

Expectancy theory of motivation

[Business](#), [Company](#)



Applying Expectancy Theory as an Approach to Improve Motivation One challenge many companies face is employee motivation. Business success is largely dependent upon the ability for companies to motivate their employees to achieve the best results. Because of this, many have researched organizational motivation and theorized on the subject. One widely accepted concept is Victor Vroom's expectancy theory. Expectancy theory is based on the premise that employees will be motivated to perform at their highest levels when they expect that their efforts will be rewarded. According to Vroom, three key relationships must be present to motivate employees. First is the effort-performance relationship, second is the performance-reward relationship, and finally the reward-personal goals relationship. When all three relationships are met, his theory is that employees will be motivated to exert a high level of effort (Robbins & Judge, 2007). In the given company scenario, an audio company has developed a new production process so that employees can meet the company's high production standards and goals. Supervisor A's employees have not been successful with the new process or goals. Supervisor B has spoken informally to many of these employees about the process and company goals. While this is not the ideal approach in having employee feedback on the low adoption of the process and goals, one can apply Vroom's expectancy theory to the objections that have been identified. Based on the feedback from the employees and the three relationships in expectancy theory, it is possible to make simple changes within the organization to increase employee motivation and results. The first concept of expectancy theory is the effort-performance relationship. Employees must believe that they are able to

achieve the performance goals with reasonable effort (Robbins & Judge, 2007). Goals or tasks that seem too difficult to achieve with any level of effort are de-motivating. In the given scenario, some of Supervisor A's employees do not feel they have the hand dexterity necessary to complete the process. Consistent with the effort-performance relationship, if an individual does not feel physically capable of performing, they will not be motivated. In order to overcome this barrier to the effort-performance relationship, the company should investigate and test the process to understand what level of hand dexterity is necessary to perform the process. If good hand dexterity is not actually the issue, the company can provide additional training to help employees master the process. If a high level of hand dexterity is necessary, the company should explore alternative processes that can be accomplished by employees with varying levels of hand dexterity so that everyone is physically able to succeed. When employees feel they can successfully perform with reasonable effort, the effort-performance relationship in expectancy theory will be satisfied. The second concept of expectancy theory is the performance-reward relationship. According to expectancy theory, if the employee believes that organizational rewards exist when they reach their performance goals, they will be more motivated to perform. This relationship can be difficult to achieve when companies tie better organizational rewards to items such as tenure or cooperation rather than performance (Robbins & Judge, 2007). In the given scenario, some of Supervisor A's employees have voiced that there is no salary differential for high performance. Applying the second relationship of expectancy theory, the company can shift the employee

review process for employee merit increases or raises to be more heavily weighted to measurable performance goals. When employees perceive that their organization will reward them for high performance, the performance-reward relationship of expectancy theory will be met. The third concept of expectancy theory is the reward-personal goals relationship. This speaks to the perception that the organizational reward for high performance is meaningful to the individual employee (Robbins & Judge, 2007). In the given scenario, some employees have expressed that the bonus structure for performance is insubstantial. It is perceived that a small amount of overtime is actually more financially appealing than the bonuses offered for reaching higher production goals. In fact, one has to be a particularly poor performer to have it affect their salary in a negative way. For employees motivated by financial rewards, this points to the fact that there is very little upside to achieving higher production and possibly an even higher financial reward for performing slowly and potentially receiving overtime. Based on the reward-personal goals relationship in expectancy theory, the company can make a few adjustments. One would be to increase the bonus structure so that high production is paid at a higher rate than overtime. Another would be to allow only the high producers the ability to earn overtime pay. When the organizational reward for high performance is meaningful to individual employees, the reward-personal goal relationship of expectancy is met. In summary, expectancy theory recognizes that there is not just one way to motivate all employees. Motivation comes from a combination of understanding the connection between the employee's goals and three key relationships in expectancy theory (Robbins & Judge, 2007). As illustrated

through the examples in the given company scenario, one can find solutions to motivate employees by addressing employee concerns as related to the three key relationships of expectancy theory. The first being the relationships of effort-performance, or the belief that with reasonable effort one can perform. The second is connecting the relationship of performance-rewards, where the employee believes that the organization will reward them for performance. And finally, the third relationship is the rewards-personal goals, where the organizational rewards match with what is meaningful of the individuals. According to Vroom's expectancy theory, these three relationships are all necessary in affecting employee motivation (Robbins & Judge, 2007). References: Robbins, S. P., & Judge, T. A. (2007). *Organizational Behavior* (12th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ, USA: Pearson Prentice Hall.