

Theories of motivation

Psychology



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Running Head: THEORIES OF MOTIVATION Theories of Motivation in Harvard Style by Motivation has been and is still an important issue in human resource management. Various theories have been established which raises the issue of what motivates employees to do their best in the accomplishment of a particular task (Finemann, Sims & Yannis 2006). However, it should be noted that even though the main theories of motivation which have gained recognition could not adequately suffice as each has its own set of strengths and weaknesses. This paper will examine two major theories of motivation namely Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the equity theory. After an analysis of each theory's strengths and weaknesses and a comparison of the two, it will conclude with its main findings.

Maslow strongly believes that motivation arises from need. Maslow placed an individual's needs on a hierarchy of importance and provides the following first four levels: physiological; safety/security; belongingness and love; and esteem (Morgan 1989). An important application to Maslow's theory is that once one understands the need level of employees, it is easier to design programs that will trigger self-motivation. Maslow's hierarchy of need has been widely recognized because of its "intuitive logic" and "case of understanding" (Knights and Hugh 2007). It should also be regarded its major strength is its unique recognition that motivation is not just attained through monetary benefits. This motivation theory also emphasizes the individuality of a person. However, the theory is flawed because it cannot be validated through research neither do Maslow provide empirical support for his claims (Knights and Hugh).

Braden asserts in his equity theory that we are motivated when we perceive
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that we are being treated in a manner that is equal to the manner in which all other employees are being treated (Daft 2007; Knights and Hugh 2007). The equity theory of motivation is useful because it shows how reward, which is the primary motivation technique used by business organizations can be utilized in order to produce better results (Finemann, Sims & Yannis, 2006). However, Braden himself cites that it is hard part to define exactly what each person perceives to be as equal. Because of this, managers might have the difficulty of employing this theory to different employees (Finemann, Sims & Yannis, 2006).

The two theories which have been examined above can be classified into two broad classifications of motivation theories-content and process. Maslow's hierarchy of needs look at employee motivation through the content approach which assumes that employees are motivated by the fulfillment of their inner needs (Daft 2007). On the other hand, the equity theory of motivation is an example of process approach which focuses on the external influences or behaviors that people choose in order to fulfill their needs (Knights and Hugh 2007).

The consensus as to what really motivates employees has been unreached indicated by the dichotomy of motivation theories. As discussed above, Maslow's hierarchy of need and Braden's theory of equity have become popular because of their recognition of what really influences man. However, as they are seen using different approaches, each cannot sufficiently explain all the factors involve in motivation.

References

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