



MAXIMIZING STAFF PRODUCTIVITY: UNDERSTANDING AND TAILORING MOTIVATION STRATEGIES FOR MANAGERS

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Abstract: As managers, it is necessary to understand the unique needs and attributes of each staff member to maximize productivity and help them achieve their potential. Motivation plays a crucial role in staff members' performance, and there are many theories and strategies that managers can use to motivate their teams. This article reviews five motivation theories, including the Hawthorne Effect Theory, Expectancy Theory, Self-Efficacy Theory, Goal Setting Theory, and Reinforcement Theory, to provide managers with general insights for motivating staff members. The Hawthorne Effect Theory emphasizes the importance of positive interpersonal relationships between managers and staff members. The Expectancy Theory highlights staff members' belief that their efforts will lead to effective performance and just rewards, while the Self-Efficacy Theory stresses staff members' confidence in their ability to perform tasks. The Goal Setting Theory is based on staff members' intentions to work towards achieving clear and meaningful goals, with coaching and feedback provided by managers. Finally, the Reinforcement Theory focuses on managers reinforcing behaviors associated with positive outcomes. However, no single theory of motivation will be effective for every staff member in every situation, and managers need to tailor their approach based on each staff member's unique motivators. The article highlights the importance of providing feedback, identifying past successful experiences, and coaching staff members in steps to accomplish necessary tasks for building staff members' confidence and enhancing their self-efficacy. By understanding and tailoring motivation strategies, managers can effectively motivate staff members, leading to increased productivity and overall success for the work unit.

Keywords: Motivation, Staff Members, Managers, Hawthorne Effect Theory, Expectancy Theory, Self-Efficacy Theory, Goal Setting Theory, Reinforcement Theory.

1.0 Context

Motivation is a staff member's effort, intensity, persistence, and direction to complete tasks, work targets, and goals. Motivation is either intrinsic or extrinsic. "*Intrinsic motivation* comes from within the person. Examples included meaningful work, increasing responsibility, professional growth, or autonomy. By contrast, *extrinsic motivation* comes from outside the person, such as money, the work environment, or quality of management" (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2013, p. 15). Punishment is sometimes considered a part of the extrinsic motivation.

Managers should be consistently studying how to help staff members *tobe their best* regarding what motivates them to accomplish tasks, work targets, and goals. No one theory of motivation will be effective for each staff member in every situation. We advocate that each staff member has unique motivators. The power and intensity of motivators may vary from time-to-time for a given staff member. Motivation is not a constant quantity in a staff member because it often "comes in spurts" as a motivational wave (Pink, 2018, p.



112). Managers must recognize when a motivational wave is happening within a staff member and effectively use it to maximize productivity (Bartz & Kritsonis, 2019).

I review motivation theories to furnish managers with basic ideas about motivating staff members. It is understood that these motivation ideas are a starting point—rather than an ending point—for managers to explore what motivates staff members. While these motivation theories may not receive as much attention as motivation theories by experts such as Maslow, Herzberg, and McClelland, each provides useful information for managers. The motivation theories reviewed are: Hawthorne Effect Theory, Expectancy Theory, Self-Efficacy Theory, Goal Setting Theory, and Reinforcement Theory.

