

# The future of work motivation theory

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Introduction to Special Topic Forum: The Future of Work Motivation Theory

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THE FUTURE OF WORK MOTIVATION THEORY RICHARD M. STEERS RICHARD T. MOWDAY University of Oregon DEBRA L. SHAPIRO University of Maryland

The topic of employee motivation plays a central role in the field of management, both practically and theoretically. Managers view motivation as an important part of the performance equation, while organizational researchers block at all levels, while organizational researchers view it as a fundamental building block. This introduction represents an overview of the field of work motivation from a theoretical and practical standpoint. The Latin word 'movere' means 'to move' or 'to influence'. Building on Atkinson's concept of 'incentive', which defines motivation as a process that leads to movement, contemporary management practice has developed useful theories of effective motivation. Indeed, the topic of motivation permeates the study of management, fields that include leadership, decision-making, ethics, and performance. It is not surprising, therefore, that this topic has received attention in both journals and management periodicals. Recent articles have focused on the relationship between motivation and organizational performance, and how managers can create a motivating environment. Whereas Vroom defines motivation as 'a process of choice made alternative by persons', Campbell and Pritchard suggest that motivation is dependent on the direction, amplitude, and persistence of an activity. The special forum focuses on the questions: 'What are the critical factors that influence motivation?' and 'What are the future directions of work motivation research?'

that must questions if progress in the field is to be made? addressed is the future research What How can agenda? we or modify current models extend of work so they continue in the motivation to be relevant are entirely new models future? And where to further our understanding motivation needed of employee behavior and job performance contemporary organizations? To understand where the field first understand ever, we must is going, where how it has of in ndividual's constant behavior, holding facts of aptitude, skill, and understanding task, and the constraints operating in the the ef of the envi ronment (1976: 63-130). These and other definitions have three com mon denominators. con They are all principally or events cerned with factors that energize, over time. and sustain human behavior channel, In various ways, of work theories contemporary motivation to explicate derive from efforts with increasing precision to determine terrelate how these behavior three factors in organizations. in

EARLYDEVELOPMENTS IN MOTIVATION THEORY The earliest man motivation to understanding hu approaches date from the time of the Greek and focus on the concept of hedo We review cial are panel forum. indebted to the time staff and of AMR effort and to the editorial of this spe for their on behalf philosophers 2 1 For motivation, recent see reviews Kanfer of the research literature on work and For a more detailed examination see Pinder of the evolution Porter, of work and (1990), Mitchell (1997), Ambrose motivation Steers theories, (2003). (1998) and Bigley,

Kulik (1999), and Mitchell and Daniels (2002). 379 380 Academy of Management Review July a principle force in behavior. driving seen as focusing were Individuals their efforts on seeking and avoiding This pleasure

pain. was later refined and further developed principle in the works of philosophers like Locke, utilitarianism as Bentham, Mill, and eighteenth century and Helvetius, centuries. in the seventeenth century of the past. outcomes would actions tend to this past would that led to positive tend to be repeated, whereas outcomes that led to negative Past actions Thorndike the end of the nineteenth century, to migrate of motivation from the began to the newly realm of philosophy emerging science of psychology. Challenges immediately arose over the use of hedonism as the basis for the study of motivation. utilitarianism had no that clear-cut were specification pleasurable or (1911) re of effect, while Hull was that effort or motivation (1943) suggested largely determined by drive X habit. Skinner later built on these (1953) and others consistent with the introduction of operant principles to by some as reinforcement (referred to conditioning referred to diminish. as the law theories), arguing learn contingent and their that, over relationships and consequences future behavior. guide to thrive individuals time, actions between that these continue As Vroom explains, he of the painful, type or of even events how agencies models vehicles continue these events could be determined for a particular nor did it make clear how persons individual; of ways of attaining their conceptions acquired pleasure pain might the hedonistic or pain, or how be modified assumption the by or source of pleasure In short, experience. no empirical consistent has or understanding as well job performance, various management performance 2003). (e. g. , Komaki, While psychologists Reinforcement as explanatory today work motivation and as in the workplace in programs tent and was unstable (1964: 10). scientists search As a result, behavioral began to expect for more based models

ing empirically plain motivation. were these early models instinct the Among as those proposed ories, such by James, Freud, and McDougall. Instead these rational, highly much behavior resulted as McDougall " an tion inherited which attention an or innate determined ere on in focusing were on stincts and drives, managers focusing more pragmatic issues. A key development here was the work of Frederick and his col Taylor move in the scientific management leagues ment. industrial engineering of (1911), along with many background, Taylor on the in his associates, focused his attention in an increas efficiencies of factory production Coming ingly posed industrialized a new and workers age. These colleagues pro to paternalistic approach that relied on a combination from an that argued from instinct, defined by f viewing theorists behavior as psychological its possessor of a certain excitement predisposi to perceive, of an class, a partic object, manner to or pay experience ular quality and to act to, objects emotional upon in regard such perceiving to it in a particular (1908: 4). James cluded jealousy, identified a list of such instincts sociability, that in managing of job training, incentive pay-for-performance tech selection systems, employee improved and the intro niques, job redesign, including duction of ergonomics.

