

## THE MULTI-PARADIGM APPROACH TO EVALUATING WORK MOTIVATION

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Abstract: The paper presents the theoretical models that have set the basis for the process of evaluating work motivation, carried out during the 2003-2006 period in six Brasov organizations. The multi-paradigm approach, stated in the outline of classic motivation theories (the combined Abraham Maslow - Frederick Herzberg model, the needs theory - David McClelland and the equity theory - J. Stacey Adams), increases the predictive capacity of the evaluation effort and compensates for the limitations specific to each theoretical model used.

The experience gained in the efforts spent researching work motivation within Brasov organizations permitted the identification of an important aspect of the motivation problem: the inconsistency between work motivation theories and their practical implementation in the form of motivation techniques. With regard to the divergence amongst paradigm approach to motivation and the reality of motivation, a series of explicative directions can be identified.

It is possible that the assumptions and implementations of motivation theories are inadequate and lacking, even more so since what we find in the domain of applied motivation within specialized papers, especially British and American, are interventions that point to the principles of scientific management rather than approaches typical to the humanization of work. Therefore it is unlikely that the arsenal of „motivational techniques”: *job enlargement*, *job enrichment*, *empowerment*, goals setting and flexible job hours will cause significant changes in behavior at work and satisfy the various and complex needs of organizations and their employees. Motivation theories tackle the content of the motivational process (the hierarchy of needs - the A. Maslow model, the bifactorial theory - the Fr. Herzberg theory) as well as its cognitive dimension (the expectations theory - the V. Vroom model, the equity theory – the S. Adams theory), while motivation techniques appear as cut-outs of customs that have proved efficient in specific work conditions. The hypothesis of insufficient reading of motivation theory on the part of management and deficient capitalization of it is backed up by the fact that „motivational techniques” respond more to the needs and goals of the organization than those of the employees.

A second hypothesis regarding the causality of the inconsistency between motivation theories and motivational techniques may be found in the rigidity and limits of theoretical models and hence the reduced possibilities for application they offer. On an evolution line - from A. Maslow to V. Vroom - the theoretical models of motivation show an increase in the complexity of theoretical accomplishment, but without a related increase in the possibilities for application or a development of their predictive capacity. In order to enhance the predictive abilities of these models a multi-paradigm approach can be outlined, which would allow compensation for the theoretical limits specific to each model used.

The multi-paradigm approach is based on the outlining of four classic theoretical models of work motivation: the combines Abraham Maslow - Frederick Herzberg model, David McClelland's needs theory and the equity theory - J. Stacey Adams.

## 1. THE COMBINED A. MASLOW – FR. HERZBERG MODEL

A. Maslow draws up one of the well known motivation theories, the hierarchy of needs theory. According to this model, each individual has five fundamental needs, hierarchically organized in the form of a pyramid: physiological (level I), safety (level II), belonging (level III), esteem (level IV) and self-actualization (level V).

Maslow describes each level of the hierarchy. The physiological needs are mostly the needs that insure the homeostasis of the organism: food, water, oxygen, sexual activity. The safety needs regard security, order, predictability. These also show the human preference towards familiar and known aspects rather than those unfamiliar or unknown, the tendency to have religious beliefs and life philosophies that organize the surrounding world in a coherent whole.

The love or belonging needs show the desire for receiving and offering affection. Esteem needs concern self-respect, the need for a positive self-evaluation as well as recognition from others. These needs can be classified in two sub-categories. The first one includes the need for power, achievement, competence, independence and freedom. The second is characterized by desires of fame and glory, recognition, attention, importance and respect. Satisfaction of esteem needs leads to feelings of achievement, confidence and competence, of being useful and needed. The last category of needs, self-actualization, is the desire for self-fulfillment, of reaching one's full potential, „what a man can be, he must be” [Maslow, p. 383]. The self-actualization needs are the only needs that grow in intensity as one attempts to fulfill them.

The needs pyramid thus develops the hypothesis of a progressive satisfaction of needs, starting from the base of the pyramid, to its top: „a person who is lacking food, safety, love and esteem, would most probably hunger for food more strongly than for anything else” [Maslow, p.374]. Human behavior is directed and sustained by the unsatisfied need: „For the man who is extremely and dangerously hungry, no other interests exist but food. He dreams food, remembers food, he thinks about food, he emotes only food, he perceives only food and he wants only food” [Maslow, p.375].

