

# Theory of expectancy

[Psychology](#), [Motivation](#)



Module: Organisational Behaviour Essay Title: Victor. H. Vroom's Motivational Theory of Expectancy and its Application within an Organisation Submission Date: 21st November 2011 Wordcount: 2, 630 Introduction This essay aims to explore Victor. H. Vroom's ' Theory of Expectancy' on seeking motivation and its application within an organisation; Vroom's Expectancy Theory has been widely researched and has substantial support in contrast to other popular motivational theories French et al (2011: 177). The essay is divided into four. I will identify the historic description of the theory; how it came to be, the important ideas that the concept embodies, and how the concept can be applied in the broader spectrum. A live case study looking at the use of the theory within my employer's organisation Bank of Ireland, Group Customer Operations. In particular is the theory mirrored in reality and do the current motivational practices within the company have any similarities to Vroom's model, is effective or ineffective? Thirdly I will examine if there are any discrepancies between theory and reality and do they match the outcome of the workplace? Are any elements of the concept ignored and if there are, are there any unexpected outcomes as a result. The findings will be analysed and areas of recommendation identified. I will outline the expected outcomes of adapting the theory in the workplace and address does this theory suit the Bank of Ireland's mission and its employees before concluding. Theoretical Background French et al (2011: 158) describes motivation to work as the forces within an individual that account for the level, direction and persistence of effort expended at work. In 1959 Victor. H. Vroom was working on a chapter of Industrial Social Psychology for the Annual Review of Psychology and reached the conclusion that the study of

motivation had not been adequately explored, which later led to him to publish the 'Expectancy Theory' (1964) (Vroom: 1964). His theory suggests that people consciously choose particular courses of action, based upon perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs, as a consequence of their desires to enhance pleasure and avoid pain (Vroom: 9). The theory can be broken down into three parts Expectancy, Instrumentality and Valence. Expectancy refers to the probability that an individual assigns to work effort being followed by a given level of achieved task performance. Instrumentality refers to the probability that an individual will assign to a level of achieved task performance leading to various work outcomes. Valence represents the values that an individual will attach to various work outcomes French et al (2011: 175). Essentially if an individual believes that working hard will be rewarded they will continue to work hard so long as they believe they can do so. Hereby motivating the individual to work harder. From a management perspective jobs are graded from easy to difficult, where easy is generally lower paid, with difficult being higher paid or involving more responsibility. Pay increases with job responsibility and employee's exert additional effort on an easy task to achieve task performance for an expected outcome resulting in access to a more difficult task (i. e. with better pay or more responsibility). In order for an employee to want to achieve something it is believed that it has to be expected from them. Once the employee is willing to perform then management should state possible rewards and outcomes that the employee can expect to receive through instrumentality. Once the task has been completed the needs of the employee must adhere to their original expectations, the manager therefore needs to determine the

salience of each of the available rewards from the perspective of the follower. For outcomes to induce heightened motivational states individuals must feel valued. The individual thought process as laid out by Vroom states that an individual's decision to exert work effort may be low if they believe they cannot achieve the necessary performance level expected of them by management. Low effort can lead to low performance and the minimum expected level result being achieved. A high value a task requires high performance and large amounts of effort must be exerted in order to attain the high value reward. This will only be reached if the worker believes they can meet the outcome and they will then self motivate themselves to do so. In broader terms Vroom examined five properties of the work role to determine a workers preference over the role. Does the job/ task provide financial remuneration? Does it require an expenditure of energy? Does it involve the production of goods and services? Does it permit or require social interaction? Will it affect the workers social status? In examining all of these factors systematically the importance on each can only be taken into consideration when economic remuneration is eliminated. Vroom (1964) cites Morse and Weiss (1955) who found that over 80 per cent of people, in a study of 401 people, would continue to work if economic remuneration played no part in their motivation to work. Thus these are the determinant factors the employee takes into account in the their decision to work and then later how they will perform a task in the workplace. The Workplace Reality Focusing on Bank of Ireland, Group Customer Operations In the context of Vroom's Theory I've examined my personal motivation to remain in this position over other career paths. In the mid 2000's Bank of Ireland

