

Motivation Theories

Motivation can be defined as that which makes people act or behave in the way they do.

In a work environment, it is sometimes viewed as the difference between what people can do and what they will do.

Motivation begins with the needs that exist within us. If these are unsatisfied we establish a goal, consciously or unconsciously, and take action to achieve that goal. People sometimes make the mistake of trying to motivate others on the basis of faulty assumptions about their future behaviour. We observe behaviour and draw conclusions from it, but very often we do not know what the motivating factor is.

Much information has been published and theories put forward about motivation. We shall consider some of them here. The best way to assess them is to consider them from your own viewpoint. Are they relevant to you? Will they work in your environment?

Douglas McGregor: Theory X and Theory Y

In *The Human Side of Enterprise*, (1987, Penguin) McGregor stated that managers who use the carrot and stick approach held a set of propositions he called *Theory X*:

- the average worker does as little as possible
- lacks ambition, dislikes responsibility and prefers to be led
- is inherently self-centred, indifferent to organisational needs
- is by nature resistant to change
- is gullible and not very bright

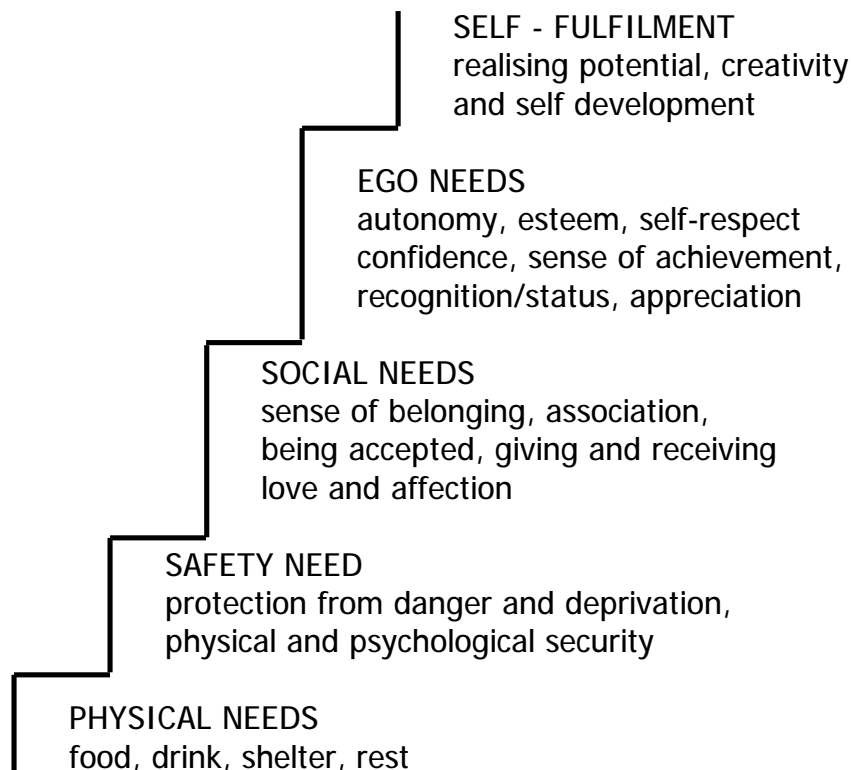
He commented that workers treated as if they fitted Theory X were unlikely to perform effectively and he suggested that a new set of propositions should be considered.

He called these *Theory Y*:

- people enjoy work as naturally as they enjoy play
- most people are capable of exercising self-control and self discipline if they are motivated to achieve a target
- the average person will not only accept but will actively seek responsibility
- many people have the imagination, ingenuity and creativity to help solve problems in the organisation
- the capacity of the average worker is only partially utilised

Abraham Maslow: Hierarchy of human needs

In *Motivation and Personality*, Maslow concluded we are driven by our inner needs which form a series of steps, and people need to satisfy each one before they can move on to the next.



People don't necessarily move in a continuous movement upwards. They may be at a different level in their personal or social life, than in their working life. Also there may be exceptions to the rules stated, and some may be content to stay at a particular level, without it adversely affecting internal motivations.

Maslow's theory may explain why some managers are unable to motivate some staff effectively. By assessing an employee's motivation, maybe by way of appraisal, a manager should be able to analyse the next level that the employee should be aiming for.

