

Organizations are like people. When they are healthy they operate within normal ranges. Is your organization running a fever? Is it showing signs of tension and pressure? On the verge of going into shock? Dr. Herzberg describes the diagnostic procedures that will help you to answer these questions.

Motivation-Hygiene Profiles

Frederick Herzberg

PINPOINTING WHAT AILS THE ORGANIZATION

Motivation-hygiene theory (often referred to as the two-factor theory of job attitudes or simply, as satisfier-dissatisfier theory) has been replicated so often (more than 200 times) that it's now possible to recognize employee morale problems from the profiles elicited by a motivation-hygiene theory study of an organization.

Motivation-hygiene theory suggests that job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction are produced by different work factors. What makes people satisfied at work are factors that relate to the content of their jobs—specifically, achievement, recognition for achievement, interesting work, increased responsibility, growth, and advancement. On the other hand, what makes people unhappy at work is not what they do but how well (or poorly) they are treated. These treatment factors (dissatisfiers) are related not to the content of work, but to the context of the job. The main factors in this group are company policy and administration practices, supervi-

sion, interpersonal relationships, working conditions, salary, status, and security. Because these factors describe the job context and, in their negative aspects, serve to provide job dissatisfaction, we have called them hygiene factors, symbolizing the fact that they represent preventive and environmental conditions of work.

The satisfier factors are known as motivators because if they are present in appropriate amounts in any organization, they bring about work motivation as a corollary to their creating positive attitudes of job satisfaction.

From these findings we can develop a normal, or classic, motivation-hygiene profile of an organization and use it to interpret results from specific organizations that show significant departures from the usual pattern. In this article we will analyze several common deviations from the classic profile that reveal critical problems in the management of human needs.

There are three reasons that discrepancies from the classic profile occur, not the

least of which is experimental error. Because all techniques contain the potential for error, slippages are often found in the results, with a hygiene item reported as satisfying or the lack of a motivator reported as dissatisfying. Second, individual differences in motivation can also account for discrepancies. Essentially, these differences suggest that the people interviewed were not "normal" and studies of clinical populations reported in the motivation-hygiene papers on mental health deal with these individual motivational problems. Another kind of deviation from the norm may appear, not because of any experimental error or because of any "personality" problems, but because of the climate of the organization itself and how it manages people. The motivation-hygiene interview procedure can reveal characteristics of the company that generate attitudes among its employees that are less than normal.

DEVELOPING THE PROFILE

The motivation-hygiene profile is constructed from the responses to a sequence-of-events survey of employees' feelings.

A representative group of employees from an organization or department report a time when they felt either exceptionally good or exceptionally bad about an event that occurred on their job. Asking the question in this manner assures the investigator that he is pinpointing events that describe a change-in-feeling state, and that the change is a critical one. Responses of this type are more likely to reveal a significant motivational pattern of the respondent than other types of questioning, because the focus is put on the specific event leading to the change in the employee's attitude, thus obtaining first-hand information on activities that involved the respondent, rather than the rationalizations

that are often given in response to attitude scales.

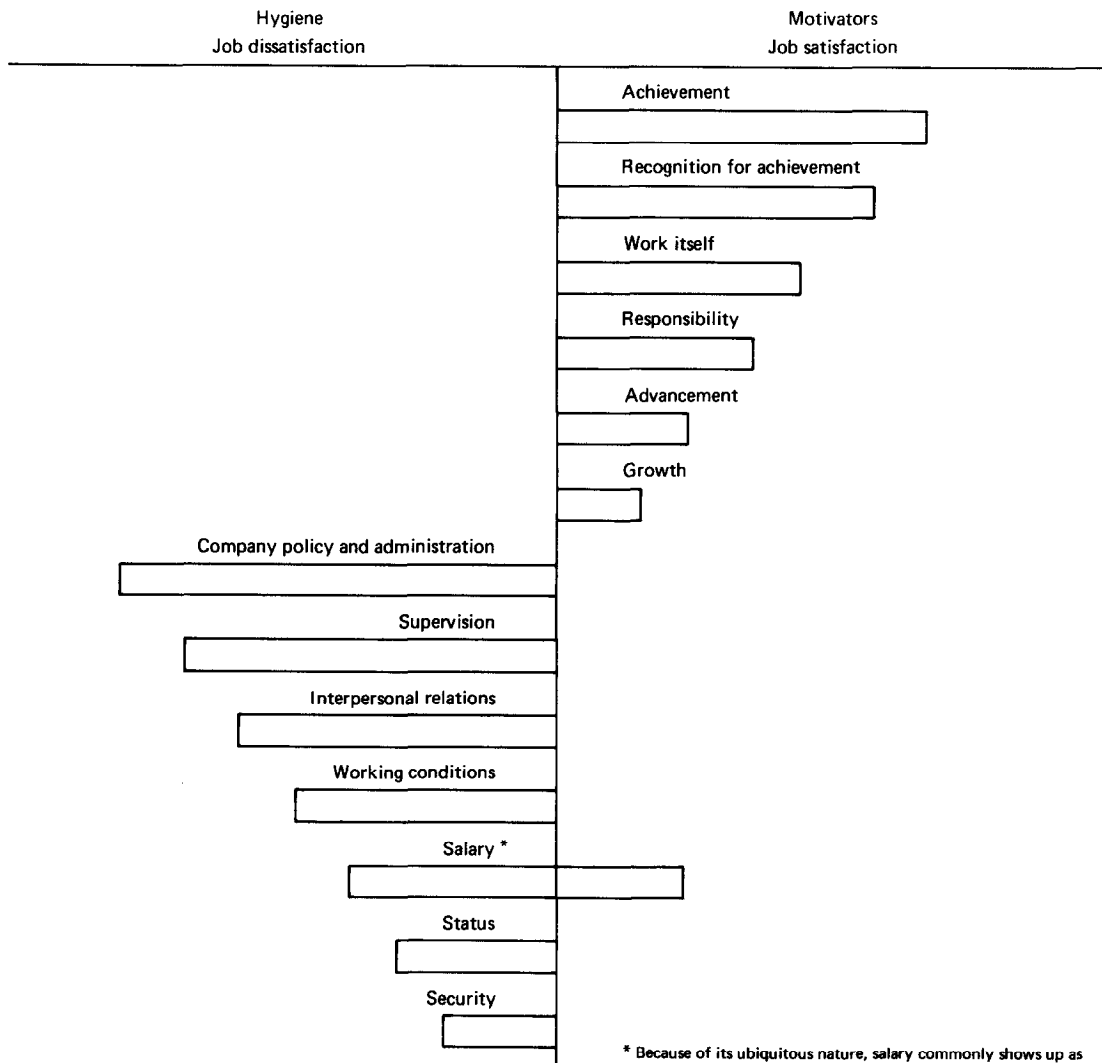
During the interview, the investigator concentrates on the event and asks the respondent to describe, in detail, what took place. The events are classified into factors that are essentially short-hand notations of what was going on during these periods of exceptional feelings. By grouping the data from all interviews within a single organization, it's possible to determine how often each factor is reported as satisfying or dissatisfying.

