

ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE - MOTIVATION

A KEY TO LONG-TERM SUCCESS

By DEREK DANN

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DON'T QUIT

*When things go wrong as they sometimes will,
When the road you're trudging seems all up
hill;
When funds are low and the debts are high
And you want to smile, but you have to
sigh. When care is pressing you down a bit,
Rest, if you must, but don't you quit.*

*Life is queer with its twists and turns
As every one of us sometimes learns,
And many a failure turns about
When he might have won had he stuck it out:*

*Don't give up though the pace seems slow-
You may succeed with another blow.*

*Success is failure turned inside out -
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt.
And you never can tell how close you are -
It may be near when it seems so far.
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit;
It's when things seem worst that you must not
quit.*

Author unknown

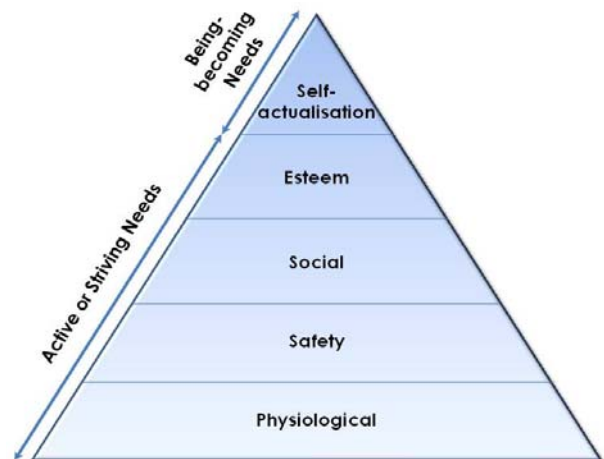
Good days and bad days; we all have them. Sometimes we can tell, even before we get up in the morning, what sort of day we expect to have. That might be because of prior events at work that will be brought to bear on the day ahead; or it might simply be that we are feeling a bit 'low' for some personal reason.

When we get to our place of work, assuming that we did indeed get up, and we are met with those colourful posters extolling the merits of greater effort, higher resilience, increased ambition or seeking new challenges, do we warmly embrace their messages? Or do we simply carry on as normal?

In this short article, we're going to explore motivation at a personal level. We'll look at what some of the academic world says about motivation because we can learn from it and apply the lessons in our own workplace.

As in any management topic, there are rafts of theories on the subject. Some are hugely beneficial to our gaining a good, practical understanding of what motivates us as in Maslow's Hierarchy of

Needs, Herzberg's Motivation – Hygiene Theory and McGregor's Theory X and Y. Others contribute to the academic debate but, here we'll concentrate on the more popular three above. So let's take a brief look and think about how we can quickly use them to the benefit of our own organisations.



Maslow. When there's talk around motivation, Maslow's theory is possibly the most often quoted. He proposed that people's needs could be described as a hierarchy as shown on the previous page.

Physiological needs include those for sustaining human life such as food, water,

warmth, etc. Maslow was of the opinion that, until these needs have been substantially met, other motivational factors have little, if any, impact. You'd probably agree with that hypothesis.

Next in the hierarchy comes Safety: the need to feel free from threat or danger. This applies not only to physical but also emotional harm. To get an understanding of this level, just imagine the impact on you of rumours circulating around your own organisation that 50% of the workforce is to be made redundant. What might that do to your sense of wellbeing and to your motivation?

At the next level, we have Social needs. These are all about our need for company and human interaction, the need for acceptance and a sense of belonging. Friendship, love and affection also belong here. Without these, we feel lonely and forgotten, two hugely demotivating factors.

Then we have Esteem. This concerns our need for recognition, for being held in high regard by others. And this leads to our own high self-esteem without which we are likely to suffer from poor motivation.

At the top of the pyramid is Self-actualisation. Maslow suggested that this is the highest order of human need. It's about our drive and determination to be who we want to be, to achieving our full potential, and to accomplishing our greatest goals in life. It's also closely associated with getting to that point where we want to 'pay back' into our communities, social groups and society at large as a way of saying "Thanks" for our own success.