1.1 The Hawthorne Effect Theory of Motivation

The term *Hawthorne Effect* is the result of studies conducted from 1924-1933 at the Hawthorne work site of the Western Electric Company in Chicago (Wickstrom & Bendix, 2000). The Hawthorne Effect advocates that: (1) staff members are inclined to be motivated to achieve work targets and goals because of increased positive attention they receive from managers who view them as *important contributors* to productivity (Robbins & Judge, 2013, p. 281; Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2013, p. 43), and (2) positive “*interpersonal relationships* that develop on the job” significantly affect organizational productivity (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2013, p. 43).² Journal of Human Resources Management and Labor Studies, Vol. 8, No. 1, June 2020 While the quality of the research conducted on which the Hawthorne Effect is based has sometimes been questioned, the Hawthorne Effect’s basic concepts are still viewed by many as relevant for managers to apply in motivating staff members. Luthans and Youssef (2009) conclude that the Hawthorne studies demonstrated that group dynamics, supervisory style, worker participation, and increased attention “are major contributors to workers’ [staff members’] positive attitudes and higher performance” (p. 580). Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (2013) note that “there was little doubt that the work at Hawthorne would stand the test of time as one of the most exciting and important research projects ever conducted” (p. 41). Managers paying positive attention to, and demonstrating a sincere interest in, staff members and their work are still relevant to motivating staff members today. Staff members being motivated by positive interpersonal relations with others at work is also relevant in today’s work settings. The Hawthorne Effect aligns well with the social and esteem needs of Maslow’s Theory and the affiliation component of McClelland’s Theory regarding motivation (Bartz & Kritsonis, 2019).

Mayo was heavily involved in the Hawthorne studies and is credited with ushering in the human relations movement regarding how managers should view and treat staff members. The human relations movement was built on the premise “that the real power [for productivity] centers within an organization where the interpersonal relations are developed within the work group” (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2013, p. 71). The human relations movement also advocated managers demonstrating sincere interest and concern for staff members.

This human relations movement led by Mayo was counter to the *scientific management* movement credited to Taylor that was prevalent in the early 1900s. “Theorists of the scientific management movement proposed that organizations should be planned and developed to create more efficiency in work methods in order to increase production. Management was to be divorced from human affairs and emotions. The result was that the workers had to adjust to the management and not the management to the workers” (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2013, p. 68). Mayo’s human relations concepts are prevalent today and should be considered by managers regarding motivating staff members.



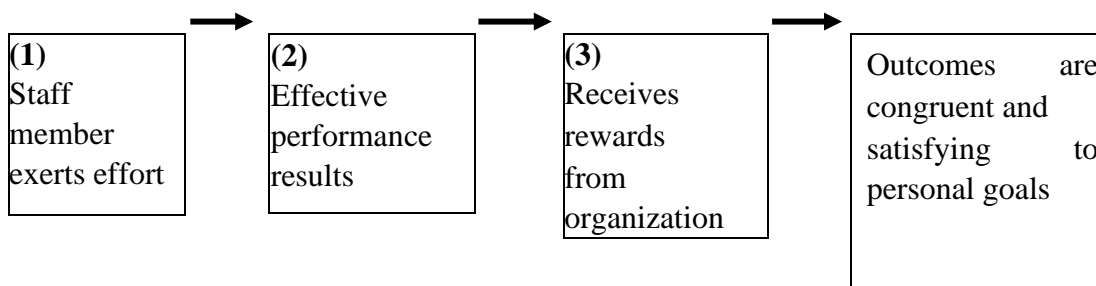
1.2 Expectancy Theory of Motivation

The Expectancy Theory advocates that:

“Staff members will be motivated to exert a high level of effort when they believe it will lead to positive results and a good performance appraisal; that a good appraisal will lead to rewards from the organization such as bonuses, salary increases, or promotions; and that the rewards will satisfy the staff members’ personal goals and needs” (Robbins & Judge, 2013, p. 224).

The chart and accompanying explanations further describe the Expectancy Theory of motivation.

Expectancy Theory



(1)Effort-performance relationship

(2)Performance-reward relationship

(3)Rewards-personal goals relationship

(Robbins & Judge, 2013, p. 224)

At the core of the Expectancy Theory of motivation is the assumption that staff members believe that their *efforts* toward achieving goals will likely lead to an effective performance level that will be justly rewarded and that personal needs will also be satisfied. For example, a staff member’s substantial effort to achieve a goal—and the goal being attained—will result in a high-performance appraisal rating and desirably extrinsic rewards such as salary increase, desirable work assignments, positive feedback from the manager, and awards/recognition.

Dr.DavidE.Bartz3A staff member’s efforts to accomplish the goals that lead to extrinsic motivations—rewards—must be satisfying to her/his needs [intrinsic motivators] as well as the work process experienced to achieve those goals.

