

Motivation

A motivated employee is someone that works hard because they feel fulfilled when they do so. Motivation is an important area of business research and over the years there have been many 'motivational theories'. One of the best-known theories of motivation is based on Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Maslow argued that individuals have a hierarchy of needs. True motivation is achieved by fulfilling higher order needs.

Basic needs

Are for reasonable standards of food, shelter and clothing and those other items which are required to be the norm to meet the needs of the body and for physical survival. The base level of need will be typically met in modern industrial society by the exchange of labour for a wage packet or salary.

Security needs

Are also concerned with physical survival. In the context of the workplace these needs could include physical safety, security of employment, adequate rest periods, pension and sick schemes, and protection from arbitrary actions.

Group needs

Are concerned with an individual's need for love and affection. The majority of people want to feel that they belong to a group.

Self-esteem

Needs are based on an individual's desire for self-respect and the respect of others. Employees have a need to be recognised as individuals of some importance, to receive praise for their work, and to have their efforts noticed.

Self-fulfilment

Maslow placed self-fulfilment at the top of his hierarchy of needs. Self-fulfilment is concerned with full personal development and individual creativity. In order to meet these needs it is important for individuals to be able to use their talents and abilities fully.

The organisation that wants motivated employees must pay due care and attention both to lower and higher order needs.

Frederick Herzberg

The work of Frederick Herzberg complements that of Maslow. Herzberg showed that to truly motivate an employee you need to create conditions that make them feel fulfilled in the workplace. Herzberg set out a key difference between 'movement' and 'motivation'. He said that you can get employees to move by 'kicks in the ass' - i.e. punishments and rewards e.g. penalties for poor work and high pay for good work. However, workers that move are not the same as workers that are motivated.

According to Herzberg if you want to motivate employees you need to create a series of 'satisfiers' which are quite different from high pay. Herzberg's satisfiers included:

1. Recognition of effort and performance
2. The nature of the job itself - does it provide the employee with the appropriate degree of challenge and enjoyment?
3. Sense of achievement

4. Responsibility

5. The opportunity for promotion and improvement.

The ideas of Maslow and Herzberg have been built on in modern theories of Human Resource Development. Human Resource Development involves talking to employees to find out about their needs and aspirations so as to be able to establish Training and Development Plans. Human Resource Development recognises that not only do organisations have objectives and requirements, so too do the individuals that work for them. Strategies such as empowerment i.e. trusting employees to think for themselves and to make decisions rather than be told what to do, and career development plans provide real motivation for employees.

Development

Is the process of identifying the development requirements of individuals and then seeking to find ways of helping them to develop their careers. A development needs analysis is the starting point followed up by a career development plan and regular appraisal.

Hierarchy of needs

A structured ladder of needs starting out with basic needs and moving up to more fulfilling needs.