In profile analysis, these factors are ranked by frequency, *not* importance. All hygiene factors are potentially of equal importance, because you cannot meaningfully differentiate one type of pain as greater than any other. Nor can you equate the pain caused by the same factor in two different individuals.

To illustrate: The most common dissatisfier is company policy and administration, the least frequent, security. Remember that frequency is the key. An employee must deal every day with people on the job, mainly his supervisor and co-workers, and it is a rare day when all these experiences in interpersonal relations are positive. Also, he will be constrained almost every day in some way by company policy and administration. These are high-frequency dissatisfiers. Status and security, which by their nature evolve slowly, occur less often in day-to-day activities; therefore, they account for few responses in the interviews.

Similarly, with the motivators, achievement and recognition for achievement in an employee's life are much more likely to occur than more interesting work or job advancement. This distinction between frequency and importance is one of the most misinterpreted aspects of motivation-hygiene theory. All hygiene factors are equally im-

Figure 1. Classic profile of motivation and hygiene factors in an organization



* Because of its ubiquitous nature, salary commonly shows up as motivator as well as hygiene. Although primarily a hygiene factor, it also often takes on some of the properties of a motivator with dynamics similar to recognition for achievement.

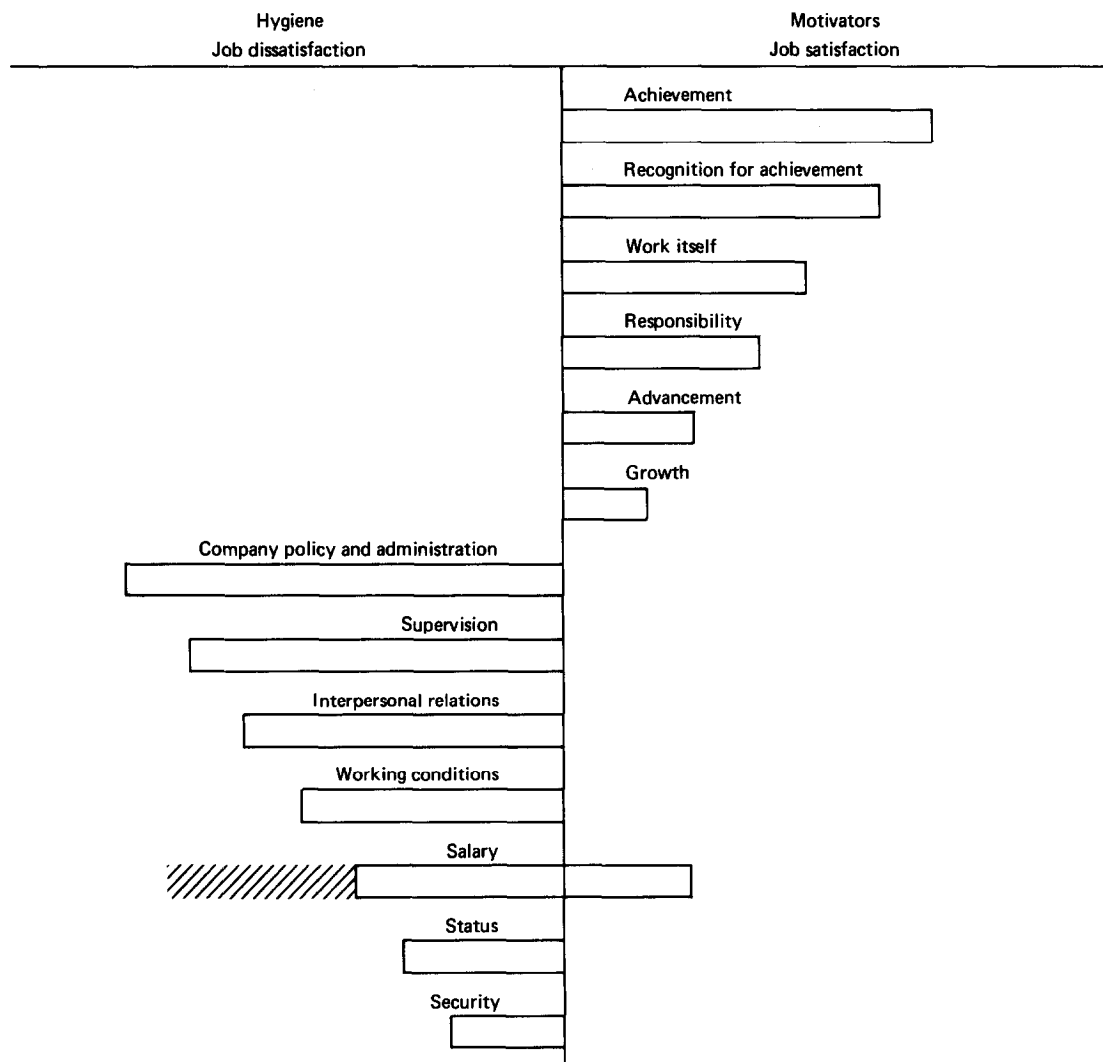
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portant, depending on the circumstances; however, the most important motivators occur with the least frequency. Personal growth is the end goal of the motivators, while achievement is the starting point for any personal growth. (For further explanation of this hierarchy of motivators and the equality of the hygiene factors see my book *Work and the Nature of Man*.)

A "normal," or classic, profile derived from numerous studies of employees ranging from the highest to the lowest level jobs and representing various cultures is illustrated in Figure 1. We can compare the findings from specific companies or any unit

of an organization with this profile and analyze significant deviations. With this procedure it becomes possible to generalize about the climate of the organization as a whole in terms of motivation and hygiene dynamics. Six organizational profiles are particularly representative of the major kinds of difficulties encountered in organizations; four of these problems originate with the mismanagement of hygiene and two arise out of inattention to motivational needs. The six descriptions that follow lay bare the dynamics responsible for the resultant aberrant profiles, and may be used as diagnostic classifications of problems within the organization.

Figure 2. The profile of a developing hygiene problem in an organization



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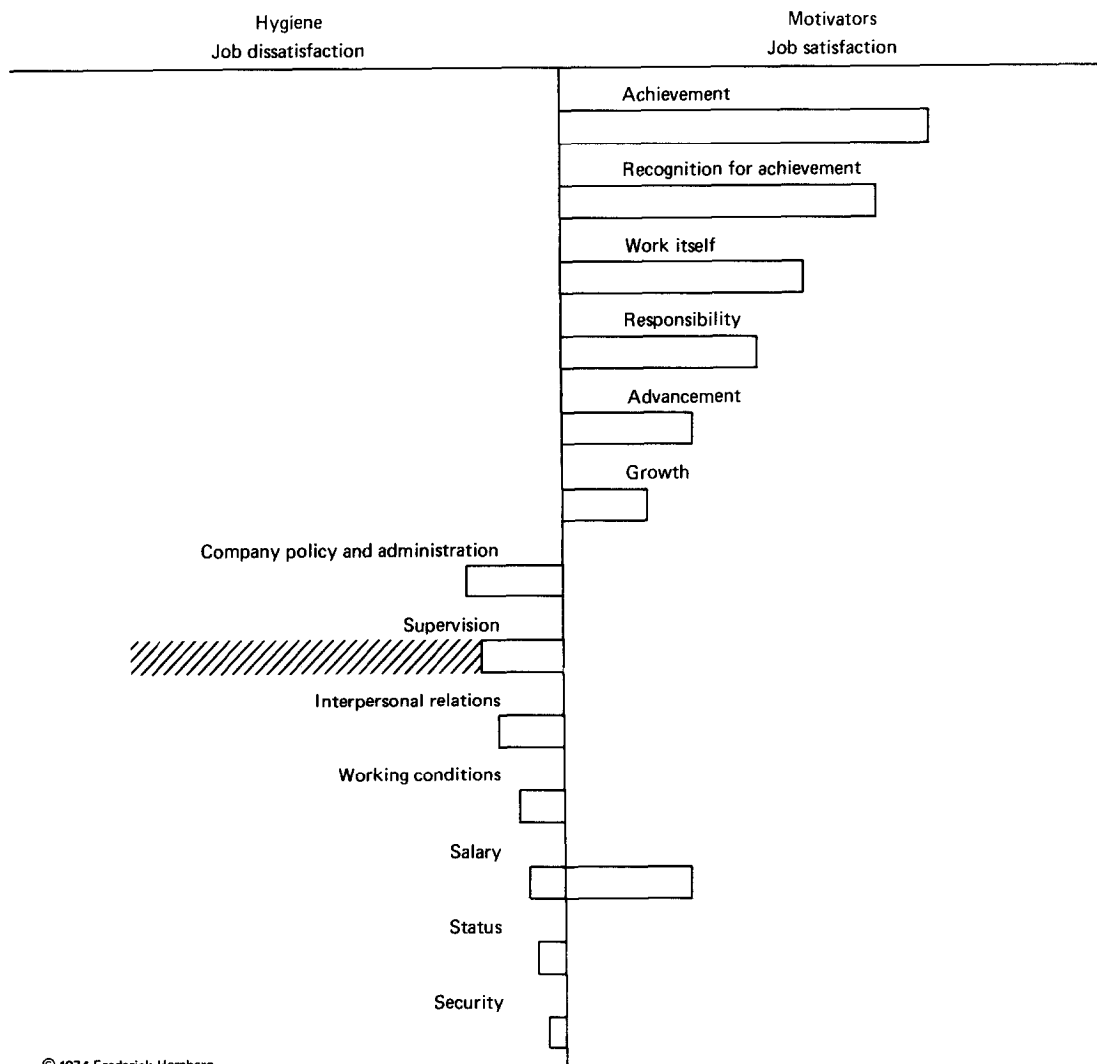
A DEVELOPING HYGIENE PROBLEM