For the Expectancy Theory to effectively motivate a staff member, the answer to the following questions from a staff member’s perspective must be YES: (1) If I give maximum effort, will it be recognized in my performance appraisal; (2) If I get a good performance appraisal, will it lead to organizational rewards; and (3) If I am rewarded, are the rewards meaningful to me? (Robbins & Judge, 2013). Using these three questions as criteria for managers to fulfill for making the Expectancy Theory work means managers must: (1) collect sufficient data to be accurately knowledgeable of a staff member’s effort and effectiveness; (2) be able to “make good” regarding the availability of rewards; and (3) have rewards that are meaningful to a staff member, understanding that “meaningfulness” may vary by a staff member’s perceptions.

1.3 Self-Efficacy Theory of Motivation

“The truth is that believing that you can accomplish *what you think [want] to accomplish* is one of the most important ingredients—perhaps the most important ingredient—in the receipt for success”(Maddox, 2009, p. 335).

Self-efficacy is a staff member’s belief and confidence that he/she can perform a task, and a series of tasks, to effectively attain a work goal. It is a belief in one’s capabilities and being able to transfer these perceived



capabilities into measurable behaviors to effectively perform work. A staff member's perceptions of her/his capabilities prompt intrinsic motivators into action that drive behavior and accomplish goals (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012).

At times, there may be a fine line between a staff member's perceived confidence regarding the capability to perform tasks leading to goal achievement and being over-confident and failing. In this situation, managers may have to step in and assist the staff member by guiding him/her for a period of time.

Maddox (2009) advocates "The power of believing you can" is key to staff members nourishing their self efficacy (p. 335). A staff member with high self-efficacy will often attempt to "stretch the window of opportunity" by pursuing very challenging tasks in relationship to capabilities. These staff members are often good at "learning on the go" or learning in action and transferring previous experiences to effectively complete the task at hand (Robbins & Judge, 2013).

Having clear and meaningful goals is crucial to effective self-efficacy by staff members as is successful progress toward achieving these goals. As Burchard (2017) observes, "The fundamentals of becoming more productive are setting goals and maintaining energy and *focus*. No goals, no focus, no energy—and you're dead in the water" (p. 177).

As noted, focus is essential to goal achievement in the process of staff members effectively utilizing self efficacy. "Focus is the ability to place attention where we want it. It is also the intentional use of attention, which, as we know, is the very definition of mindfulness" (Weiss, 2018, p. 59). Focus "zooms" staff members into the concentration needed to perform tasks effectively (Bartz, 2018-2019). Effective application of focus by staff members also includes knowing "what to ignore" to avoid distractions and understanding that attempting to multitask is ineffective to quality work (Duhigg, 2016, p. 102; Bartz & Bartz, 2017).

When staff members interpret past experiences related to a newly-assigned goal as failures they often perceive that *stable causes* (unchangeable) prompted the failure. Thus, they are pessimistic about performing well on the newly assigned goal. These circumstances cause a staff member to have low self-efficacy (Carver, Schieier, Miller, & Fulford (2009). The manager must help build the confidence of a staff member to enhance her/his self-efficacy by:

1. Identifying past successful experiences of the staff member that are transferable to the present tasks to be accomplished.
2. Using co-workers as models for demonstrating that if "they can do it, so can you."
3. Coaching the staff member through steps that will help him/her to accomplish the necessary tasks to achieve a goal successfully.
4. Providing insights and feedback to the staff member for psychological support to overcome negative emotions and utilize positive psychology in the form of realistic optimism for motivation (Robbins & Judge, 2013; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012).

1.4 Goal Setting Theory of Motivation

"Productivity starts with goals. When you have clear and challenging goals, you tend to be more focused and engaged" (Burchard, 2017, p. 177).