Frederick Hertzberg: Work needs

Hertzberg identified the following true motivators as contributing to high morale and job satisfaction:

- achievement
- recognition
- responsibility
- promotion prospects
- nature of the job

He also noted these 'hygiene' factors whose absence or inadequacy in a job produces poor performance and dissatisfaction:

- higher authority policy
- pay
- type of management
- working conditions
- relations with colleagues
- fringe benefits

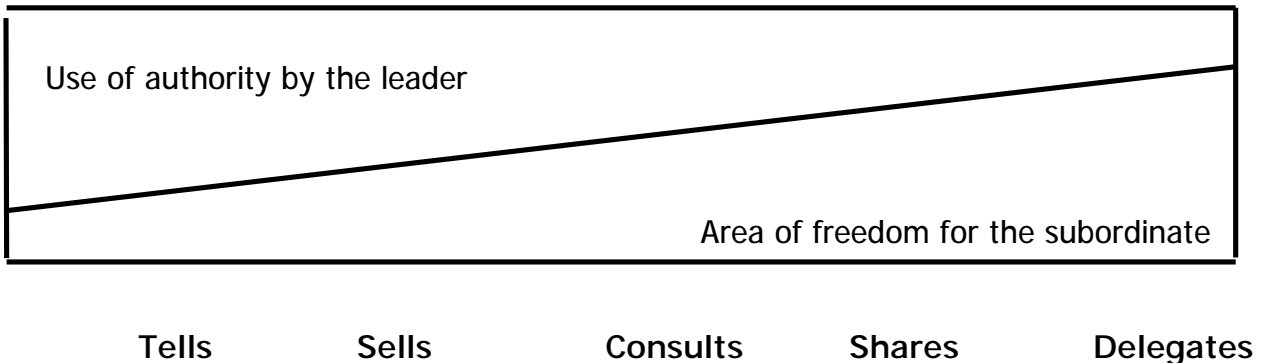
Hertzberg's research led him to the conclusion that the 'hygiene' factors were rarely high motivators. People tend to take fringe benefits and good working conditions for granted, but when they are removed they had a highly demotivating effect. A salary increase had a short-term motivating effect when it was felt to be deserved, but rarely did the effect last very long, while what was felt to be an unfair salary was a long-lasting demotivator.

David McClelland: Motivation Model

McClelland identified three types of people, and suggests in *Human Motivation* that each of us fit into one of the following:

- **Achievement motivated:** desire for excellence, likes doing a good job, wants a sense of accomplishment, wants to advance in career, needs feedback.
- **Authority motivated:** likes to lead, to give advice, wants prestige and job status, enjoys influencing people and activities, likes their ideas to predominate.
- **Affiliation motivated:** likes to be popular and well thought of, desires friendly relations, interaction, dislikes being alone, likes to help other people, is a team player.

Tannenbaum and Schmidt's Leader Behaviour continuum



Tannenbaum and Schmidt identified a link between the way a leader uses authority and makes decisions, and the likely outcome of the behaviour of the group. Interestingly, at either edge of the continuum, neither side completely gives up their power or authority.

The manager will still be held responsible and accountable for the results of any delegation and employees always have the power to refuse to do what a manager tells them.

This idea led to the conclusion that management styles at either edge of the continuum led to very different behaviours:

PUSH STYLE	PULL STYLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• works best with authority• is high risk• gets low commitment• is win/lose• needs enforcement• is most effective in the short term	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• works without authority• is low risk• gets high commitment• is win/win• is self-enforcing• is most effective in the long term

The 'Push' style is highly effective in a crisis when a firm decision may need to be made swiftly without time for discussion, while the 'Pull' style has obvious benefits when time is more flexible.

Victor Vroom's Expectancy Theory

This theory helps explain why a lot of workers aren't motivated on their jobs and merely do the minimum necessary to get by. It states that an employee is motivated to exert a high level of effort when he or she believes effort will lead to a good performance appraisal;

A good appraisal will lead to organisational rewards like a bonus, a salary increase or promotion; and the rewards will satisfy the individual's personal goals.

One possible source of low motivation is the belief by the employee that no matter how hard he or she works, the likelihood of getting a good performance appraisal is low.

Many employees see the performance-reward relationship in their job as weak, because organisations reward a lot of things besides just performance. So, if salary is allocated on the basis of seniority, length of service, being co-operative or 'sweet talking' the boss, employees are likely to see the performance-reward relationship as being weak and demotivating.

The rewards also need to be tailored to individual employee needs. Unfortunately, many managers are limited to the rewards they can distribute, which makes it difficult to personalise rewards. Also, some managers assume that all employees want the same thing, thus overlooking the motivational effects of differentiating rewards.

So, the key to Expectancy Theory is an understanding of an individual's goals and the linkage between effort and performance, between performance and rewards, and between the rewards and individual goal satisfaction. There is no universal principle for explaining everyone's motivation.