

ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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Lesson 08

introduction to intrinsic motivation

ONCE AGAIN: DEFINITION OF INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

- **INTRINSIC MOTIVATION** arises from engaging in an activity that is perceived enjoyable and, most importantly, like a goal in itself
 - It's doing something for the sake of doing it; performing the activity IS THE GOAL
 - In other words, you are intrinsically motivated whenever you cannot separate pursuing an activity from receiving its benefits

SO, IF INTRINSIC MOTIVATION DEPENDS ON PERCEIVING THE ACTIVITY ITSELF AS A GOAL, THEN IT IS CRUCIAL TO UNDERSTAND WHAT CHARACTERISTICS THE ACTIVITY SHOULD HAVE IN ORDER TO BE INTRINSICALLY MOTIVATING

THIS IS CRUCIAL FROM AN ORGANIZATIONAL POINT OF VIEW
(HOW SHOULD ORGANIZATIONS DESIGN JOBS?)

BUT IT IS ALSO CRUCIAL FROM AN INDIVIDUAL POINT OF VIEW
(WHAT JOB SHOULD I TRY TO DO?)

A CONCEPTUAL MAP



AUTONOMY & SELF-EXPRESSION

WHY IS IT RELEVANT FOR INTRINSIC MOTIVATION?

Self-expression and self-determination represents a reward in itself, for most people, in most situations.

Intrinsically motivating jobs should provide, *at least to some extent*, opportunities to **make their own decisions**, to express their **view and voice**, to see themselves and be seen by others as **causal agents**, and a sense of **control, self-determination** and **authorship**

IS COMPLETE AUTONOMY POSSIBLE?

In organizations, no activity is completely isolated. All tasks are directly or indirectly interdependent from other tasks.

Thus, autonomy cannot be neither conceived nor implemented, in organizational settings, as complete independence.

Rather, autonomy should be seen as a **perimeter of discretion that individuals are able to exercise while, at the same time, considering the constraints that are implied by their interdependence with other organizational actors in pursuing a common goal.**

GROWTH & MASTERY

WHY IS IT RELEVANT FOR INTRINSIC MOTIVATION?

For most people, personal and professional development (growth) and full mobilization of their abilities (mastery) represents a reward in itself.

Intrinsically motivating jobs should provide, *at least to some extent*, with opportunities to **learn**, to receive **feedback**, to be exposed to **new experiences** and challenges, to receive **training**, to **fully utilize their abilities**, to feel **competent** and to pursue **learning goals**

IS FOSTERING GROWTH and MASTERY ALWAYS POSSIBLE?

In organizations, almost all jobs and roles include at least some tasks that are repetitive, simple, devoided of any learning opportunities, or where individuals cannot fully express their abilities.

Thus, the key point is **the extent to which a certain job or task provides at least some opportunities for growth and mastery.**

However, it is also crucial the **individuals' attitude towards activities**. For example, different individuals may interpret the same challenging activity in very different ways, in relation to their implication for growth and mastery

MEANING & PURPOSE

WHY IS IT RELEVANT FOR INTRINSIC MOTIVATION?

For most people, performing an activity that is perceived as meaningful, important, purpose-oriented, and that aligns with personal values, represents a reward in itself.

Intrinsically motivating jobs should be, at least to some extent, **goal-oriented**, emphasizing a sense of **progress**, clearly connected with a **broader sense of purpose, value, impact and meaning**

DIFFERENT LEVELS AND TIME REFERENCES

At a **micro** level / **short-term** horizon: tasks that are 1) oriented to **goals** that are **clear, specific, challenging** 2) provide a sense of **completeness** 3) provide a clear sense of continuous **progress** and **achievement**

At a **macro** level / **long-term** horizon: perceived **causal connection** and **alignment** of individual goals to organizational goals, the relevance of the job's **impact** (its **consequentiality**, the fact that **it makes a difference**), the significance of **values** and **meanings** associated with the job

PASSION & INTEREST

WHY IS IT RELEVANT FOR INTRINSIC MOTIVATION?

