

Workers motivation



Since this day many theories have been developed trying to identify what lies behind the motivation of workers. What is it that pushes workers to improve their performance, increase their effort and ultimately feel part of an organisation? “ Motivation is a conscious decision to perform one or more activities with greater effort than other competing activities” (Roberts and Corbett, 2009, *Understanding Organisational Behaviour IB1230 p. 240*). It could be interpreted that motivation being a ‘ conscious decision’ cannot be forced, but only be triggered by managers using certain methods. However, even today many managers refuse to give up Taylorism and the use of the scientific management. As a result the idea of the ‘ rational economic man’ still exists and managers still treat the workers as ‘ cogs in a machine’ presumed that they are motivated only by pay. This essay will argue that today job has come to be a way to make a living, and pay is just the mean for a better living but not what motivates people to work (Gostick and Elton). Pay itself does not motivate people to improve their performance or increase their effort. What people desire beyond their material well-being, that pay can offer, is self-fulfilment and a sense of belonging.

To begin with, the effectiveness of the scientific management has been challenged many times but the first blow was the Hawthorne Studies conducted by Elton Mayo in the 1920s. Until then workers had mostly no saying on the decision-making or work process, and based on McGregor’s ‘ Theory X’, were seen as genetically lazy, with no real ambitions. With his experiment Mayo wanted to show the relation of productivity and the poor working conditions and how this could be controlled by alternating some factors of the working environment. However, productivity was increasing

whatever the working conditions, leading to the conclusion that workers wanted to perform better in return of the interest that the managers had shown to them. The results of this study challenged the established conception of the 'rational economic man' and brought the era of the 'social man' and McGregor's 'Theory Y'. Workers are still human beings when they enter 'the factory door' with feelings and ambitions, in search of 'self-actualisation'. So this leads to the conclusion that motivation is affected by social factors as well, and sometimes workers place more importance to these than pay itself.

'Self-actualisation' needs were what Maslow considered to be the highest level in his 'Hierarchy of Needs'. Maslow supported the view that people must firstly satisfy each before they can move on to the 'higher-order needs'. It is believed that 'self-actualisation' is what continuously motivate workers as it is never fulfilled but always pursued. However, what managers must understand is that once they offered to workers the taste of self-achievement and freedom it is difficult to then remove them. Also 'self-actualisation' is not only achieved through work and individuals' progress in this pyramid. It is achieved at different times by individuals and using different methods by their managers (Fincham and Rhodes).

FIGURE 1. 1-Source: Lecture Notes

Herzberg further developed this idea in his 'Two Factor Theory' where he presented job satisfaction to be a result of the 'motivators' and job dissatisfaction as a result of the 'hygiene factors'. Therefore it was assumed that different factors let to either job satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

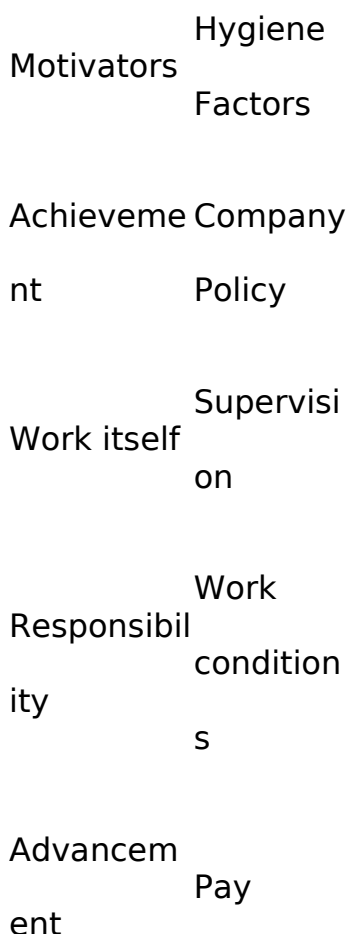


FIGURE 1. 2-Source: Lecture Notes

It can be argued that there are similarities with ‘ Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs’ as motivators satisfy the top needs of the pyramid whereas hygiene factors fulfil the basic human needs. Pay here is assumed to be a factor that leads to job dissatisfaction when is not met and thus included in the hygiene factors. It is broadly believed that workers with a satisfied pay will not necessarily be encouraged to perform better but only manage not to be dissatisfied. On the other hand, if the work itself is challenging and there is a potential of recognition, this is more likely to keep workers motivated and devoted to the organisation. That is why Herzberg talks about ‘ job enrichment’, a “ means to encourage motivation by building greater responsibility and variety into a job” (Roberts and Corbett, 2009,

Understanding Organisational Behaviour IB1230 p. 248). After all, as he argued, “ the very nature of motivators, as opposed to hygiene factors, is that they have a much longer-term effect on employees’ attitudes” (Herzberg, 2003, One More Time: How Do You Motivate Employees? p. 70). Therefore it can be assumed that pay is just a short-term solution to the motivation problem since when they reach a satisfies economic position then they will turn their attention to the social factors.