was domestically marketed as a company with opportunity for growth, positive benefits and remuneration packages and was a well paid respected profession. It catered for individuals who wanted to join the workforce early and grow with the organisation without necessarily requiring third level education. Unfortunately in my experience this was not the reality. Drawing on Vroom's expectancy theory as mentioned previously, in practice, I expected opportunity to prosper and learn my way from the bottom up. I believed that through hard work there was positive opportunity for economic remuneration, which held most value for me personally. Expectancy, Instrumentality and Valence all had obvious appeal but management knew this and marketed it well through manipulation of valence (Vroom: 23). After seven years continuous employment the remuneration is below industry average, bonuses are not rewarded to employees in inferior positions. The company appears to incorrectly use role manipulation for a competitive advantage in the labour market Gunnigle et al (2011) the reality of the position does not meet with the 'sales pitch' position. An area of particular focus addressing motivation is the yearly appraisal system Bank of Ireland use called PMRS. This is a measurable scale of performance through task assignment on a scale of one to four. One being a poor performer, four being an excellent performer. This scale was at one stage used to determine what percentage bonus an employee would get based on their performance. This is now used as a scale to review your motivation, however economic reward is no longer attached rather the link is job security. At the beginning of each year tasks are assigned to each employee if one wished to add to it or take on any extra tasks here is where it would be noted for management to see

and then reviewed at the end of the year to see if it had been achieved. The principle flaw with this system is that two employees can attain a grade three (i. e. they had performed well in most tasks assigned and surpassed in one or two key areas) however, both employees being in roles not dissimilar may have not worked as hard as each other but yet received the same performance grade and the same pay. This leads to de-motivation among employees under a system that is unequal. The motivation to work hard had been eliminated; as the result of it hard work had no real value anymore it was therefore viewed that grading was based on favouritism. Currently motivation to work is based on economic remuneration purely as most people find themselves struggling to clear debts as a result of lack of credit from the downturn in the economy. Job security, which is a need more associated with Maslow's hierarchy of needs Maslow (1943), can be an expected value to work toward now. Which again falls under the category of valence in Vroom's theory of expectancy (1964). Theory vs. Reality As mentioned above it may be seen that some areas requiring motivation based on the value of a task lends itself to the ' Expectancy Theory'. The appraisal system being the main point of reference shows that if an employee should wish to work hard to attain a certain set of goals they will be rewarded, many outcomes of which can be of value to an employee, recognition, monetary or otherwise. Another area to be considered is the area of recruitment and promotion. Should an employee wish to attain a certain position within Bank of Ireland, the opportunity to train in area's that will lend their skills to the position in question will be made available where possible, in the past even college courses were offered and funded by the Bank for an employee

wishing to better themselves. This is a clear example of instrumentality being implemented. Management would often encourage employees toward this or even shape them in preparing for a goal. The ' Expectancy Theory' proposes that an employee's expectations may be linked to intrinsic and/or extrinsic factors although the theory fails to mention the rationality assumptions underlying the choice behaviour. In work behaviour is linked to a specific value of the employee, however, the value is not shown how it comes to be of value to the employee in the theory. A more accurate model of how motivation is used in application between management and employees may be that of Porter and Lawler French et al (2011: 179) which is a more detailed extension of Vroom's theory this does assume the rationality of choice behaviour in that motivation, performance and satisfaction can all occur when rewards are allocated on the basis of past performance but motivation can also occur when job satisfaction results from rewards that are felt to be equitably allocated. When it is felt that negative inequity results, satisfaction will be low and motivation reduced. This recognises that job performance and satisfaction are separate but are potentially interdependent. Management are aware of this and use it to improve upon recognition systems and appraisal within which the employee gets more consideration as to what will improve work for them and in return benefit the company. In previous years the government rolled out a Cycle to Work Scheme this was believed that in giving organisations grants to pass onto their employees a greener workforce would become the result. Large numbers availed of the scheme that would allow the purchase of a bicycle with discount at the Banks expense the only condition was that the

