The Roots of Employee Motivation

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Abstract

The school of thought by many firms are still as distant today as it was seventy years ago when deciding how to motivate employees to do better higher quality work. The research presented in this research is an attempt to show the reader that there are many options that prove effective when it comes down to employee motivation and job satisfaction. There are also many alternatives other than giving employees monetary rewards. The research also proved that employee motivation does not start with the "rule with an iron fist theory" in which employees are motivated out of fear. Employees are indeed motivated with simple rewards and recognition that are cheap for the employer but priceless for the employee. These thoughts and theories have been both researched and proven by countless surveys and countless hours of research. The research started with Maslow's Hierarchy of needs and continues today between scholars alike.

Employee motivation and job satisfaction have pondered by the minds of scholars and managers since the early 1900's or earlier. The questions; what creates the motivation for employees to do their work in a productive and intuitive manner? What keeps employees satisfied with their work today that will prevent them from having high absenteeism? Or how does the organization keep from having a high turn around rate? There are three main psychologists that spent a lot of time formulating the different needs theories that describes contrasting views on human motivation. With so much work that has been involved with the study of motivation, managers and organizations should realize that through motivation an employee's job satisfaction will increase creating more productive employees and a better work place.

Fitz-enz (1997) stated that the average company loses approximately $1 million dollars with every 10 managerial and professional employees who leave the organization (Ramill, 2004). This is a big loss for these organizations, often a loss that organizations don't realize resulting a sunk cost in their operating expenses. The organization will not get that cost back, this is such a discrete cost that organizations often overlook this as an expenditure of their manpower. For this reason organizations need to start looking at why their employees are leaving the company seriously to better retain their employees in the future.

The term motivation is derived from the Latin word movere, meaning to move (Dictionary.com, 2014). Motivation represents those psychological processes that cause the arousal, direction, persistence of voluntary actions that are goal oriented (Ramill, 2004). The definitions of motivation arose the various needs theories of motivation in an attempt to pinpoint internal factors that energizes behavior. Needs as defined are physiological or psychological deficiencies that arouse behavior. Thus, human needs vary over time and place (Ramill, 2004).

Maslow's needs hierarchy theory is stated that human beings aspire to become self-actualized and viewed human potential as a vastly underestimated and unexplained territory (Ramill, 2004). The hierarchy starts with the need to obtain physiological support before being able to move to the next rung in the pyramid. The need for security which includes economic, psychological, and physical security are the next needs that need to be filled before moving to the next rung. The person then needs to fulfill the social need before moving up to esteem then to self-actualization. This needs hierarchy is really great in theory but does not explain the motivational factors of individual employees. This is because employees in today's modern world do not have the same needs or goals in mind. Employees also have different motivators that are not explained by the hierarchy of needs theory. McClelland's needs theory focuses more on three needs: achievement, power, and affiliation (Ramill, 2004). The need for achievement is defined as the drive to excel; the need for power is defined as the need to make others behave in a way that they would not have behaved otherwise; the need for affiliation was defined as the desire for friendly and close interpersonal relationships (Ramill, 2004). Achievement theories propose that motivation and performance vary according to the strength of one's need for achievement (Ramill, 2004). This is best summed as saying that the need for achievement proposes that motivation and performance vary according to the strength of one's need for achievement and is defined as a desire to accomplish something difficult (Ramill, 2004). According to Ramill (2004), McClelland proposed that high achievers are more likely to be successful entrepreneurs. The need for affiliation is suggested that people have the desire to spend time in social relationships and activities. These people are likely best at being effective managers or leaders because they have a hard time making difficult decisions without worrying about being disliked. The need for power reflects an individual's desire to influence, coach, teach, or encourage others to achieve.

McClelland proposes that top managers should have a high need for power coupled with a low need for affiliation (Ramill, 2004). These needs are vary generalized needs that have been created but nonetheless are very profound in their finding and describe people and their motivators effectively.

