Chapter 13[1]

Motivation

13.1 The meaning of motivation

The term 'motivation' derives from the Latin word for movement (mover). A motive is a reason for doing something. Motivation is the strength and direction of behavior and the factors that influence people to behave in certain ways. People are motivated when they expect that a course of action is likely to lead to the attainment of a goal and a valued reward one that satisfies their needs and wants. The term 'motivation' can refer variously to the goals that individuals have, the ways in which individuals chose their goals and the ways in which others try to change their behavior. Locke and Latham (2004: 388) observed that: 'The concept of motivation refers to internal factors that impel action and to external factors that can act as inducements to action.'

As described by Arnold et al (1991) the three components of motivation are:

1 Direction – what a person is trying to do.

2 Effort – how hard a person is trying.

3 Persistence – how long a person keeps on trying.

Well-motivated people engage in positive discretionary behavior – they decide to make an effort. Such people may be self-motivated, and as long as this means they are going in the right direction to attain what they are there to achieve, then this is the best form of motivation. But additional motivation provided by the work itself, the quality of leadership, and various forms of recognition and reward, builds on self-motivation and helps people to make the best use of their abilities and to perform well.

There are two types of motivation and a number of theories explaining how it works, as discussed below.

13.2 Types of motivation

13.2.1 Intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation takes place when individuals feel that their work is important, interesting and challenging and that it provides them with a reasonable degree of autonomy (freedom to act),

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[1] Armstrong, M. (2014). Armstrong's handbook of human resource management practice (11th ed.). London: Kogan Page.

opportunities to achieve and advance, and scope to use and develop their skills and abilities. It can be described as

motivation by the work itself. It is not created by external incentives. Deci and Ryan (1985) suggested that intrinsic motivation is based on the need to be competent and self-determining (that is, to have a choice). Michael Sandel (2012: 122) remarked that: 'When people are engaged in an activity they consider intrinsically worthwhile, offering money may weaken their motivation by "crowding out" their intrinsic interest or commitment'.

Intrinsic motivation can be enhanced by job design. Katz (1964) suggested that jobs should in themselves provide sufficient variety, complexity, challenge and skill to engage the abilities of the worker. Hackman and Oldham (1974) in their job characteristics model identified the five core characteristics of jobs that result in intrinsic motivation, namely: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback. Pink (2009) stated that there are three steps that managers can take to improve motivation:

1 Autonomy – encourage people to set their own schedule and focus on getting work done not how it is done.

2 Mastery – help people to identify the steps they can take to improve and ask them to identify how they will know they are making progress.

3 Purpose – when giving instructions explain the why as well as the how.

13.2.2 Extrinsic motivation

Extrinsic motivation occurs when things are done to or for people in order to motivate them. These include rewards such as incentives, increased pay, praise or promotion; and punishments such as disciplinary action, withholding pay, or criticism.

Extrinsic motivators can have an immediate and powerful effect, but it will not necessarily last long. The intrinsic motivators, which are concerned with the 'quality of working life' (a phrase and movement that emerged from this concept), are likely to have a deeper and longer-term effect because they are inherent in individuals and the work and are not imposed from outside in such forms as incentive pay.

Motivation theory as described below explains the ways in which intrinsic and extrinsic motivation take place.

13.3 Motivation theory

As mentioned by Steers et al (2004: 379) the earliest approaches to understanding human motivation date from the time of the Greek philosophers and focus on the concept of hedonism as a principle driving force in behavior. Individuals were seen as directing their efforts to seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. This principle was later refined and further developed in the works of philosophers such as John Locke and Jeremy Bentham in the 17th and 18th centuries. Motivation theory has moved on from then. It started in the earlier part of the 20th century with the contributions of the exponents of scientific management (instrumentality theory). In the middle years of that century the behavioral scientists entered the field and began to develop the 'content' or 'needs' theory of motivation. The main process theories such as expectancy theory emerged in the in the 1960s and 70s, although the first formulation of the process theory of reinforcement took place in 1911. The three main areas of motivation theory – instrumentality, content and process – are examined below.

13.3.1 Instrumentality theory

Instrumentality theory states in effect that rewards and punishments are the best instruments with which to shape behavior. It assumes that people will be motivated to work if rewards and penalties are tied directly to their performance; thus the awards are contingent upon effective performance. Instrumentality theory has its roots in the scientific management methods of Taylor (1911: 121) who wrote: 'It is impossible, through any long period of time, to get workmen to work much harder than the average men around them unless they are assured a large and a permanent increase in their pay.'

This theory provides a rationale for financial incentives such as performance-related pay, albeit a dubious one. Motivation using this approach has been and still is widely adopted. It may be successful in some circumstances, eg piece work, but – for reasons explained in Chapter 27 – merit or performance pay is flawed.