The first problem, which can be found in almost all companies, is the mismanagement of one specific hygiene factor. In the profile shown in Figure 2 a single hygiene factor is significantly displaced in comparison with the classic profile. We use salary as an example, although any one of the hygiene factors would serve equally well. In organizations with this profile, a single source of pain is disturbing a large number of employees. Some inequity in comparison with other organizations is implied by a factor that is "out of step" with the others. We would expect salary, for example, to be a source of dissatisfaction in so-

cial service organizations where professional salaries are below the national average or less than those offered by private corporations for similarly qualified people. The hygiene problem is a legitimate one, albeit not critical to the present functioning of the organization.

Unlike typical morale survey ratings of salary or any of the other hygiene factors, a motivation-hygiene study showing a significant increase in discontent with a hygiene factor can be accepted as *real*, rather than as a general comment on the status of the factor in the organization. Corrective action can then be taken before it becomes a major disruptive source of discontent.

Figure 3. The profile of a hygiene crisis in an organization



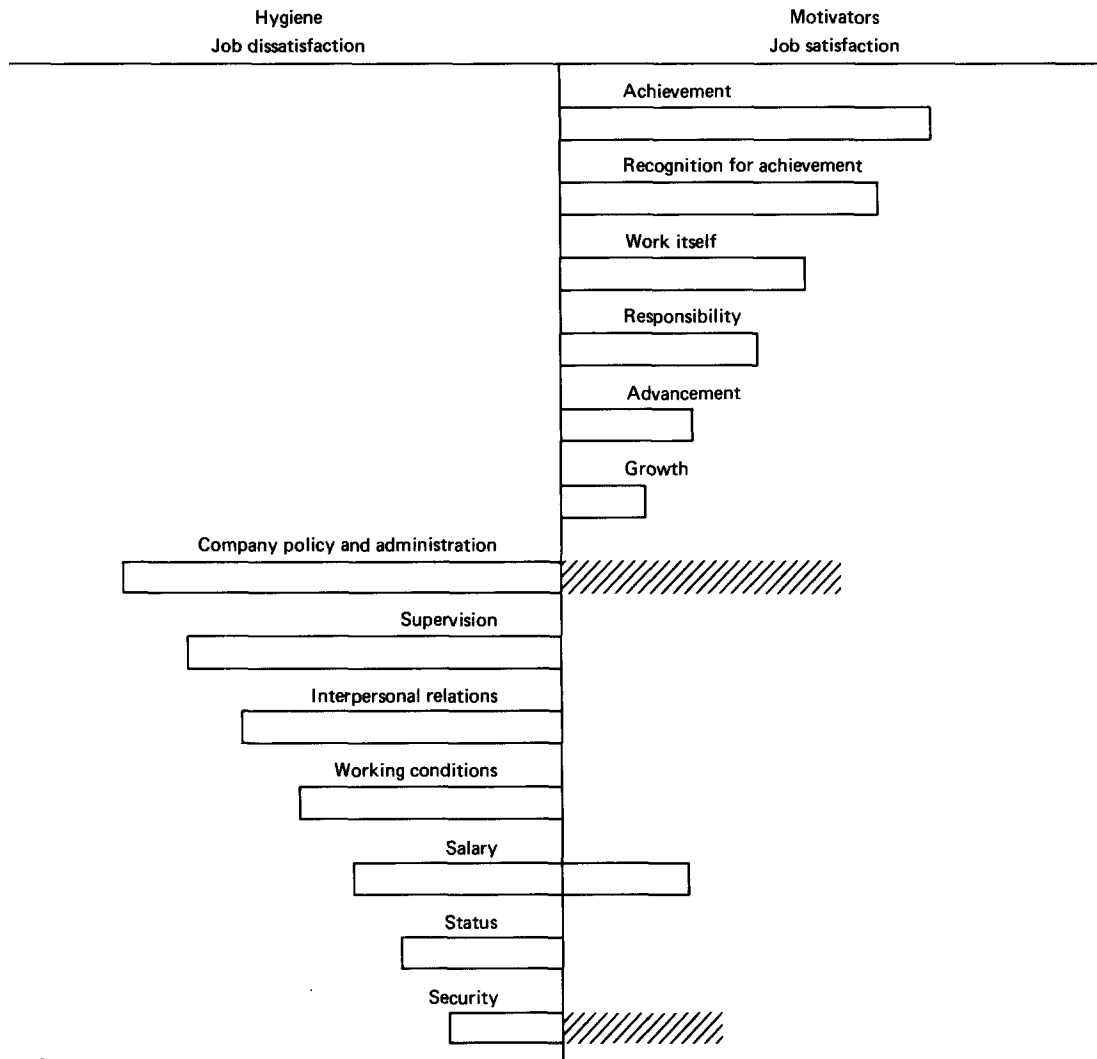
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A SPECIFIC HYGIENE CRISIS