The theory that most accurately describes employee motivation is Expectancy theory. Expectancy theory describes an employee's tendency to perform his job tasks at a level that's equal to the type of response he expects from the employer (Mayhew, 2014). Expectancy theory argues that the strength of a tendency to act in a certain way depends of the strength of an expectation that the act will be followed by a given outcome and on the attractiveness of that outcome to the individual (Ramill, 2004). In layman's terms the individual is to act with their perception that their effort will lead to performance and the desirability of the outcomes that result from the performance. This leads to the thought that job design is actually the answer that gives motivation among employees. The general concept of job design is that workers are motivated to perform better when they find satisfaction in their jobs. Research suggests jobs that are interesting, motivating, and meaningful often supply employees with a high level of satisfaction, which translates into a productive work-force that meets business goals (Redmond, 2014). This is based on the idea that the task itself is the key to employee motivation. Mainly boring and monotonous jobs will stifle the motivation to perform well. This is where the challenging job enhances motivation through variety, autonomy, and decision authorities as ways of adding challenge to a job (Ramill, 2004). In today's workforce employees are hungering for more responsibility and tasks that are not mundane in nature. Employees want substance in the work that they are performing. This is where the other needs theories fail to meet the expectations of employee motivation. They are assuming that the employees are still striving to

meet the basic needs of security, and safety. This is not true in the modern era and employees are now looking for different motivating factors in their lives.

Herzberg's theory of the motivator-hygiene in this author's opinion goes almost hand and hand with the expectancy theory. Frederick Herzberg's theory was based on a survey of over two hundred accountants and engineers throughout the United States (Value Based Management , 2014). During the survey Herzberg discovered that employees tended to describe satisfying experiences in terms of factors that were intrinsic to the content of the job itself. According to Herzberg the factors leading to job satisfaction are separate and distinct from those that lead to job dissatisfaction. Because of the hygiene theory managers who seek to eliminate factors that create job dissatisfaction can bring about peace but not necessarily motivation (Ramill, 2004). Herzberg advises managers to use vertical loading on employees instead of just giving employees tasks that are harder. Vertical loading is when an employee is given tasks that are of a supervisory position to motivate employees. This also gives employees more responsibility. Herzberg has advised to follow seven principles when vertically loading jobs (Ramill, 2004).

Table 1.1 Principles Used to Provide Additional Responsibility

Principle		Motivators Involved
a)	Removing some controls while retaining accountability	Responsibility and personal achievement
b)	Increasing the accountability of individuals for their own work	Responsibility and recognition
c)	Giving a person a complete natural unit of work(module, division, area, and so on	Responsibility, achievement, and recognition
d)	Granting additional authority to employee in one's activity job freedom	Responsibility, achievement, and recognition
e)	Making periodic reports directly available to the worker directly rather than to the supervisor	Internal recognition
f)	Introducing new and more difficult tasks not previously handled	Growth and learning
g)	Assigning individuals specific or specialized tasks, enabling them to become experts	Responsibility, growth, and advancement

Ramill (2004), explains that with the principles of Herzberg there is more in the manager's role in motivating employees than just compensation. Herzberg also suggests that managers and organizations should arrange work in the following ways; job enlargement, job rotation, and job

enrichment (Value Based Management , 2014). Ramill (2004), outlines some of his guiding principles when looking back upon the theories and how to put them into practice.

Needs of the employee- Employees have multiple needs based on their individual, family, and cultural values. In addition these needs depend on the current and desired economic, political, and social status; career aspiration; the need to balance career, family, education, community, religion, and other factors;; and a general feeling of one's satisfaction with the current and desired state of being.

Work Environment- Employees want to work in an environment that is productive, respectful, providing a feeling of inclusiveness, and offers a friendly setting.

Responsibilities- Given that one feels competent to perform in a more challenging capacity and has previously demonstrated such competencies, and employee may feel a need to seek additional responsibilities and be rewarded in a fair and equitable manner.

Supervision- Managers and other leaders more frequently that others feel a need to teach, coach, and develop other. In addition these individuals would seek to influence the organization's goals, objectives and the strategies designed to achieve the mission of the organization.

Fairness and equity- Employees want to be treated and rewarded in a fair and equitable manner regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, geographic location, or other similarly defined categories. Employees also expect to be rewarded better than their counterparts that are working with an output at or below the norm.