To hierarchically satisfy the needs a series of conditions must be fulfilled: freedom of speech, freedom of movement, without harming others, the freedom to seek information, presence of justice and honesty. At the same time Maslow maintains the relative or partial satisfaction of each need. It is not necessary for a need to be completely fulfilled before a need of a higher level becomes a motivator. Also, while moving up through the hierarchy, the level of need satisfaction drops. To exemplify, Maslow describes the situation of an „average citizen” that has 85% of his physiological needs fulfilled, 70% of the safety needs, 50% of belonging needs, 40% of esteem and only 10% of self-actualization needs satisfied.

The author underlines the distinction between wants and needs, between „cognitive” and „conative” needs, but admits to the weak delimitation between these two categories. The desire *to know* and *to understand* are considered cognitive wants. But these can also be identified with techniques employed to satisfy security needs (order, rationalization) or self-actualization.

Another distinction is made between behavior motivation and its cause: „Not all behavior is determined by the basic needs. Some behavior is highly motivated, other behavior is only weakly motivated. Some is not motivated at all (but all behavior is determined)” [Maslow, 1943, pp. 391-392].

The limits of Maslow's model lie right in its theoretic core: gradual and hierarchical satisfaction of needs have not been empirically confirmed. The diversity and complexity of human motivation is too ample to be contracted in a schema with such a high level of inflexibility. Maslow himself presents situations in which the hierarchy is not followed (persons for whom the need for esteem is more important than that for belonging, creative persons for whom this need lies at the base of the pyramid, persons with very low aspirations that remain at the inferior levels, exceptional persons who „sacrifice” primary needs in order to fulfill an ideal or to follow a standard of values). There're also questions regarding the cultural aspect of Maslow's model, it being applicable more to the middle-class 1940's Arian American than anything else [Huczynski and Buchanan, 2001, p. 242].

The bifactorial model drawn up by Fr. Herzberg clearly separates the factors that increase job satisfaction (and motivation, implicitly) from the factors that generate dissatisfaction. Herzberg identifies two factor categories: hygiene factors (salary, work conditions, quality of supervision, status, safety, company policy, interpersonal relationships) and motivational factors (achievement, recognition for achievement, level of responsibility, the possibility of advancement).

This model is based on the following assumptions: i. Hygiene factors do not generate satisfaction, only eliminate dissatisfaction, if they are not in a certain degree of balance they cause dissatisfaction but their growing above this level will not lead to satisfaction; ii. Hygiene factors belong to the environment, so they are external to the task, and motivational factors are related to the job content; iii. Satisfaction can only be achieved by intervention at motivational factors' level; iv. Both categories of factors must be simultaneously fulfilled.

Herzberg revolutionizes the vision on motivation and motivational techniques by underlining the distinction between the motivated and the motivator. A number of elements external to the job, salary among them, are included in the hygiene category, which is an approach opposite of the classic one, which maintained that money is the strongest motivator. Focus on the subject of the job and not the context has generated two of the motivational techniques with the widest area of use: job enrichment and job enlargement.

Criticism to the two factor theory is aimed at the research methodology used, considering that the relationship between satisfaction and performance has been omitted [Armstrong, p.263].

The two theories that are based on needs fall under the traditional schema which classifies motivation based on the positioning of the motivation source in two large categories: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. In extrinsic motivation we can include the first three levels of the pyramid of needs (physiological, safety, belonging) and hygiene or context factors of the two factor model. In intrinsic motivation we can include the last two levels of the pyramid of needs (esteem and self-actualization) and motivational or content factors of the two factor model.

The combined Maslow – Herzberg model is based on cumulated measurement of factors specific to intrinsic motivation (lower level Maslow factors with Herzberg hygiene factors) and the factors specific to extrinsic motivation (higher level Maslow factors with Herzberg motivational factors).

This association of factors enables the identification of the motivational level characteristic to each employee, but also the level of motivation at which a certain category of employees is. Thus a number of predictions related to the behavior of individuals/categories of persons can be inferred, in order to conceive motivational packets. The association of

Maslow factors with Herzberg ones allows the limits of hierarchical progression to be overcome because the two categories of factors must be simultaneously fulfilled.

The saturation level for hygiene factors indicates the intervention methods to be used in order to eliminate dissatisfaction. These interventions can be considered corrective, because their purpose is to eliminate the dissatisfaction felt by an employee, not to raise the motivation level. If non-saturation of hygiene factors indicates dissatisfaction, their utmost saturation indicates, in accordance with Maslow, de-motivation. Non-saturated motivational factors are motivational levers, and resizing them can lead to an increase in the level of motivation. In this case too, in accordance with Maslow's theory, utmost saturation of the motivational factors indicates a state of de-motivation.

Essentially, the sources of dissatisfaction must be purged first by sizing the hygiene factors to the level expected by each employee in order to insure the efficiency of interventions carried out at the level of motivational factors.