As each of these needs is substantially satisfied, the next need becomes more dominant. And, of course, it's always possible to slip back down the hierarchy, as some may recognise during periods of deep recession.

In fairness, it must be said that, despite the wide recognition afforded to Maslow's theory, probably because it is easily understood and has a certain logic, Maslow presented no empirical data to support it and subsequent research has been unable to validate his thinking.

Herzberg probably comes a close second to Maslow in the popularity stakes. He postulated a two-factor theory in which he identified 'hygiene factors' (dissatisfiers) and motivation factors. He suggested that, within organisations, intrinsic factors are related to job satisfaction whilst extrinsic factors are associated with dissatisfaction. The table below illustrates some of the factors:

Hygiene Factors (Dissatisfiers)	Motivation Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organisation and its values • Its policies and administration • The kind of supervision people receive • Working conditions • Interpersonal relations • Salary/rewards structure • Status • Security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement • Recognition • Growth/advancement • Interest in the job

Herzberg went on to say that we should expect the presence of some of these factors within organisations but that they may have an entirely neutral effect on motivation; yet, if they are perceived as 'bad', then they will be dissatisfiers.

Consider the working conditions and environment in your current place of employment. If the conditions are good, they are possibly not much of a motivator whereas, if they are poor, then they almost certainly will be a demotivator.

McGregor suggested that people in organisations could be managed in one of two ways depending on their attitude

to work. (There is no suggestion here that people's outlook on work is necessarily reflected in their attitude towards life in general; in other words, we can have totally different attitudes and approaches to each).

'Theory X' people were seen as those who work because they have to, those who do not like work and will do as little as possible to avoid it altogether; they will need a carrot and stick management style and will resist taking on new responsibilities. Usually, they are concerned more with security than with achievement and ambition. On the other hand, 'Theory Y' people find work stimulating and energising; they want to be a part of a successful organisation and will do whatever they can to help it achieve that. They are imaginative and creative, accept and seek out responsibility and new challenges to stretch their capabilities and expand their knowledge and skills.

Think about some of your work colleagues and decide into which category you would place them. If some of them are Theory X types, what could you do to help them realise their full potential?

Jeremy Bentham's 'Carrot and Stick' theory is broadly analogous to McGregor's Theory X though it considerably predates it, having its roots in the Industrial Revolution. Sadly, all too often, the 'carrot and stick' approach of reward and punishment remains a mainstay of motivational practice, sometimes necessarily but also frequently through lack of vision.

So, we've taken a look at some of the academic theories of motivation and you have thought about how they might be manifested in your own organisation. But there are alternative ways of looking at the subject. Let's explore further.

When it comes to motivation, as in any

other management discipline, there's no magic wand to fit every scenario.

That's partly because we are individuals with different needs, perceptions and aspirations. The old cliché about the glass being half full or half empty has some relevance; yet it is far too simplistic. Most of us are not just one or the other; we're far more complex than that.

Our attitudes can change daily, hourly or even minute-by-minute depending upon our perceptions of any particular situation. So our motivation can be different too; it may be 'towards' or 'away from'; towards pleasant outcomes, e.g. a pay rise, a promotion, an exciting new challenge; or away from a threat, e.g. redundancy, a demotion, bankruptcy. One induces attraction, the other flight. And whilst we all prefer attraction (towards), there are times for all of us when flight (away from) has to be the way.

So what can we do about motivation of our staff?

WHAT WE CAN DO

Well, a good starting point might be to consider further the motivational models we've just examined. They hold a host of indicators to how our people might be feeling. And they show some attributes we might want to establish within our own organisations in order to achieve win / win outcomes.

As employers and managers, the best we can do is to give our people the environment in which they are able to flourish, to grow and develop, to be stakeholders in our joint success, where they are proud of their achievements, where they recognise that this is part of their journey and they have not yet reached their destination.

Because in the end, what matters in the workplace is how we, as individuals, feel

about our current situation and our future.

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