Theories of workplace motivation

- Crystal Mullen

I find myself interested in the concept of motivation. What is that motivates people get up and do an honest day's work versus wasting that same day lying in bed watching the *Lifetime Movie Channel* ? Why is one person motivated simply to make a paycheck while someone else is driven to take charge of their own business? As it turns, out, scientists and psychologists have been asking these same type of questions regarding for centuries. As a result we have received many theories from different scientific, psychological perspectives that offer explanations for where our motivation originates and even suggestions on how to how to increase it. Understanding four of the most common motivation theories can be especially useful as it pertains to the workplace (Anderson, 2014).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

One of the most well-known motivational theories came from Abraham Maslow. Maslow created a theory that suggested that humans are motivated by a hierarchy of needs that leads them to take actions in a particular order based on that person's need for survival. Furthermore Maslow's theory purposed that human beings must fulfill their needs in a lower category before attempting to fulfill needs in a higher category. Maslow's order of needs are: physiological, safety, love and affection, esteem and self-actualization (which involves clarity or an achievement of personal goals) (Anderson, 2014).

If I were to identify any of Maslow's five needs, in the work place, I would need to see what it is that is motivating a person's actions. For example, a

worker is only motivated by physiological and safety when they are worker is motivated simply by a need for a paycheck, and a means to keep a roof over their head and gas in their car. Furthermore, I can tell if a worker is motivated by love and affection, esteem, and self-actualization if they derive more joy and fulfillment from all aspects of their work-life on, whether it would be making their work deadlines to taking parting in a company-wide community project. (An eHow Contributor, 2014).

The Two-Factor Theory

Frederick Herzberg's created a two-factor theory that can explain workplace motivational tendencies. According to Herzberg, the two consistent factors that play into workplace motivation, are hygiene and motivators. Hygiene involves factors that are needed it remain present and active in order to ensure workplace satisfaction. These factors include a fair paycheck, a stable work environment, and even a level of supervision. Motivators involve factors, that if present, increases workplace satisfaction but does not diminish workplace satisfaction levels if absent. Examples of motivators include recognition of abilities, a sense of personal achievement, or even the overall nature of their job (Anderson, 2014).

If I were to observe Herzberg's Two-Factor theory, I would need to determine if a worker's actions are motivated by either the fulfillment of his or her needs or by the avoidance of undesirable factors. Under the two-factor theory, if a worker is striving for positive rewards, such as a pay raise, he or she may be motivated by motivators. However, if that same worker is motivated by avoiding avoid negative feedback, such as a being written up

in his or her review, then that person is motivated by hygiene (An eHow Contributor, 2014).

McClelland's Theory of Needs

David McClelland's developed a motivational theory of needs that although similar to Maslow's hierarchy of needs but instead suggests that an individual's needs are usually shaped by his or her life experiences over a period of time. McClelland's motivational theory lists three different types of motivation styles: high achievement needs, affiliation needs, and a need for power. People who are motivated by high achievement are driven to excel at everything they attempt and seem to enjoy high-risk situations. Individuals motivated by a need for high achievers would serve an organization best being given challenging projects that have clear goals and are given constant feedback. Workers who are motivated by a need affiliation are most content in harmonious workplace environments that provide amiable relationships with their superiors and coworkers. These individuals work best in teams or groups that are supportive of each other. Finally, workers who are motivated by a need for power excel when they are able to direct and organize others for either their own personal goals or for their company. Individuals who are motived by a need for power are best suited for management positions (Anderson, 2014).

Expectancy Theory

Victor Vrom's motivational theory actually uses Herzberg's two-factor theory to challenge the various workplace hygiene factors that do not always result in employee satisfaction and increased productivity. These employees

however, will only increase their productivity if they believe their service is directly related to them achieving their own goals. Furthermore, contrary to Herzberg's theory, Vrom's motivational theory, suggests that motivators are completely essential to a worker's increased productivity (Anderson, 2014).

Identifying Vrom's expectancy theory a worker's actions and motivations happens to be the trickiest of the four motivational theories listed. For example, a worker who is motivated by a need for promotion in her workplace may actually be motivated not for the benefit of the company he or she works for but for his or her own personal desire to buy a new car or home. In fact, in some cases, a worker's personal goals may actually result in lower productivity rather than instead of higher. For example, if a worker, is motivated by the need for less time, then at work and more time at home, he or she may decline career advancement opportunities in order to maintain a position with less responsibility. (An eHow Contributor, 2014).

Conclusion

Based on what I've read, I can see how all four of these motivational theories can be useful in the workplace. I can see how I've used Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs were in place when I took that second job at McDonald's just to make sure I had enough money for rent. This would suggest I was motivated by physiological and safety needs. I've also noticed my own motivation to sharply decline at a job if Herzberg's two-factor theory if I'm working in a volatile workplace environment. This suggests that they company's hygiene factors are low and hampers job satisfaction. Furthermore, I can understand now why I do enjoy working in a group of supportive co-workers. Based on

McClelland's theory, this motivation speaks to my need for affiliation. Finally, based on Vrom's theory of expectancy, I can identify with the individual's personal goals actually decreasing their desire to advance within the company. I have also had my desire to for more time with my studies to keep me away from taking more overtime or working Saturdays. Therefore, motivational theories can be very instrumental to recruiting and maintaining the best people in any organization.

References:

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