As a result of consistently poor treatment of employees in terms of a specific hygiene complaint, the company may be faced with a hygiene crisis. In this case, as is shown in Figure 3, one hygiene factor, supervision, is elevated at the expense of all other factors. Otherwise, the motivational pattern remains similar to that of the classic profile. What has happened here is that a particular grievance has become so painful to the employees that the other concerns fade in comparison, just as a vicious headache can mask all other bodily pains. This problem can be severe enough to cause a walk-out or work slowdown.

Although the crisis is often cured quickly—perhaps by the resignation or dismissal of the supervisor responsible for the crisis—there are some long-term psychological side effects. The employees remain sensitive to the particular hygiene concern and often the company finds it necessary to placate employees in ways that are both unnecessary and expensive once the situation has reached crisis proportions. The danger lies in just this overcompensation. The company should only rectify the complaint and avoid the temptation to provide a compensatory addition. If it does, it is treating a legitimate complaint as a “tantrum” and will in turn

Figure 4. The profile of an organization after the correction of a serious hygiene problem



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create a “tantrum” strategy among its employees.

The tantrum strategy may be illustrated by a situation in which we find employees seeking hygiene through manipulating the conscience of management. For example, a new supervisor is sent in to replace the man who caused the hygiene altercation and his employees immediately begin to complain. The new “grievances” go not to the supervisor, but to his superior. Unless management refuses to “baby” the employees and expresses confidence in the man it chose to improve supervision, the hygiene-seeking will be exacerbated. The likely outcome is the

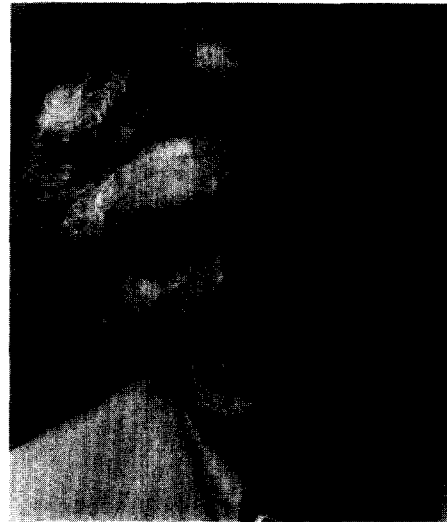
appointment of committee after committee to study the problems, taking up valuable production time.

A SATISFYING HYGIENE EVENT—THE BOOMERANG EFFECT

Management’s problems are not over after solving the hygiene crisis or correcting a chronic and painful condition. The immediate outcome of the change is shown in Figure 4, which demonstrates what the motivation-hygiene profile would look like after a sudden improvement in company policy and

administration. A significant inversion is observed as a result of employees' misinterpreting their feelings of relief from pain as a source of satisfaction. It is as if the company had stopped hitting their employees over the head with a hammer and subsequently were praised for the pain-relief. The duration of the boomerang inversion of the hygiene factor involved as a source of job satisfaction will depend on two conditions: First, it's a question of how long the hygiene pain went on—the shorter the bad situation, the shorter the relief from pain will be interpreted as satisfying. Second, and of greater concern, is the role management plays in prolonging this response by maintaining an essentially unhealthy condition in the organization.