Far from being exploit saw ative in intent, Taylor and his associates as an economic to scientific boon management the use both workers and management through in of improved manufacturing techniques, re and creased shared operating efficiency, the subsequent rise of an in workforce, creasingly sophisticated coupled to maximize with efforts company productivity re without increasing simultaneously employee wards. However, to discredit served this sys wards, eventually to the widespread rise of

unionization, leading in the 1930s. In efforts social scientists and managers  
Meanwhile, to consider the role of social influences began on behavior in the  
1930s. The role of group dynamics as come to view employees dynamics and the need  
complex beings influences were with multiple as recognized motivational powerful  
influence influences locomotion, curiosity, and sympathy. fear, as in around the  
1920s, however, Beginning to creased of the theory limitations began to be  
replaced instinct theories emerge, began on drive or reinforcement.

Led based by models as Thorndike, Wood by such psychologists worth, the  
theorists introduced and Hull, drive in motivated of learning and behavior or  
for that decisions concerning present posited are ture behaviors influenced  
largely by the concept with past of rewards associated consequences to this  
as hedonic behavior. (1954) referred Allport 2004 Steers, Mowday, and Shapiro  
381 re these Best noted among performance. are Mayo's and Roeth search  
endeavors (1933) Bendix and Dickson's (1939) works. isberger of this  
contribution summarized the principle movement that human relations by  
observing as human to treat workers the " failure beings on came poor in  
and, thus, has found considerable popularity on individual to work factors  
relating research motivation. and their col While Maslow and McClelland on  
the role of individual differ focused leagues in motivation, (1966; Herzberg,  
Herzberg to under & Snyderman, Mausner, 1959) sought activities how work  
of and the nature stand and performance. ne's job influence motivation ar In  
his motivation-hygiene theory, Herzberg is largely influenced that work  
motivation gues a job is intrinsically to which the extent chal by for recogni  
and provides opportunities lenging saw the con tion and reinforcement.  
Herzberg a job (which he referred text surrounding to as as being in far more

factors) temporal hygiene terms of leading to satisfaction and future motivation. Herzberg deserves credit for introducing the field to the role of job design? specifically, a key factor in work motivation job enrichment? satisfaction and Hackman extended work job attitudes. and Oldham this line of In subsequent work, have (1976) and others as it relates to research endeavours to be regarded craftsmanship, as the cause of low morale, and consequently unresponsiveness, fusion" (1956: 294). McGregor (1960) later built on this in his classic early work, *The Human Side of Enterprise*. new models of work By the 1950s, several theories emerged, which collectively to as content? since their referred theories, to identify aim was factors associated capital is Maslow's hierarchy motivation.

Included need (1954) that, as suggests hierarchy theory, which their way individuals up a develop, they work on the fulfillment of a series of based hierarchy needs, including physiological, and esteem, security, belongingness, that the first Maslow self-actualization. argued on the list represent three needs deficiency before needs that people must master they can into a healthy while the personality, develop to two represent needs that relate growth of and the development achievement individual human Alderfer (1972) later adapted potential. to encompass exist this model just three needs: last tence, relatedness, A second need introduced growth. theory of the same (1938) but more by Murray and era, first prioritized safety and and motivation, design, job performance, Deci while others, (1975; Ryan & Deci, including theories 2000), have articulated focusing specific versus on task-based intrinsic extrinsic ically in motivation factors (e.g., self-determination theory). fully developed by McClelland (1961, 1971),



ignored the THE " GOLDENAGE" OF WORK MOTIVATION THEORIES n the mid to 1960s, a new approach Beginning the study of work motivation which emerged, on delineating focused the processes underly contrast Process theories ing work motivation. content with the earlier theories, which sharply on identifying focused factors associated with in a relatively motivation staticenvironment. view work motivation Process theorists from a dynamic tionships to human and look for causal rela perspective across as they relate time and events in the workplace. ehavior to the process is a series Central theory genre of cognitive motivation theories of that collec to understand the thought pro tively attempt cesses in determining that people go through to behave theories on and focused instead of a hierarchy concept of an array of distinct the motivational potency achieve defined and clearly needs, including and autonomy. McClel ment, affiliation, power, at any given individuals land argued time, that, that often needs several possess competing serve to motivate when activated.