The Goal Setting Theory is based on the premise that intentions to understand and work toward a clear and meaningful work goal are a major source of motivation for staff members. Such staff members need to understand precisely what needs to be done to fulfill goals and receive feedback on progress toward goal attainment from the manager. The manager also should provide coaching if staff members encounter roadblocks in the process of attempting to attain goals (Robbins & Judge, 2013). Goal attainment is also



aided by staff members' occasionally and consciously taking time to reflect and analyze their progress toward goal attainment with an emphasis on causation. Specifically, what is working and why? What is not working and needs to be changed?

On the opposite end of the spectrum from a staff member with high self-efficacy is a staff member exercising cognitive dissonance. While the staff member with high self-efficacy is confident of her/his capabilities to master a challenging goal, the staff member exhibiting cognitive dissonance believes his/her capabilities are adequate, but the work goals are irrational or illogical (Cardeiro & Cunningham, 2013). Hence, it is not the staff member's fault that goals assigned by a manager cannot be achieved. As difficult as it may be, the manager needs to "work through" with the staff member his/her negative perceptions of work goals and help the staff member understand—and justify in the staff member's mind—why the work goals are practical, needed, and beneficial (Vargas & Yoon, 2004, p. 61).

Managers involving staff members in the goal development process is beneficial because it helps build ownership within the staff members. Managers should also establish a formal identified schedule for providing feedback on goal attainment progress to the staff member. Informal feedback given through daily supervision by the manager is also valuable. Managers must realize that furnishing staff members with feedback information is *only the starting point* of an effective feedback process. The real test of effective feedback is that it is understood, internalized, and applied to enhance goal attainment.

The self-efficacy and goal setting theories of motivation complement each other because clear and persistent goals for staff members are critical to each for success. It is often helpful for managers to work with staff members to "breakdown" a goal into a progression of manageable tasks.

1.5 Reinforcement Theory of Motivation

"B.F. Skinner, one of the most prominent advocates of operant conditioning, argued that creating pleasing consequences to follow specific forms of behavior would increase the frequency of that behavior. He demonstrated that people will most likely engage in desired behaviors if they are positively reinforced for doing so; that rewards are most effective if they immediately follow the desired response; and that behavior that is not rewarded, or is punished, is less likely to be repeated" (Robbins & Judge, 2013, p. 218).

Reinforcement Theory takes a behavioristic viewpoint because it postulates that positive reinforcement conditions a staff member's behavior to continue. "Reinforcement theorists see behavior as environmentally caused. You need not be concerned, they would argue, with internal cognitive events; what controls behavior is reinforcers—any consequences that, when immediately following responses increase the probability that the behavior will be repeated" (Robbins & Judge, 2013, p. 218).

The *operant conditioning* aspect of the Reinforcement Theory advocates that staff members "learn to behave to get something they want or to avoid something they don't want" (Robbins & Judge, 2013, p. 218). Positive reinforcement of a staff member's behavior (e.g., accomplishing a goal and the process used to achieve it) will cause a continuation of the staff member's effective performance. Conversely, no reward—or even punishment—for an ineffective performance of a staff member will decrease such performance.

In summary, the Reinforcement Theory of Motivation advocates that the behavior of a staff member is a function of consequences (Robbins & Judge, 2013). A staff member will continue a behavior when receiving positive reinforcement (reward) and will terminate a behavior resulting in no reward or punishment. A staff member's behavior is entirely "environmentally caused" (Robbins & Judge, 2013, p. 218). Hence, the Reinforcement Theory of Motivation is completely dependent on extrinsic motivation.



2.0 Closing Thoughts

Maximizing the effectiveness of each staff member is essential to a work unit's productivity and managers meeting their supervisory responsibilities. Motivation plays a crucial role in staff members' performance and requires managers to continually seek to help them be motivated to *be their best*. The Hawthorne Effect Theory, Expectancy Theory, Self-Efficacy Theory, Goal Setting Theory, and Reinforcement Theory are theories of motivation that provide managers with general ideas for motivating staff members. In the end, managers need to be astutely aware of what motivates each staff member based on his/her unique needs and attributes in a given situation.

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