If the company encourages this inversion by expecting increased performance and satisfaction with the job as a result of the alleviation of pain, serious and long-term motivational problems will develop. Let's consider a change in job security, for example. Suppose a company has experienced a severe economic slowdown and is threatened by the possibility of across-the-board staff reductions. Fortunately, a new product or market develops and the employees are no longer afraid of losing their jobs. The profile would then resemble the one shown in Figure 4 with job security and company policy and administration reported as motivational. In a few months, however, this inversion should subside, and the profile return to normal. On the other hand, if the company continues to remind the employees that, since their jobs are no longer vulnerable, everyone should naturally want to work harder, the inversion would stabilize. The employees would then be working to pay off management for making their jobs secure, and not for the intrinsic value of the work itself. The resulting adjustment pattern is one of increased expectancies of hygiene improvements, and conformity to



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His writings (he has published over one hundred books, monographs, articles, and films in the areas of clinical and individual psychology), his seminars in the United States and 26 foreign countries, and his consulting with industrial, educational, social and governmental organizations throughout the world have established him as one of the best-known behavioral scientists. A few years ago the Conference Board cited Dr. Herzberg as the behavioral scientist who has most influenced the thinking of management.

His principal books are *Job Attitudes: Research and Opinion* (Psychological Service of Pittsburgh, 1957), *The Motivation to Work* (with Bernard Mausner and Barbara Snyderman, John Wiley and Sons, 1959), and *Work and the Nature of Man* (World Publishing Company, 1966).

rules and procedures (doing things the right way rather than the best way). Finally, in many cases, hostility is directed at the company for its failure to recognize the real motivational needs of its employees. This syndrome is the one most frequently observed in the management of people.

Figure 5. The profile of hygiene shock in an organization



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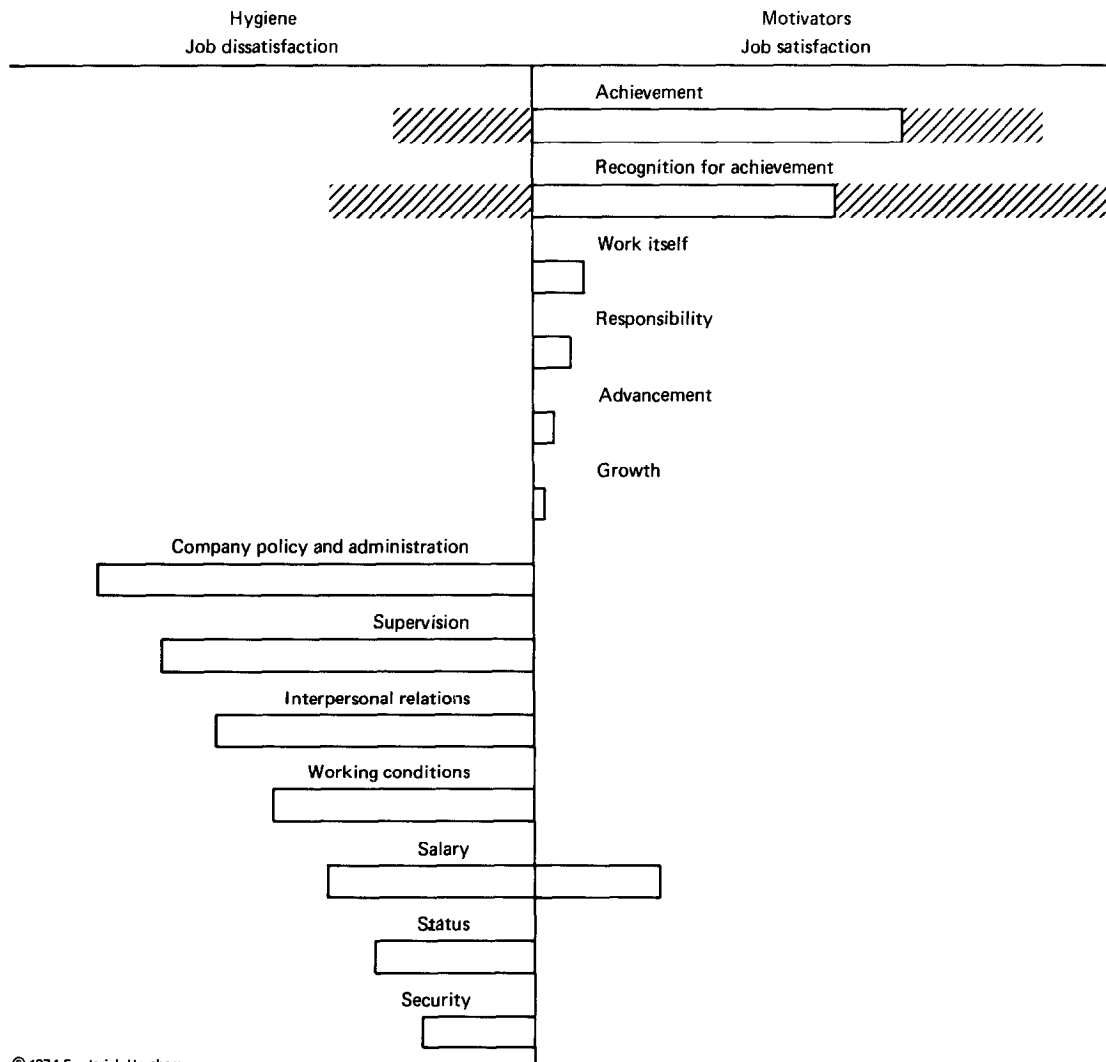
HYGIENE SHOCK

Hygiene shock occurs whenever there is a serious threat to the integrity of the organization. The resultant profile is one that represents psychological chaos in the organization. As shown in Figure 5, the motivators are depressed. Motivator inversions may occur as well as significant displacements of the hygiene factors. In fact, the profile may not even resemble the normal organization of satisfiers and dissatisfiers. What has happened is a damaging series of events in which the nervous system of the organization has been jolted by a shock wave, leaving employees psychologically dazed and disoriented as re-

gards both hygiene and motivational factors. Like the impact of a death in the family on an individual, the organization is experiencing a loss of catastrophic proportions.