This behavior contrasts notion of a steady pro with Maslow's over time up a hypothetical gression hierarchy as individuals grow and mature. By far, most of on in McClelland's model focused the attention (defined as behavior of with a standard directed toward competition as a need to and power excellence) (defined over one's environment). have control McClel the needs for achievement a land's conceptualization offered researchers as they related to set of clearly needs defined to Maslow's in contrast behavior, workplace more abstract for conceptualizations (e. g. , need versus achievement need for self-actualization) n the workplace. In our view, the the late 1960s and generated during 1970s make this period of a early

something theories. Never "golden age" of work motivation never since has before and, some would argue, how 382 Academy of Management Review July in explicating been made the progress of work motivation. etiology best known of the cognitive theories Perhaps is expectancy (or expectancy-valence) theory. from the early work Expectancy theory derives saw be of Lewin (1938) and Tolman (1959), who havior based as purposeful, on conscious and largely goal directed, intentions. Vroom (1964) pre formulation of ex systematic o much several models emerging ences on work motivation of cross-cultural influ and job performance & of 1982; Earley, 1997; Steers (Bhagat & McQuaid, 2001; Triandis, Sanchez-Runde, 1995). to expectancy In addition theory, a number other theories of work moti important cognitive vation have been since the 1960s, developed its own focus. Adams each with (1963), for exam ple, how em equity theory to explain both cognitively and behavior ployees respond to perceived in the workplace unfairness ally & Colwell, 2003, and Weick, (see also Mowday introduced sented the first to the workplace. ectancy theory as it related He argued that employees tend to rationally various evaluate work behaviors on-the-job those be harder) and then choose (e. g. , working haviors believe will lead to their most val they ued work-related rewards and outcomes the attractiveness Thus, promotion). ular task and the energy invested a great deal on the extent pend employee to valued Porter believes outcomes. and its accomplishment (e. g. , a of a partic in it will de to which the will lead & Maruyama, that 1976). Adams Bougon, argued both conditions of underpayment and overpay can ment influence behavior.

Re subsequent work on procedural and distributive justice further develops this area using the fundamental concept of equity and its consequences (Cro & Rupp, 2003; Folger, 1986; Greenberg, Panzano & McFarlin, 1993; Sweeney 1993). In the late 1960s, goal-setting theory also emerged as researchers discovered that the 1960s, began simple handed Steers showed goal act of specifying en for behavior targets task performance 1968, 1996; (Locke, in this arena & Porter, 1974). Research and specificity, goal difficulty, to enhance each served task on numerous Based empirical

Lawler Vroom's (1968) expanded to recognize the role of individual initial work differences abilities and skills) (e. g. , employee in linking and role clarity job job effort to actual Porter and performance. the relationship between Lawler also clarified and sub performance that this relation satisfaction, sequent arguing of the ship is mediated by the extent and quality in exchange receive rewards for employees job performance. a Finally, feedback that goal commitment Porter and to recog incorporated loop nize learning about past relation by employees in the That is, if superior ships. erformance to lead to superior failed future rewards, past effort may suffer as incentives and the employee in the employee's reward system lose credibility good Lawler eyes. performance. Locke and Latham studies, (1990) subsequently a formal theory of goal setting. proposed Earley a time dimension to and Erez (1991) later added this Rosse topic by on examining motivation, the role of cognitive and processing while Crown a number its initial of Since publication, or further refine to extend have worked scholars to re the basic framework expectancy cognitive research and new theoflect emerging findings retical developments 1990; Mitch (e. . , Kanfer, For

