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## Motivating Employees by Matching Personality and Work Profile

**Sapan Shrimal**

Assistant Professor, SIBM, Pune  
E-mail: [sapanshimal@sibm.edu](mailto:sapanshimal@sibm.edu)

### Motivated Employees-The Most Precious Asset

The importance of a motivated work force needs no elaboration. A highly motivated employee can transform problems into fruitful business opportunities. At the same time, an abundance of resources and facilities would fail to instill optimism in a demotivated employee.

Jack Stack explains the story of Springfield Remanufacturing Corp. (SRC) in his book, 'The Great Game of Business'<sup>1</sup>. It mentions how a team of motivated employees achieved a production target, which was considered to be beyond imagination. He coined the phrase, "You Gotta Wanna".

When International Harvester (now Navistar International Corp.) was faced with a possibility of a shutdown, the empowered and motivated team of frontline workers changed the way the company did business and provided stability to its business.

Motivated employees invariably constitute an asset to an organization, even if they are not particularly strong on technical knowledge. This is owing to their commitment and enthusiasm with which they work and with their interpersonal relationships.

### Sources of Motivation

Realizing the importance of motivation, HR managers and psychologists have been searching for and studying the factors that drive motivation among individuals. Various theories have been propounded explaining various facets of motivation. For example, Abraham Maslow proposed the theory of 'Hierarchy of Needs' in his 1943 paper "A Theory of Human Motivation". Herzberg's Two Factor Theory explains the hygiene factors and the motivators. Expectancy Theory by Vroom proposes that motivation of the behavior selection is determined by the desirability of the outcome.

Supported by the theories of motivation and by further research and studies on the subject, researchers, HR professionals and psychologists provided further details on various sources of motivation.

Friedman & Havighurst, in 1954, detailed the Five Functions of Work:

Income

- Maintaining a minimum sustenance level of existence
- Achieving some higher level or group standard

Expenditure of time and energy

- Something to do
- Away of filling the day or passing time

Identification and status

- Source of self-respect
- Way of achieving recognition or respect from others
- Definition of role

Association

- Friendship relations
- Peer-group relations
- Subordinate-superordinate relations

Source of meaningful life experience

- Gives purpose to life
- Creativity; self-expression
- New experience
- Service to others

Leonard, Beauvais & Scholl (Sources of Motivation Model) categorize the sources of motivation as follows:

- Intrinsic Process Motivation- Individuals primarily motivated by intrinsic process will only engage in activities which they consider interesting.
- Instrumental Motivation- Individuals believe that the behaviors they engage in will lead to certain outcomes such as pay, praise, etc.
- External Self Concept based Motivation- The individual attempts to meet the expectations of others by behaving in ways that will elicit social feedback consistent with self perceptions.
- Internal Self Concept based Motivation- The individual is primarily inner-directed. Internal self concept motivation takes the form of the individual setting internal standards that become the basis for the ideal self.
- Goal Internalization- Individual adopts attitudes and behaviors because their content is congruent with their value system. The individual believes in the cause, and as such is willing to work towards the goals of an organization supporting this cause.

In addition to the above, there are numerous other models and theories describing the sources of motivation. Broadly, all these sources of motivation can be categorized into two types:

- Intrinsic Factors
- Extrinsic Factors

## **Intrinsic & Extrinsic Motivation**

Intrinsic motivation is defined as the doing an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence. For example, a person may show great passion in collecting antique watches for his/ her own inner satisfaction or liking. Few examples of intrinsic motivation have been listed below:

- Interesting task
- Learning
- Fun
- Curiosity
- Positive feelings

Extrinsic motivation is doing something for external consequences, including rewards, recognitions and remunerations. For example, another person performing the same act of collecting antique watches may be doing it for fame, social status or even with an objective to sell the collection later at a good price. Few examples of extrinsic motivation have been listed below:

- Recognition and status
- Financial incentives
- Social inclusion

Considering the factors impacting productivity and satisfaction level of employees, we will focus on answering the following question:

What motivates an employee to a higher degree and for the longer term?

- Providing employees in herently satisfying and interesting tasks.
- OR
- Providing external motivators, including salary, work environment and reward system.

## **Inner Drive or External Push**

Various studies have been undertaken to understand and determine the most influential motivational factors for the work force in various businesses. Most of these studies indicate that individuals are motivated by a combination of factors rather than just a single factor.

Further, a person is not just motivated either intrinsically or extrinsically, but a mix of both, which could result in a high degree of payback. At the same time, it is important to understand the primary drivers for a person, so that a degree of focus can be established.

Since the beginning of the industrial age, emphasis has been placed largely on the external rewards and working conditions. It had been assumed that a person can be motivated to perform any task efficiently by offering financial rewards, recognition and appropriate environment.

At the same time, it has been noticed that every person has a unique personality and interest profile. Though, he / she has the ability to perform a wide variety of activities, he / she has different degrees of motivation and interest for different types of tasks. He / she may be highly inclined to do something even without any external reward (or even despite external constraints) and at the same time, he / she may be reluctant to perform some activities, even despite all

external incentives.