A perceived gross injustice in any hygiene area can set off hygiene shock. There are too many possibilities to list all the recurring hygiene shock situations in an organization, but they almost always arise from extremely inept handling of a labor grievance or from what is interpreted as a vindictive or callous new company policy or practice. A familiar example is the autocratic attempt by a company to enforce an unpopular policy by "stonewalling" it as if there were infringe-

Figure 6. The assembly line profile



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ment of “divine” management rights. Another is a company that forces early retirement on longer-term employees or a totem pole merit rating program coupled with an up-or-out tenure policy.

Hygiene shock demands of managements the most open and honest communications with their employees and the best of cool leadership qualities. Management’s overriding job is not to lose control of the situation and to initiate decisive actions dealing only with the essential hygiene amelioration that the employees need—in short, simply stop the bleeding. The mistakes managements frequently make are either to delay

either action while it searches for all the facts via morale surveys, task force studies, reviews of company policies and procedures, or to do nothing and hope to ride out the storm. Very often the failure to act is prompted by the fear of making a mistake. Any action—and the quicker the action the better—will involve casualties, but the failure to act at all may threaten the survival of the organization.

THE ASSEMBLY-LINE SYNDROME

Companies with many jobs of limited motivational potential are common to the world of

work. This condition is represented on the motivation-hygiene profile as a significant increase in two motivational factors, achievement and recognition for achievement, while the other motivators are depressed, as is shown in Figure 6. The hygiene factors follow the classic sequence, with one or two possible inversions. The problem here is that the job is impoverished and the only motivators that are available are those of short duration and high frequency, such as achievement and recognition for achievement.

The assembly line is the place where we most often find this motivational problem. Frequently, the only available motivator is the degree to which working faster fosters feelings of achievement, along with the recognition for achievement built into exceeding the standard piece rate set for the job and earning incentive pay. Evidence suggests that these motivators move only a minority of assembly-line workers. Soldiering on the job is more common behavior than rate busting. Inevitably, a dependence on these less nutritious motivators increases the need for "atta boys" from the supervisor, with subsequent inversion of hygiene items such as interpersonal relationships with the supervisor. The work is psychologically empty of growth, and, in order to compensate, the employee attempts to fulfill his motivational needs with hygiene factors.