employee having purchased the bicycle receiving a discount had to use their bicycle to attend work and leave the car at home. A big scheme was rolled out by the bank to promote the health and fitness benefits that could be achieved by availing of the scheme and how bank of Ireland was going to lower its carbon footprint for the organisation and the employee. However employees saw this as a great opportunity, health and fitness was the value and the expectancy was that in availing of the scheme they would become healthier. All that was needed was to purchase the bicycle (Instrumentality). However there was an unexpected outcome nobody has adhered to the rules in not using their cars and everyone who availed of the scheme ended up with a new cheap bicycle. The bank wasn't to benefit in lowering its footprint at all. This shows that the concept behind the theory is correct but the results or value may not match the expectancy through the instrumentality implemented. Which again shows that Vrooms Theory fails to take all factors into account. Recommendations Some flaws mentioned previously state that it is assumed by management that people are rational thinkers in their motivational behavior in line with Vroom's theory but many have argued this. It is argued that the essence of the theory in work and motivation is the choice of work behavior. As such, it is shown that the present formulation of theory in industrial and organizational psychology, and consequently the empirical research based on it, ignores the rationality assumptions underlying this choice behavior. Some of these assumptions are specified. It is pointed out that the major constructs of the theory (expectancy and valence) lack the necessary theoretical classification (House: 1974). In addressing the issues of fairness through appraisal management could adopt



a more paternal approach in analyzing peoples annual leave, punctuality and work statistics. Utilizing Maslow's theory on the hierarchy of needs Maslow (1943) could possibly address these issues better as the theory states what needs motivate people in contrast to Vroom's theory which focuses more on what people want. Vroom relies more on self-actualization where Maslow focuses not only on self-actualization but other needs such as esteem, social, safety and security and physiological. A combination of both theories being considered could produce greater results for organizations and their employee's. For the unexpected outcome of the Cycle to Work Scheme more focus should have been focused on instrumentality that is in how could the bank result in a better carbon footprint. Greater emphasis needed to be put in the ensuring that the rules had been adhered to perhaps a monitoring scheme that awarded points for every time someone cycled to work or even a small charge being applied to those who did use their cars after availing of the offer. This would have resulted in employee's being motivated by costs. Which as Vrooms theory suggests is the main underlying motivator in most people's decision making. The bank in turn could have seen their expectations followed through on. Another version of Vrooms theory that has been adapted and may be more fitting in dealing with the motivation of staff was the Porter and Lawler French et al (2011: 179). In attributing more individualistic values to set out tasks management can find greater input from their employee's. Resulting in a more pro-active approach than the more basic ' Expectancy Theory' this again would result in greater results being achieved for all of the involved parties through better organisation. As Vrooms expectancy theory is very broadly based it should be considered

when looking to motivate employee's in their work when high performance is required but not singled out to any specific value, this in turn will require more examination of other theories in selecting the best approach for motivation. Conclusion In conclusion we have seen the principles of how Vroom's ' Theory of Expectancy' on motivation can be used within an organisation, how it is applied in an organisation and the outcomes of its implementation. It can be noted that a lot of research has gone into what motivates people in their jobs and how they choose task. Therefore the theory is very important to factor in on people's decision-making on a given task. However, the theory can be seen to have flaws it is very descriptive in the thought process used by an employee or indeed management in choosing whether or not to take on certain tasks. Although due to rationality assumptions underlying choice behaviour it fails to determine how people come to value something that they will expect through instrumentality. This can leave management with the difficult task of determining the salience of an expected outcome which can result in employee's values not being met therefore reducing motivation. Thus echoing that more research into people's needs and not just what they want should be done when determining what will motivate an employee. This will then lead to a greater chance of a more reliable process being implemented in achieving a positive outcome for both employee and the organisation in which they work no matter what the task. Bibliography French, R, Rayner, C, Rees, G, Rumbles, S, Schermerhorn Jr, J, Hunt, J, Osborn R. (2011) Organizational Behavior 2nd Edition, United Kingdom: John Wiley & Sons Ltd Gunnigle, P, Heraty, N and Morley, M. (2011) Human Resource Management in Ireland, Dublin: Gill and

Macmillan House, R. J, Wabba, M. A. (1974): ' Expectancy Theory in Work and Motivation: Some Logical and Methodological Issues'. Human Relations. 27 (2), 121-147 Vroom, Victor. H, (1964) Work and Motivation, U. S. A: John Wiley & Sons Ltd