Effort- Even though employees may exert higher levels of effort into a position

based on a perceived significant reward, this could be a short-term success if the

task itself does not challenge or provides satisfaction to the employee.

Employee' Development- Employees prefer to function in environment that

provide a challenge, offers new learning opportunities significantly contributes to

the organization's success, offers opportunities for advancement and personal

development based on success and demonstrated interest in a particular area.

The above listed theories are the foundation for managers. Managers must know the

basics which their decisions are made from. The question remains though how do managers take

the motivational theories and put them into practice to create employee motivation, satisfaction,

and productivity? Messmer (2005), describes a "sandwich generation[1]" where it is becoming

increasingly important for employees to have increased control of their time so they can balance

competing demands such as personal obligations that include caring for children and elderly

relatives. Being able to accommodate this group of employees can boost their morale and loyalty

to the company. The ways to accommodate this is to have flexible schedules that include

telecommuting and working from home. This also includes having more flexible office schedules

where employees are given the options of coming to work later or leaving a little earlier to better

accommodate their personal needs not just work needs. Work life balance is an issue that is on

the rise among employees. Other ways to create job satisfaction is giving employees interesting

work to keep employee retention. Employees also want to have the opportunity for professional

development. This is not only good for growth but creates a more skilled workforce within the

organization (Messmer, 2005). Not only should the organization provide accommodations

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[1] Sandwich generation is defined as a generation of people who are caring for their aging parents while supporting their own children (merriam-webster, 2014)

for their workforce; employees also want to have feedback on their performance.

Performance reviews are a good indicator of how the employee is performing, but these only happen once or twice a year. To build the positive work culture managers should be able to have conversations with their respective employees more often than once or twice a year. Ensuring that the employee knows how they are performing and where there is room for improvement. Without regular performance appraisals employees are often left in the dark about their performance. This often creates sentiment and dissatisfaction of the job. These feelings should not be ignored until the annual or semiannual review of the employee. A way to help carve better relationships between managers and employees is to have regular meetings. These meetings will help to serve what employees are doing right and what the employees need to improve upon. These meetings will help managers stay on track with their job requirements and professional objectives year-round (Messmer, 2005). There is nothing too lose when the manager stays in contact with their employees working to keep them on track to obtain goals. Employees need interaction to be able to communicate their needs to the organization. Each employee has a need that needs fulfilled. Developing career paths is another motivator for an employee (Messmer, 2005). Employees do not like the thought that they are going to stuck in their position without moving anywhere whether that move is horizontal or vertical. When a survey of 150 executives was surveyed of why good employees quit their organizations the number one reason was the limited opportunities for advancement. Good employees are ambitious and most likely won't stay in a position long if it lacks growth potential (Messmer, 2005). It is difficult for all organizations to have that potential for growth due to perspective size. There are a lot of organizations where the employee base and management base are small in size. These

organizations likely experiences higher turnover when compared to bigger organizations that naturally has more opportunities to help their employees grow to their potential.

With creating employee job satisfaction employee attitudes often come into play. There are contradicting schools of thought where happy employees are productive employees, and on the other side happy employees are not productive employees (Lise M. Saari, 2004). The truth is that employees have attitudes and viewpoints about the many aspects of their jobs and their organizations (Lise M. Saari, 2004). From the research however the focal point is job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is defined as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences (Lise M. Saari, 2004). The important idea to take away is that whether or not employees are either happy or not happy the manager has to consider how satisfied the employee is with their job. There are many ways for organizations to create job satisfaction in the business world today. Companies can create job rotation. Job rotation is often used in jobs where a quick cycle process is involved. Industries such as manufacturing plants often times use job rotation to help break up the repetitive cycles of turning the same bolt all day. This practice can also be used in a number of other industries to help create a more rounded employee. This process is sometimes called cross training of employees. This cross training means that employees can now rotate around where needed to fill in the gaps of missing employees. This process also makes the employee more indispensable to the organization. This is a form of horizontal loading that is used more frequently in organizations such as the United States Navy to develop a moveable workforce. Employers can also use the techniques such as job enlargement, and job enrichment. These techniques include more vertical loading. With this vertical loading employees are now given tasks that are more of a supervisory level. This gives the employee the chance to show that they are capable of having a more challenging task added

to their workloads as well as showing their managers that they are capable of more than just their job description. How the organization tackles the task of creating job satisfaction is dependent upon what the organization is trying to accomplish. It is proven that job satisfaction not only creates employees that are productive but also creates a positive work environment that feeds into their need to create more motivation.