Instrumentality theory relies exclusively on a system of external controls and does not recognize a number of other human needs. It also fails to appreciate the fact that the formal control system can

13.3.2 Content theory

The aim of the content or needs theories produced by Maslow, Alderfer, McClelland, Herzberg, and Deci and Ryan was to identify the factors associated with motivation. The theory focuses on the content of motivation in the shape of needs. Its basis is the belief that an unsatisfied need creates tension and a state of disequilibrium. To restore the balance a goal is identified that will satisfy the need,

and a behaviour pathway is selected that will lead to the achievement of the goal and the satisfaction of the need. Behaviour is therefore motivated by unsatisfied needs. A content theory model is shown in Figure 13.1. Content the– ory, as the term implies, indicates the components of motivation but it does not explain how motiva– tion affects performance – a necessary requirement if the concept is to provide guidance on HR policy and practice. This was the role of expectancy theory, as will be discussed later.

13.3.2.1 Maslow's hierarchy of needs

The most famous classification of needs is the one formulated by Maslow (1954). He suggested that there are five major need categories that apply to people in general, starting from the fundamental physiological needs and leading through a hierarchy of safety, social and esteem needs to the need for self–fulfillment, the highest need of all. When a lower need is satisfied the next highest becomes dominant and the individual's attention is turned to satisfying this higher need. The need for self–fulfillment, however, can never be satisfied. 'Man is a wanting animal'; only an unsatisfied need can motivate behavior and the dominant need is the prime motivator of behavior. Psychological development takes place as people move up the hierarchy of needs, but this is not necessarily a straightforward progression. The lower needs still exist, even if temporarily dormant as motivators, and individuals constantly return to previously satisfied needs.

Maslow's needs hierarchy has an intuitive appeal and has been very popular. But it has not been verified by empirical research such as that conducted by Wahba and Bridwell (1979), and it has been criticized for its apparent rigidity – different people may have different priorities and the underpinning assumption that everyone has the same needs is invalid. It is difficult to accept that needs progress steadily up the hierarchy and Maslow himself expressed doubts about the validity of a strictly ordered hierarchy. But he did emphasize that the higher–order needs are more significant.

13.3.2.2 ERG theory (Alderfer)

Alderfer (1972) produced a more convincing and simpler theory, which postulated three primary categories of needs:

1 Existence needs such as hunger and thirst– pay, fringe benefits and working conditions are other types of existence needs.

2 Relatedness needs, which acknowledge that people are not self–contained units but must engage in transactions with their human environment acceptance, understanding, confirmation and influence are elements of the relatedness process.

3 Growth needs, which involve people in finding the opportunities to be what they are most fully and to become what they can. This is the most significant need.

13.3.2.3 McClelland's achievement motivation

An alternative way of classifying needs was developed by McClelland (1961), who based it mainly on studies of managers. He identified three needs of which the need for achievement was the most important:

1 The need for achievement, defined as the need for competitive success measured against a personal standard of excellence.

2 The need for affiliation, defined as the need for warm, friendly, compassionate relationships with others.

3 The need for power, defined as the need to control or influence others.

13.3.2.4 Herzberg's two-factor model

The two-factor model of motivation developed by Herzberg (1957, 1966) was based on an investigation into the sources of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction of accountants and engineers who were asked what made them feel exceptionally good or exceptionally bad about their jobs. According to Herzberg, this research established that there were two factors that affected feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Motivating factors or 'satisfiers' relate to the job content and consist of the need for achievement, the interest of the work, responsibility and opportunities for advancement. These needs are the intrinsic motivators. He summed this up in the phrase 'motivation by the work itself'.

Hygiene factors relate to the job context, including such things as pay and working conditions. 'Hygiene' is used in the medical use of the term, meaning preventative and environmental. In them- selves hygiene factors neither satisfy nor motivate and they serve primarily to prevent job dissatisfaction, while having little effect on positive job attitudes. Pay is not a satisfier but if it is inadequate or inequitable it can cause dissatisfaction. However, its provision does not provide lasting satisfaction.

Herzberg's two-factor theory in effect identifies needs but it has been attacked by, for example, Opsahl and Dunnette (1966). The research method has been criticized because no attempt was made to measure the relationship between satisfaction and performance. It has been claimed that the two-factor nature of the theory is an inevitable result of the questioning method used by the interviewers. It has also been suggested that wide and unwarranted inferences have been drawn from

small and specialized samples and that there is no evidence to suggest that the satisfiers do improve productivity. The under- pinning assumption that everyone has the same needs is invalid. Denise Rousseau (2006: 263) in her presidential address to the US Academy of Management summed up these views as follows: 'Herzberg's long discredited two-factor theory is typically included in the motivation section of management textbooks, despite the fact that it was discredited as an artefact of method bias over thirty years ago.'

In spite of these objections, the Herzberg two- factor theory continues to thrive; partly because it is easy to understand and seems to be based on real-life rather than academic abstractions, and partly because it convincingly emphasizes the positive value of the intrinsic motivating factors and highlights the need to consider both financial and non-financial factors when developing reward systems. It is also in accord with a fundamental belief in the dignity of labour and the Protestant ethic that work is good in itself. Herzberg's strength as a proselytizer rather than a researcher meant that he had considerable influence on the job enrichment movement, which sought to design jobs in a way that would maximize the opportunities to obtain intrinsic satisfaction from work and thus improve the quality of working life. Herzberg famously remarked that if you want people to do a good job then give them a good job to do (quoted by Dowling, 1971).