For most people, experiencing the pleasure of doing something that they perceive as enjoyable and interesting represents a reward in itself

Intrinsically motivating jobs should be, *at least to some extent*, **personalized** and **customized** to the individual's natural and / or learnt / discovered **interests, passions, preferences** and **inclinations**, so that the **job-person fit** is as high as possible

TOP-DOWN vs BOTTOM-UP JOB DESIGN

Classic job design completely or largely disregard individual preferences. When organizations utilize a pure top-down logic to job design, it is very difficult, or very expensive, to increase significantly the **person-job fit**. In that case, the need for **coordination** is prioritized over the need for **personalization**.

It is necessary a different approach to job design (where a **bottom-up logic** is given more emphasis), where autonomy is used not just as a way to give discretion in the execution phase, but also in the job design phase.

A more balanced approach between **personalization** and **coordination** should be pursued in order to create intrinsically motivating jobs.

RELATIONSHIPS & COLLABORATION

WHY IS IT RELEVANT FOR INTRINSIC MOTIVATION?

For most people, being involved in activities that imply positive relationships, a sense of belonging, community and sharedness represents a reward in itself

Intrinsically motivating jobs should be based, *at least to some extent*, on **collaborative effort, mutual support, teamwork**, a sense of “**sharedness**” (for example, sharing goals and values), **reciprocity**

DO INDIVIDUALS MATTER?

YES, different individuals may be more or less sensitive to the social component of their job. **Extroverts**, for example, are more intrinsically motivated by collaborative activities than **introverts** (the same is true for more «agreeable» individuals). Other factors to consider: **background culture, organizational culture, task complexity** and several others

However, do not underestimate the *value of positive relations even for introverts*. Significant studies (eg the Harvard Study of Adult Development) show that having strong, deep, meaningful social relations is **the most important determinant of long term happiness and health**, even for introverts.

TO SUMMARIZE

jobs providing task variety, challenges, new experiences, training, knowledge sharing - in organizations that value competence, personal development and learning goals

GROWTH & MASTERY

AUTONOMY

jobs allowing decision making, self-expression and self-determination - in organizations that are psychologically safe and promote initiative, proactivity and authorship

jobs perceived as meaningful, impactful, valuable, goal-oriented, emphasizing progress - in organizations where a sense of collective purpose is clearly communicated

MEANING & PURPOSE

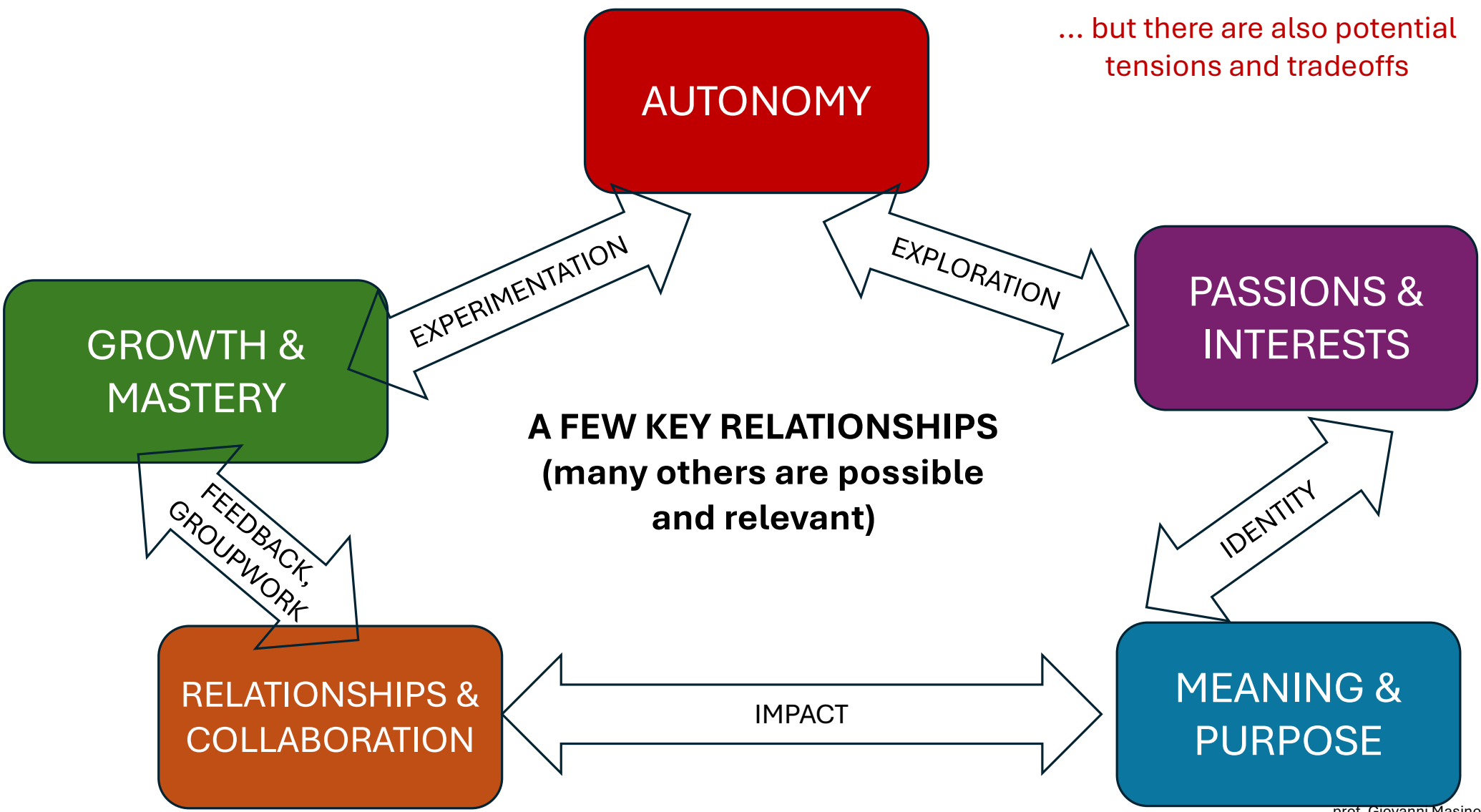
jobs reflecting individual interests, passions and preferences - in organizations that value a high level of person-job fit