example, ell, 1997). expectancy theory has to study forms of work behavior been used other than job performance, ab including employee citizen and organizational turnover, senteeism, Porter, & 1977; Mowday, (Mobley, ship behavior 1973; Steers, 1982; Organ, 1988; Porter & Steers, have also Steers & Rhodes, 1978). Researchers and social influences linked group expectations to individual decisions work motivation (Porter, Lawler, ancy & Hackman, principles have basic expect 1975). Finally, into been incorporated the role of groupgoals, in (1995) examined on performance. o individual addition goals, of goal-setting Applications theory in the form of individual and team management-by-objectives are now used widely in programs throughout (Ambrose & Kulik, 1999). dustry saw significant this period Finally, develop on the role of social ments focusing cognition on behavior and self-efficacy and performance as Bandura such researchers by leading a social Bandura (1977a, b, 1997). cog proposed nitive that self-confidence suggesting theory, to lies at the heart of an individual's incentive a major act or to be proactive. fter Indeed, on social review of the research literature cog nition and self-efficacy, and Luthans Stajkovic for the (1998, 2003) found considerable support in determining role of self-efficacy work as moder related particularly performance, ated by task complexity and locus of control. 2004 Sfeers, Mowday, and Shapiro 383 Based posed place izational research, this extending a model through behavior. on this Luthans concept labeled (2001) has pro into the work positive organ An outside this situation in the subject cause it is no izations) observer that either rom conclude might we have lost interest be of work motivation (perhaps in organ issue longer a pressing or that we solved the work motivation the con con its

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN WORK MOTIVATION Many and 1970s and pool cated nessed of the have ideas emerging from the 1960s been subsequently to reflect an further developed and more of research findings research a series methods. extended thereby eliminating problem long ago, for additional work. Neither of these need seems the clusions On very plausible. economy, trary, and e-commerce, dot. oms, as the more ization (as well facturing is force and service in the new replete increased traditional a motivated a with global manu work Indeed, of refinements and extensions For expanded sophisti the 1980s wit of researchers existing example, in conceptual made great strides developments on social and empirical work learning focusing on in new work focusing theory, as they did systems, innovation and justice, punishment, procedural on work influences and cross-cultural creativity, behavior. interest However, by the 1990s, intellectual in work motivation least as mea theory? t goal-setting theory, job design, sured cline sider by journal precipitously. the number articles publications? seemed As evidence of theoretical of to de this, con to be reward theories. hallmark of frequently MIT econo Indeed, competitive advantage. over a de mist Lester Thurow (1992) observed cade that successful (and ago companies countries) principally nology vated will on compete the quality their human in the future their based tech of both resources. firms), as cited A moti and a critical workforce becomes strategic in such asset then, has Why, competition. so little intellectual there been focus activity we have ing on this important topic? Perhaps the breakthrough ideas that can yet to develop level of understanding. push us to the next on work mo While theoretical developments tivation in recent have declined may years, the world ? f work

has changed dramatically. one can argue that the past decade Indeed, has witnessed other than any are both Companies and expanding (often at downsizing or levels in different the same divisions time, is character of the hierarchy). The workforce ized by increased with diver diversity highly and demands.

Information technol gent needs both the manner ogy has changed frequently and location tional forms of work (such now published over the past decade journals & Kulik, & 1999, or Mitchell find few articles that You will Daniels, 2002). in focus on genuine theoretical developments see minor area. exten will this Instead, you empirical)sciencehavioral see Ambrose (e. g. , sions, tests, or applications empirical ing theories. While clearly helpful, to breakthrough leads developments of exist this hardly in our (as opposed in leading greater decade workplace in memory. changes of the principles understanding underlying work motivation.

At the same of time, a review recent in the the most editions of textbooks field of management and organizational be havior that most of the theories dis reveals cussed date from the 1960s and 1970s, with to more recent work. references only fleeting curious that some early motivation (It is also theories been widely that have subsequently to permeate continue discredited such texts. ) In short, while of management other fields negotiations, tion design) decision (e. g. , leadership, making, and teams, and organiza groups to develop continue conceptually, substantive theoretical focus developments on work motivation have not kept pace. ng research activities. as those New found Teams organiza in e-com are merce) are commonplace. as of hierarchy, distributions. of power is on the

rise. Managing workers contingent to perplex continues workers experience knowledge across experienced managers industries. divergent And globalization of man and the challenges defining traditional the notion aging steady across borders are now the norm in of the exception. as well The use 3 See 2003) focusing a key strategic mance. a special on issue the asset o? Harvard Business Review (January as of employee motivation importance in competition and corporate performance 84 Academy of Management Review July can have a profound These changes influence on how companies to attract, retain, and attempt motivate their employees. Yet we lack new models in of guiding behavior capable managerial this new era of work. As Cappelli " Most notes, observers of the corporate world believe that the traditional between and relationship employer is gone, but there is little understand employee it ended and even is less about what ing of why els that relationship" We believe (1999: 1). our intellectual to redirect time has come new models? and into discovering tual energies new models? f work motivation research toward commensurate tion and with job performance replacing that the this new era. tions work plete, more theories. more for developing complex motivation that are more valid, broader useful in scope, and, to practitioners theories of more com by implication, than existing In the second, Yitzhak Fried and Linda Haynes examine in which time factors can Slowik ways influence and job performance processes goal-setting mance in work that organizations. They argue the addition of time as a key variable in goal and validity setting theory adds to its dynamism in helping in in behavior explain employee creasingly environments. omplex, continually evolving work THE ROAD AHEAD With this for papers motivation. in mind, in 2001 AMR issued a