In the job motivation evaluation process, applying the combined model meant identifying the inferior/hygiene factors and, respectively, the superior/motivational factors relevant to organizational culture. Thus the items regarding the degree of inferior/hygiene factor satisfaction have focused on: compensation system, work equipments, physical work conditions, work schedule, discipline enforcement, company policy, money distribution between employees and owners. The second item set which measured the degree of superior/motivational factor satisfaction focused on: interest towards the job itself, responsibilities, freedom in expressing frustrations, importance placed on one's own ideas, freedom of decision, possibilities for self-development and for leaning new abilities, the relationship with the direct superior and the work colleagues, the reputation of the company.

The cumulated measurement of the two categories of factors was achieved by using a scale with seven degrees of intensity: a. unhappy; b. rather unhappy; c. neither happy nor unhappy; d. rather happy; e. happy; f. indifferent; g. cannot say.

The rigidity of Maslow's theory which made this model one of the most contested ones at a theoretical level, even though due to its intuitive nature it may be the one most often used by management, can be overcome by correlating the hierarchical levels with the two factors identified by Herzberg.

Using the combined model in evaluating job motivation made possible the identification of the motivation level for each evaluated employee, as well as the construction of motivational charts at the level of each employee category included in the evaluation process.

## 2. THE A- P-A SCALE (THE D. MCCLELLAND MODEL)

The theory of fundamental needs, described by David McClelland, was used in the job motivation evaluation process to identify the general motivational energy, as well as the needs configuration at individual level for each evaluated employee.

D. McClelland classifies needs in three categories: need for achievement (*nAch*), need for power (*nPow*) and need for affiliation (*nAff*), saying that each individual exhibits a bias towards a particular motivational need [McClelland, p. 39]. Based on Murray's research, who identified 21 needs classified in nine groups, McClelland considers that needs are acquired as time passes and are influenced by experience. Research was centered on the need for achievement (*nAch*), this being considered a separate need that can be isolated and studied. The instruments used by McClelland were the TAT (Thematic Appreciation Test) and laboratory experiments (e.g., subjects were required to throw disks on a pole from any

distance they wanted. Most subjects threw randomly, from a medium distance. The persons with a strong need for achievement measured very carefully the winning distance: not too close because the task would have been ridiculously easy, but not too far to make the task impossible. They set for themselves moderately difficult, but attainable objectives).

Characteristics of high *nAch* individuals:

- 1) they set for themselves moderately difficult goals, looking to have control over the results;
- 2) they are not gamblers, they prefer to put a lot of time into solving a problem, rather than leaving it to chance;
- 3) for managers, setting moderately difficult goals, which can be attained, shows disposition towards risky actions; they believe abilities and effort will influence the results;
- 4) they are the „spine” of organizations, but usually fail in management positions because they expect others to concern themselves with work as much as they do; in these situations a number of variables intervene, success is not conditioned only by one’s own task but by the way others work as well;
- 5) they worry more about self-actualization and less about financial rewards, but they do not undervalue the latter; money is perceived as recognition of performance;
- 6) they seek out situations in which they can receive feed-back for their accomplishments;
- 7) they are not open to discussions about their personal life, or about their personality traits.

The behavior of individuals with a high *nAch* is explained by the fact that they talk a lot about ways to improve things. Once they start thinking in terms of „achievement”, they will start acting accordingly. Usually high *nAch* persons grew up in families that had certain expectations of them (e.g., to show some amount of independence at the age of six-eight: to know their neighborhood, to be able to come home on their own). D. McClelland maintains that the need for accomplishment can be advanced through training programs and personal growth, thus it is a „teachable” need.

Characteristics of high *nAff* individuals:

- 1) they seek within the organization for new friends and satisfactions derived from interpersonal relationships;
- 2) they look to establish and develop amicable relationships with the people around them;
- 3) they avoid competitive situations;
- 4) they place a lot of importance on the possibility to communicate.

Characteristics of high *nPow* individuals:

- 1) they tend to control and influence others, assuming persuasive roles;
- 2) they have a high capacity for foresight and have a disposition for risky actions;
- 3) they are authoritative, prefer leadership positions, need to be at the center of attention;
- 4) they are preoccupied by personal reputation.