PASSIONS & INTERESTS

RELATIONSHIPS & COLLABORATION

jobs relying on collaboration, mutual support and teamwork - in organizations with a strong sense of community and relationship-oriented leadership and culture

... but there are also potential tensions and tradeoffs



POSITIVE EFFECTS OF INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

- In very general terms: decades of studies clearly show that intrinsic motivation has a number of important advantages and POSITIVE effects, both for **people** and for **organizations**:
 - PEOPLE'S HAPPINESS AND WELL-BEING
 - INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE
 - ORGANIZATIONAL LOYALTY
 - CREATIVITY (INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP)
 - LEARNING AND COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY (INCLUDING YOUNG PEOPLE AND CHILDREN)
 - IMPROVED FOCUS, ATTENTION AND PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS
 - PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR, COLLABORATIVE AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING ATTITUDE
 - ETHICAL BEHAVIOR

NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES AND RISKS OF INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

- In very general terms: **the negative consequences and risks are FAR LESS significant and consequential than the advantages**, and mostly concern peculiar / marginal situations or cases
- However, these risks should not be completely ignored
 - **WORK-LIFE INBALANCE**
 - being too passionate about your job may lead to neglect other important aspects of life
 - **RISK OF EXPLOITATION**
 - Intrinsically motivated employees may be more likely to accept poor working conditions, lower pay, or heavier workloads because they are driven by passion
 - **RISK OF IGNORING BROADER ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS**
 - Employees who are deeply motivated by their own interests may pursue personal goals at the expense of organizational strategy

PROBLEMATIC PERCEPTIONS ON INTRINSIC MOTIVATION (IM)

1. we tend to believe that others don't care about IM as much as we do

- in other words, **we tend to underestimate the relevance of IM for other people**
- this is relevant for organizations and HR managers, as they may rely too little on IM and too much on EM in order to motivate employees

2. we tend to underestimate the relevance of IM for ourselves in the future

- we tend to consider our «future self» almost as if it was «another person», so we underestimate the relevance of IM for our future self just like we do for other people
- this may lead to choices that we regret in the future (as we overestimate the relevance of Extrinsic Motivation for our future self)
- also, this may lead to choose future activities in which we will be less persistent than we anticipate, as we underestimate the relevance of future enjoyment
- **this is relevant when we need to choose a job among several options**
 - for example, **how much relevance we give to extrinsic criteria like pay, benefits, reputation, logistics, as compared to intrinsic criteria, like autonomy, growth, interest, purpose and connections**