call on the topic of the future of work was A special seminar held at the Next, Myeong-Gu Seo, Lisa Feldman Barrett, and Jean M. Bartunek draw on both psychological and neurobiological of core affect theories a set of direct and affective experiences to identify indirect paths affect through which work-related can influence affective feelings three dimensions of behavioral and direction, intensity, to direct In addition affect influence, persistence. can also influence behavior affective experiences on goal level their effects indirectly, through and goal commitment, as well of motivation as on components judgment expectancy, utility, and progress. L. Ackerman Ruth Kanfer and Phillip then use to face and adult development theories life-span an understanding facilitate of the implications of on workplace motivation. aging aging Although as leading to declining is generally viewed cognitive these auditory and intellectual capabilities, theorists argue that this view may be overly simplistic is a more that aging Instead, plastic. they argue in which process, cognitive complex declining are accompanied in other abilities by growth intellectual of motives abilities, reorganization traits. and goals, and changing personality moreover how aging influences Fully understanding a comprehensive motivation, therefore, requires combination of the different and often understanding taking changes this, Naomi Following and S. Alexander Gilder, pensatory place. Ellemers, Haslam Dick de use self the key to relating outcomes: of the Academy of Management 2001 annual meeting ment to stimulate in the interest and discussion to the call, researchers In response sub topic. were submitted subsequence which papers, fifty-six of space reviewed. frequently the journal, many papers worthy accommodated. However, following view six papers emerged cycles, offer new and useful ideas and future directions of the topic. What these for the



theoretical In view could limitations not multiple that seem insights development of be re to into in common is a have papers on existing to build of effort theories genuine work motivation and extending by adapting con of the changing them to fit the realities is temporary Today's workplace workplace. hort-term characterized by an increasingly variable, performance among increasing employ interdependence ees in some form of team (often manifested to affective responses evolving organization), the workplace value increasing experience, on the part of employees, conflicts and motive nature of the transitory and a clear recognition focus, of careers. time as a critical six papers a variety address our understanding The tivation Edwin A. Locke in this special issue appearing to advancing of issues critical of motivation theory and mo social pro categorization theory and identity cesses to examine in which ndividual the ways to determine interact work and group processes in organizations motivation. The fact that work around increasingly organized to understand it is important gests influence how work is teams how sug groups The first paper, by on focuses P. Latham, on work moti of metatheories the development six recommenda vation. These authors present in the workplace. and Gary motivation. Their paper can have in groups participation explores a power 2004 Steers, Mowday, and Shapiro 385 on motivation ful influence can be understood what by on individual-level effects. Finally, Hugo lines of research the influences and bove focusing and beyond Crown, D. F. , & Rosse, J. G. 1995. Yours, through mine the and ours: exclusively several Deci, Facilitating of individual and Human group productivity and group goals. Decision Processes, motivation. Organizational 64: 138-150. New York: social across integration Behavior M. Kehr

synthesizes on motivation by E. L. 1975. Intrinsic P. C. 1997. Face, Plenum. structure: cultures. An New of explicit and on motivation abilities perceived model. using a compensatory workplace answer some model intriguing, helps solved examining implicit motives in the Kehr's unre

Earley, of organizational analysis York: Oxford University Earley, P. C, and & Erez, norms: models. M. and harmony, behavior Press. 1991. Time role Journal of dependency effects processing of on 76: individual questions concerning goal at tainment and why self-set goals may sometimes be nonmotivating. to the these papers contribute Throughout, research and theo long tradition of substantive in the field of work motiva retical development tion that benefit both organizational researchers and practicing alike. managers goals motivational 717-727. The cognitive of Applied Psychology, R. 1986.

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He of Oregon. focuses his teaching Steers, Mowday, and Shapiro Debra ment L. Shapiro, the Willard Graham of Manage Professor formerly Distinguished at UNC-Chapel is now professor of management in the and organization Hill, R. H. Smith School at College of Business, of Maryland Park, and a member University of the Academy of Management's Board of Governors. She her Ph. D. received from conflict Her University. in organizations that the cross-cultural challenges research tend of managing focuses on issues regarding employee how to motivate to manage behaviors and Northwestern unproductive conflict effectively.