However, Herzberg’s Theory did not come about without criticisms that compromise its effectiveness in motivating the workers. It is argued that his research was not objective as it only included accountants and engineers, occupations that were considered to be profitable. In addition, as it is clearly illustrated by Heider’s ‘ Attribution Theory’ people tend to attach successes to internal factors and externalise any failures. As a result the interviewees blamed the managers for feeling dissatisfied from their job and on the other hand, recognised themselves as the main factor leading to job satisfaction. Another strong criticism involves the fact that the workers may not have been honest of what really motivates them, offering therefore a reason why pay is included as a hygiene factor (Fincham and Rhodes). It was argued that this behaviour may exist because workers want to be socially accepted and thus portrait themselves to be motivated by a more “ noble” factor than pay (Rynes, Gerhart and Minette). Recent studies still draw the same conclusions as the one carried out by Herzberg more than 50 years ago. Workers are more likely to contribute to the work process if they feel comfortable in the work environment, close to their managers and have a sense of achievement. Once more, pay did not play a major role in motivating people

since the pursue of ‘ self-actualisation’ remains the major concern of workers and their ultimate goal (Bassett-Jones and Lloyd).

Moreover, pay has a major role in Adam’s ‘ Equity Theory’ where workers are presented to be motivated by pay in relative terms rather than in absolute. Money can be measured and thus it allows comparisons to be made leading to the importance of equity and fairness as a factor of motivation. Therefore it is argued that workers are more likely to improve their performance if they consider their pay to be fair relative to the effort they had put and the effort of the others. This idea is supported by the experiment held out by Adams where the students who they receive higher pay relative to their efforts were motivated to work harder in order to “ restore equity in the exchange” (Fincham and Rhodes, 2005, Principles of Organisational Behaviour p. 203). However, there is the risk that conflict maybe arise because workers and managers have different perceptions of what the effort the workers must be and the pay that is considered to be fair for that effort.

Beyond the theories the managers can put in practice, they must firstly realise that the workers are individuals with different needs, values, experiences, that have an impact on what finally motivates them. As said before, people are on different levels on the ‘ Hierarchy of Needs’ pyramid and place different value on different ‘ hygiene factors’ and ‘ motivators’ (see figures 1. 1 and 1. 2). In order for this obstacle to be overcome the managers must concentrate on the individuals who work in the organisation. What drives the motivation of the each worker may change, because of different circumstances. Known the worker on a personal level gives the advantage to change the behaviour towards them. It is true that with the <https://assignbuster.com/workers-motivation/>

current crisis and the growing fear of the unemployment many workers do not have the feeling of security in their job. Thus this is their motivation for the specific time and what the managers must try to restore. However it could be argued that in this decision-making process the workers must have the chance to be heard and a compromise decision to be reached in order for any organisation to have a brighter future.

On the other hand, inter-group conflict may be aroused because of manager's expectations concerning certain groups. "What managers expect of subordinates and the way they treat them largely determine their performance and career progress" (Livingston J. S, 2003, Pygmalion in Management p. 176). Therefore if a manager expects a group to perform badly and not be able to reach a certain target, this demotivates the individuals of the group and their performance is declined as expected. However, this may not always be the case since the individuals' desire to prove the manager wrong may drive them to improve their performance and thus raise the expectations which the manager previously had. It could be argued that the conflict is sometimes desirable as it changes the behaviour of the workers to the best which it is in line with the interactionist approach. In this example pay did not play the major part in motivating workers even though it could be claimed that the individuals improve their performance in order to receive a better reward. However Herzberg's followers would argue that what really motivated the group was the job that became more challenging and gave the opportunity of self-achievement and recognition.

Of course, the behaviour of the workers is affected by the organisation's structure and culture. According to Maslow workers pursue their ' self-

actualisation' through work and therefore it could be argued that the "organisational performance will depend ultimately on the extent to which individuals are provided with the opportunity to satisfy their own goals by contributing to the goals of the organisation" (Mullins J., 2008, Essentials of Organisational Behaviour p. 355). People are more likely to be motivated and feel part of an organisation when they share the same values, beliefs and attitudes. Therefore the organisation policy may focus on the pay as a measure to reward better performance and to the individual needs of the workers. It is true that some workers will be motivated through this but for the wrong reasons. The organisation's structure encourages them to behave unethical in order to gain a raise in their pay or a promotion (Luecke, 2006). Indeed the ideas that people work for money and that more money rewards mean better performance are only just myths. As argued before, people look for something deeper in doing their work and managers who ignore that and continue to 'bribe' their employees in fact they "pay the price in a lack of loyalty and commitment"(Pfeffer J., 2003, Six dangerous myths about pay p. 99). Of course the policy of the organisation and its structure depends on which country it operates as there are different perceptions of what motivates people. This is evident from a survey in 2000 where among eight countries U. K valued 'good pay' the highest. However, this is a result of the different methods used in these countries from which British companies may learn in order to rely less on pay to motivate their workers.

In conclusion, pay does motivate people but this will not last in the long-run. Money is the means for a better life but is mostly seen as "a condition to work rather than related to particular effort" (Handy C., 1993, Understanding

organisations p. 52). Once the workers achieve their material well-being they will try to satisfy their desire for self-fulfilment. As a result pay does motivate to some extent and mostly at the beginning of someone's career but then he/she will pursue recognition, achievement and finally 'self-actualisation'. Therefore managers must strive to learn their workers on a personal level, consider their worries and needs in order to discover what ultimately motivates them to give their best effort. The Tandem Computer took this step, and moved away from offering money for better performance to being more concerned of keeping their workers satisfying through the work itself. Therefore it " would not even tell you your salary before expecting you to accept the work" (Pfeffer J., 2003, Six dangerous myths about pay p. 93). More organisations must take this difficult step in order to depend less on money and offer their workers greater opportunities for personal growth.

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