’ve been programming for ten years; I should know Java.
- I think that most other people know Java, so I should, too.
- I’m embarrassed that I don’t know Java.

The Motivation Worksheet

This worksheet will act as a guide for you as you search for jobs and a sort of compass for keeping you on track as you evaluate opportunities.

Your worksheet need not be complicated. It can be a simple list of factors and some sort of indicator of relative importance. There's no wrong way to do this, so long as it's honest and fits your needs.

The Motivation Worksheet

Here's what a worksheet of Andy would look like in 2009 and twelve years earlier in 1997.

Andy's Needs	2009	1997
Salary	7	9
Good health benefits	10	3
Location	6	2
Strong team, co-workers	10	4
Contributing to open source software	6	2
Using non-Windows technology	9	0
Autonomy	7	10

What Motivates You?

Here's a list of factors that most people find important to consider as they search for a job.

Money

Money is perhaps the most obvious motivator, but it's not always a matter of how much you can get. Money also comes in many different forms like base salary, yearly, performance and signing bonus.

What to know: what minimum salary you require and what range you expect to make.

What Motivates You?

Benefits

Maybe you have a family with specific health-care needs, so the type of health insurance offered makes a difference.

Retirement plans that a company pays into are effectively free money.

What Motivates You?

Benefits

Stock and stock options are deferred compensation that relate to how well the company is doing.

You may be offered perks like health club memberships, company cars, discounts on products the company sells, and so on.

What to know: benefits you must have, including any specifics about types of health coverage you must have.

What Motivates You?

Location

Your workplace's location is relevant in both a macro and micro sense. if you're in Cebu and plan on staying there, you're not going to be searching for jobs in Manila.

What to know: how far you are willing to commute every day, in terms of both distance and time, and in what form of transportation.

What Motivates You?

Pride and Prestige

For some, the allure of having a Google business card or being able to say “I work for Apple” can be intoxicating.

The work itself may be the source of your pride. It may not matter if you’re working at Apple if you, or your friends, see your work as boring old sysadmin work.

What Motivates You?

Important Work

The type of work may make a difference as well. Perhaps you want to work on projects only for products or services that the company sells.

What to know: *what “important” work looks like to you.*

What Motivates You?

Type of Work to Be Done

The type of work may be different from what work is important. Programmers are often motivated by sexy products and projects.

What to know: *the kinds of projects that excite you and make you want to come to work each day.*

What Motivates You?

Company Size/Department Size

Size of the company usually has a big effect on how things are done.

Bigger companies tend to be more rule-bound.
Smaller companies usually give employees more autonomy.

Bigger companies may have more room for advancement, but it may be a more political process than in smaller ones.

What to know: *how big a company, a department, or a team that you want to work for.*

What Motivates You?

Co-Workers

Do you need a well-oiled, high-performing team to make your life complete?

Or can you get by with co-workers who fly below your soaring heights?

How important is it to have co-workers who are more talented than you to challenge your skills?

Do you get along with everyone? Or will one jerk on the team ruin your whole day?

What Motivates You?

Co-Workers

The importance of social interactions at work can't be ignored. You'll be with your co-workers for forty hours a week or more, which may well be more waking hours than you spend with your spouse or girlfriend.

What to know: *who you want to work with and who you want to avoid.*

What Motivates You?

Technology Used

Don't expect that the company will match your desires exactly. Maybe they're running on Macintoshes instead of Windows.

In fact, you may specifically look for differences as a motivator for the job. Maybe you've used only Linux in the past and the chance to work in a BSD environment would be a great addition to your résumé.

What to know: what systems, languages, and other tools you enjoy using.
What you want to learn going forward.

What Motivates You?

Autonomy and Direction

Techies tend to crave independence and autonomy more than most, sometimes to the degree where there can be grave misunderstandings between the employee and management.

What to know: *imagine what a good relationship with management means to you.*

What Motivates You?

Dress Code

How comfortable do you have to be?

Do you bridle at the thought of management telling you what you can and can't wear?

The war with management over dress codes has been around since the first programmers came to work in torn jeans and a flannel shirt.

Techs tend to hate ties and prefer to dress casually.

What Motivates You?

Working Hours

Can you work Monday through Friday from 7:45 to 4:15?
How about whenever you want, so long as the work is done?
Are you able to do weekend and after-hours work?

Flexibility with family can be critical.

Can you take some hours in the afternoon to go to your kid's doctor appointment?

What the job ad calls “family-friendly” may not meet your expectations.

What Motivates You?

... and Many More

Fun factor: Is the work fun or a drudge?

Career advancement: Do you have a path to advance in the company?
Or does that not concern you?

Company stability: Is the company likely to be around in the long term?
What's your tolerance for risk?

Stepping stone to future jobs: Do you need a certain kind of job to reach future goals?