### **Importance of Extrinsic Motivation**

Jack Welch expressed the need of rewards in the following quote:

*"I think showering rewards on people for excellence is an important part of the management process. There's nothing I like more than giving big raises... You have to get rewarded in the soul and the wallet. The money isn't enough, but a plaque isn't enough either.... you have to give both." (Jack Welch, quoted in Hymowitz & Murray, 1999, p. B1)*

External motivators have been an important tool for ensuring higher productivity and satisfaction for human resource. These factors act as positive reinforcers for the desired behavior. After early childhood, a person is driven by social demands and influences, and the importance of external motivators keep rising as the person grows.

External factors also help to keep the person focused and disciplined. With lack of such motivators, the person may be susceptible to complacency and insincerity.

### **Other Side of Extrinsic Motivators**

Though extrinsic factors play an important role in keeping the person moving, these may sometime prove to be not only ineffective, but also counterproductive.

According to one Gallup study 60-80% of workers are not engaged at work. They feel little or no loyalty, passion or motivation on the job. While the companies have been working hard to motivate employees with all possible means, such a result on employee engagement raises questions about the effectiveness of external motivators.

Extrinsic factors suffer from a few drawbacks. These factors are difficult to sustain. A person might continue to perform a scientific research for his entire life, just because he has the drive to find the answer. The same drive may not sustain with just monetary rewards.

External motivators lose their significance with time and need to be reinforced at a higher degree, as the time passes. Studies suggest that as the level of external motivators increase, their value diminish. For example, as the income of an employee increases, money becomes less of a motivator. Further, these factors have a limited impact and as soon as the reward is taken away, motivation disappears.

Some recent researches have shown even the negative impact of external factors. A related series of studies shows that intrinsic interest in a task, the sense that something is worth doing for its own sake, typically declines when someone is rewarded for doing it.

Theresa Amabile, associate professor of psychology at Brandeis University, reported on experiments involving elementary school and college students. The least-creative projects, as rated by several teachers, were done by those students who had contracted for rewards. As per Amabile, rewards have this destructive effect primarily with creative tasks, including higher-level problem-solving.

Other researches have shown that it is not only artistic and creative works, which get affected by external rewards. In a study by James Gabarino (now president of Chicago's Erikson Institute for Advanced Studies in Child Development), girls in the fifth and sixth grades tutored younger children much less effectively if they were promised free movie tickets for teaching well. Study showed that tutors working for the reward took longer to communicate ideas, got frustrated more easily, and did a poorer job in the end than those who were not rewarded.

Researchers offer several explanations for this phenomenon:

- Rewards encourage people to focus narrowly on a task, to do it as quickly as possible and to take few risks.
- People come to see themselves as being controlled by the reward. They feel less autonomous, and this may interfere with performance.
- Extrinsic rewards can erode intrinsic interest. People who see themselves as working for money, approval or competitive success find their tasks less pleasurable, and therefore do not do them as well. In a 1982 study, Stanford psychologist Mark L. Lepper showed that any task, no matter how enjoyable it once seemed, would be devalued if it were presented as a means rather than an end.

### **The Answer Lies Within**

In a study conducted at Piketon Research and Extension Center and Enterprise Center, Ohio, researcher studied and ranked sources of motivation as per their importance. In the list of ten factors, 'interesting work'<sup>1</sup> ranked first. Other factors were good wages, full appreciation of work done, job security, good working conditions, promotions and growth in the organization, feeling of being in on things, personal loyalty to employees, tactful discipline, and sympathetic help with personal problems.

It has been found that if people find a task to be of their interest, then they are more productive and creative in its performance. Further, they tend to be more proactive, enthusiastic and energetic, even despite long hours of work.

The examples of such inner motivation are highly visible in the field of music, sports, social cause and scientific inventions. However, a closer look at the employees reveals the fact that each person is motivated to perform tasks which match his / her personality and interest.

### **The Real Motivator**

It can be inferred from above that one of the best ways to motivate a person is to offer him / her activities, which they find interesting and satisfying. It can be noted that the interest and satisfaction differs from person to person and each employee will have a different set of inclinations. Therefore, everybody will have a different set of activities which they would prefer to work on. Identifying that unique blend of preferences and offering corresponding opportunities may prove to be the biggest motivator for a person.

It can be noted here that above inference does not undermine the value of external motivators. External factors need to be used to supplement the internal motivators.

HR professionals have generally looked at the qualifications and previous experience of a person to determine the suitability for a position. During recent years, companies are also evaluating

people on their attitude and value system. Companies also offer opportunities to shift profiles and go for job rotation, based on personal preferences.

However, matching the work profile with the personality and interest profile is yet to take a formal shape. A number of tools including psychometric profiling are available to understand the personal profile. A structured approach to enable each employee to take up tasks, which are in conjunction with their profiles, will not only make employees happier and more satisfied, but will also help company achieve higher engagement and productivity.

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