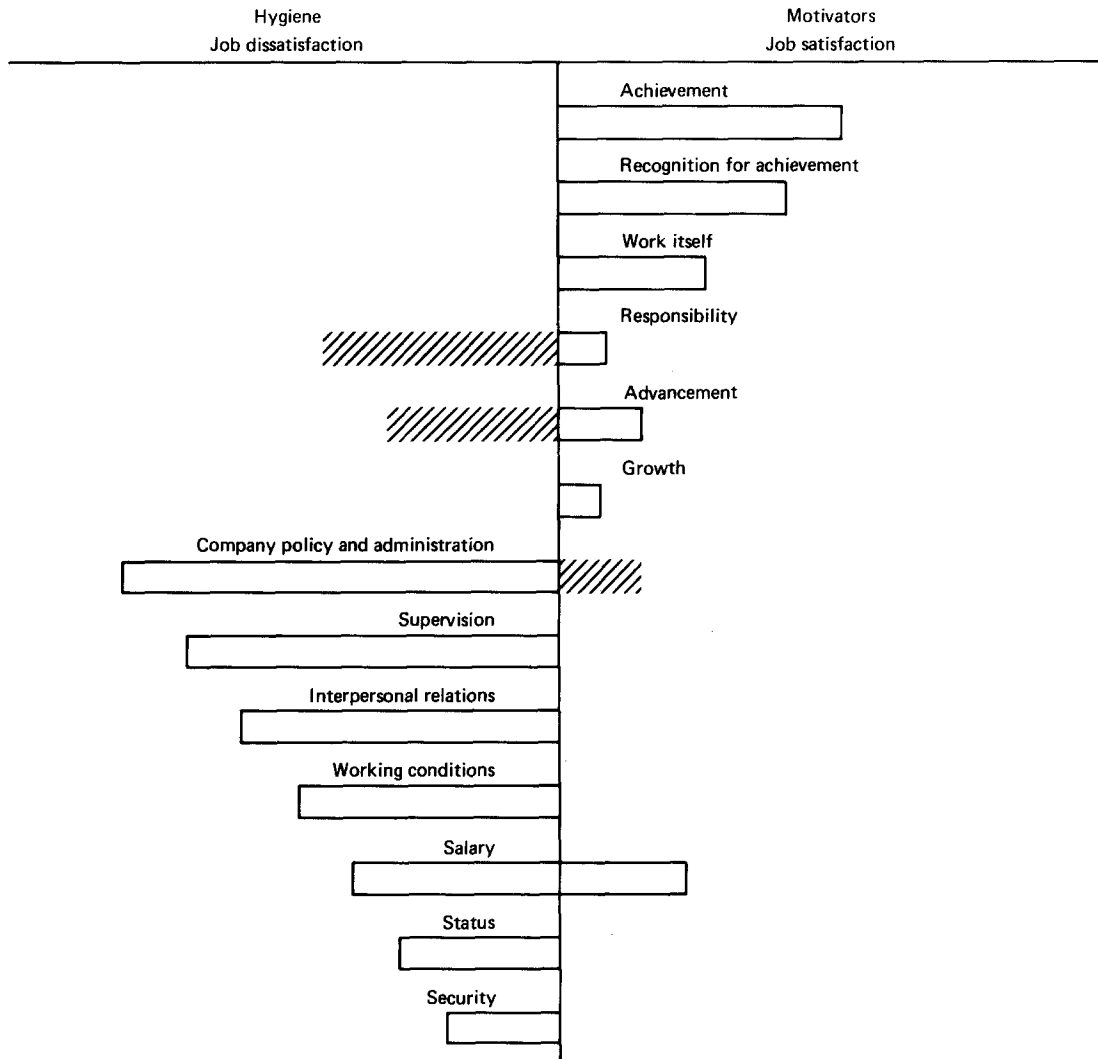
Morale surveys, and even critical-incident surveys, will suggest that these blue-collar workers have less motivation than their white-collar counterparts. In fact, these employees want and need a motivating job more. The results are in direct contradiction to the facts. It's only the severe constraints placed on opportunities for growth among assembly-line workers that make it appear that they are less interested in motivators. Motivation becomes a myth to these employees, and self-actualization a concept conceived in an intellectual's fairyland. There is both a popular and "scientific" literature in which it's asserted that lower-echelon employees desire more hygiene and fewer motivators than higher-level employees. We suggest, and our research confirms, that the reality of the situation is quite the opposite. The problem is that some behavioral scientists cannot recognize the self-fulfilling prophecies in their own data.

ABILITY WITHOUT OPPORTUNITY

Another common failing of organizations is the underutilization of available talents of their employees. In the previous motivational problem, the workers did not have sufficient opportunity and/or training to express all their motivator needs. In this case, the em-

"It's only the severe constraints placed on opportunities for growth among assembly-line workers that make it appear that they are less interested in motivators."

Figure 7. The profile of an organization with ability but without opportunity



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employees have learned the necessary skills, but have not been given the responsibilities commensurate with their abilities. The profile of the organization shown in Figure 7 displays the inversion of one or more of the motivator factors in an otherwise classic motivation-hygiene profile. The organization has recruited highly motivated people, yet has failed to redesign jobs to meet the needs of these employees. Frequently, this profile will mirror the responses of a college graduate six months or so after he has joined the company.

The inversion describes the disillusionment of the young employee who was ready to work diligently, only to find he had few, if any, responsibilities for his own work. He is checked and double-checked and told more often what not to do than what he can do. The company may tell the employee that he must prove himself first before moving on to a job with real responsibility and discretion. The employee's reaction is to wonder how he can prove himself in a "Mickey Mouse" job.

This organization is a prime candidate for job enrichment. Without improvements in jobs that increase the employees'

control over their jobs, they will either leave the company outright or depart psychologically. In the latter case, they will come to work on time, but be apathetic and indifferent to their jobs. And who can blame them?

CONCLUSION

The six profiles discussed represent the most common problems in employee attitudes encountered in organizations. Of course, no two "normal" profiles will ever be the same, since no single motivator or hygiene factor will have the same effect on any two individuals.

What must be stressed is that the problems revealed by deviations from the "normal" profile are real problems, reflecting as they do an in-depth theory of human behavior that has been replicated repeatedly with employees at every level of the organization hierarchy in many different organizations, large and small, and in many cultures, authoritarian as well as democratic. This analysis reports actual events in people's lives, rather than their "attitudinal" rationalization of behavior and feelings.

What should we do about these problems? How should we handle these devia-

tions from the normal? Each problem is singular and requires its own solution. Together, however, they demonstrate the continuing need to assess dissatisfaction within organizations and the continuing need to use ingenuity both in increasing the overall supply of hygiene factors and in distributing them equitably among employees. As I have written previously, there are no permanent solutions for sanitary engineers.

The motivator problem discussed in the last two profiles represents a different kind of challenge. Managements that are not prepared to provide whatever motivators are possible in the job are not prepared to meet the challenge of managing adults. Over time, the goals of an organization run by such managers become directed to the worker who is hygiene-oriented, rather than to the worker who is motivator-oriented. The cost to the organization in diminished creativity and spirit is inestimable.

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