Employee motivation is not just created on the back of the employee's job satisfaction. Motivation can come from a number of different factors. Employers can drive the influence of Herzberg and create more vertical loading. This idea works but without recognition this method often times becomes a source of employee resentment without other practices in place. The organization needs to be able to recognize their employees in ways that are both satisfying and rewarding. A survey conducted in the 1990's revealed that nearly 95% of American workers ranked cash bonuses as a meaningful incentive, 87% believe that special training is a positive incentive, following stock options at (85%). 76% said that recognition at a company meeting, and tied at 62% was merchandise incentives and a simple pat on the back saying "good job" (Creech, 1995). It is important to note that even though monetary incentives are ranked number one on the list these incentives are short lived. The organization can also fall into the trap of where the monetary bonus becomes expected of the organization, often-times creating problems, if that is taken away from the employees. An interesting item from the survey is the fact that employees want recognition. The two forms of recognition, being recognized at a company meeting and receiving a pat on the back ranked rather high in the list of employee incentives. Employees also said that they wanted to be part of the inner workings of the corporation (Creech, 1995). These are simple and inexpensive ways to create motivation among employees. These practices are more often being over looked within organizations today. These are such small and

simple jesters that help employees realize they are important to the organization and their work is

needed and appreciated. These small steps will lay the foundations of the organizations

motivators for their employees.

Recognition and reward represent fundamentally different mechanisms of human

motivation (Hansen, 2002). With these different mechanisms Maslow not only provided a

theoretical basis for differentiation between reward and recognition but for arguing that they

represent different mechanisms of human motivation (Hansen, 2002). Thus the primary

implication is that reward and recognition must be distinguished because the underlying

mechanism of human motivation is different. Recognition and reward are not simply two options

from which to choose when assembling an employee motivation program (Hansen, 2002).

Employers need to change the angle in which they undertake employee motivation. Instead of

asking how do we motivate employees? Employers need to ask the question; how is this

behavior motivated (Hansen, 2002)? In response organizations should not expect employees to

appreciate having their behavior motivated with a reward program (Hansen, 2002). According to

Hansen (2002), the only appropriate expectation is that behavior meets the minimal requirements

for the reward. Effective reward programs may be the ante that gives the organization entrance to

the game (Hansen, 2002). On the other hand recognition is appropriate to intrinsically motivate

behaviors such as inventiveness, commitment, and initiative (Hansen, 2002). Herzberg observed

that problems could occur with the removal of rewards because they often turn into expectations

or even entitlements. Herzberg described this as the "what have you done for me lately"

syndrome. This suggests that an organization will be rewarded for both a reward program and a

recognition program. Recognition programs are more likely to have a lasting effect on the

employees, whereas rewards can become subject to entitlements. The research suggests that even

though programs that have reward systems in place, employees can come to the expectation that they are entitled to that reward because they met those minimum requirements. A recognition program tends to go a lot further when trying to motivate employees. This approach is cheaper and goes along way when it comes to notoriety within the organization. It is because of the notoriety of being recognized by the upper ranks within the organization that drives employees to be motivated to perform their job with excellence.

Theorists and employers are still studying the early works of motivational behavior. Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Herzberg's theories of employee motivation still make the foundations of thought. The modern day management fads that float around in business journals today are still based on the founding principles. Employees and organizations are realizing that it is important to see what the employee needs and to accommodate those needs. Employee needs have a wide range in scope. Ranging from needing flexible work hours to provide better work and personal life balance to being able to reward employees with monetary and recognition rewards. Employers are now coming to the table with every possible idea to get the most out of their workforce. As this workforce changes it is sure that the underlining basic theories won't change just the execution of the principle. Job design to rewards is always changing and so does the organizations who want to implement these programs into their structure. It will always be important for organizations to recognize that without employees, work will be left undone. So with that in mind what drives the employees to work will always be the subject of the human resource professionals around the world.

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