In an organization environment the need for achievement (A) can be managed as a need for success correlated with a personal standard for excellence and a strong desire to carry out well challenging tasks. If they have autonomy, individuals with a dominant need for achievement are inclined towards risky actions and do well in such actions, as long as they can place and hold the risks under control. The need for affiliation (A) is the need to have amicable, pleasant relationships with others, the strong desire to establish and maintain personal relationships compatible with one’s own feelings and thoughts. Within the organization, if they have autonomy, individuals with a dominant need for affiliation are not inclined towards risky actions and do not do well in such actions. As for the need for power (P), it shows: the need to control and influence others, a strong urge to manipulate others, with as much impact as possible and emphasizing the signs of power. Persons with a

dominant need for power are visionaries, inclined towards high risk actions and with a high need for autonomy.

Using the fields of action and intervention opened by the McClelland model, management can quickly identify the levers managers can use to increase the motivational energy, but especially to identify corrective interventions. Thus, based on the motivational structure of the employees, a correlation between job description (responsibilities, tasks, competence limits) and the employee's dominant need can be drawn, in order to achieve the conditions required for performance on the job. To this end, management positions should be held mostly by individuals with a strong need for power, the expert/specialist positions are compatible with employees whose profiles show a dominant need for achievement. Positions which imply a high level of affiliation (public relations, human resources) require, according to McClelland's theory, individuals who have a dominant need for affiliation or persons that have this need in a high degree.

The A-P-A scale facilitates the identification of the dominant need, the motivational profile, as well as the level of motivational energy of the evaluated employee. Appraisal based on this model implies the construction of an „ideal type” of the A-P-A structure for each category of evaluated employees. In the research conducted within the Brasov organizations this „optimal profile” was produced following in-depth interviews with the executives regarding the business' development strategy and human resource strategy. Based on the type of organizational culture (*learning, friendly-family etc.*) an „optimal” or „ideal type” of the motivational culture can be build for the entire organization or for job categories.

The motivational structure was identified by applying the A-P-A test individually, comprising 18 statements regarding each of the three dominant needs. Scores values are in the [-12,12] range.

The items that regarded the need for accomplishment were: 1) I like to work hard; 2) I like difficult tasks; 3) I want to know if and how I'm advancing, while I'm working on a task; 4) obtaining results is what matters most to me; 5) I like how I feel after accomplishing a difficult task; 6) I like to set goals for myself and to achieve them.

The items that measured the need for power were: 1) I like to compete and win; 2) I like to lead and have responsibilities; 3) I warn those that do things to which I disagree; 4) I like to influence other persons; 5) what matters most to me is to prevail over the rest; 6) in a situation that requires a leader I step up and assume leadership.

The third set of items processed the need for affiliation: 1) I have/want to have a lot of friends; 2) I enjoy being liked by those around me; 3) I like to go to parties; 4) I like to be part of as many groups/organizations as I can; 5) I like working with others more than I like working alone; 6) what matters most to me are friends.

The McClelland model offers levers for intervention for corrective actions as well as for increasing the motivational energy.

### 3. THE J. S. ADAMS MODEL

The equity theory described by John Stacey Adams is a procedure theory that focuses on getting answers to the questions related to the occurrence and display of the motivational process. This model fits with the approaches specific to social comparison and social perception theories. Adams claims that in the organizational environment employees compare themselves permanently with other persons or groups in order to establish if what they are receiving for their work and efforts is fair and equitable.

Based on Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory, Adams' theory maintains that when we perceive a situation as being inequitable from an input (effort, time, ideas, experience, abilities) versus output (recognition, salary, satisfaction, safety) point of view, we will act to correct the inequity. From this theoretic perspective each individual has a very clear idea of what represents just compensation for the work done, and inequity is determined by comparison to the group of reference, with various degrees of tolerance for it.

Inequity can be positive (over-compensation) when the employee considers he is getting more than what would be fair, or negative (under-compensation) when the employee decides that he is getting less than what would be correct.

There are a number of probable behaviors associated to the three states, resulting from an evaluation of the financial or non-financial compensation package that the employee receives from the company. When the employee receives what he deems fair, considering the exchange with the company as being equitable, it can be expected that he will have the right attitude towards work, with a constant, good efficiency and with growing efficiency if the feeling of equity is confirmed in time. When the employee receives less than he deems fair and sees the exchange with the company as inequitable there is a possibility that he will develop behaviors to re-establish the „balance“: silent raise in other categories of compensation that the employee has access to (theft), absenteeism, avoidance of responsibilities that are not clearly defined in the job description, protests of job „overloading“, demonstrative waste of resources and not lastly, leaving the organization. When the employee receives more than he thinks is fair, he should develop behaviors towards ethical balance: disposition to effort, helping colleagues, taking on additional tasks etc.

N. Leonard, L. Beauvais and R. Scholl [Leonard, Beauvais and Scholl, p. 974] identify five classes of comparisons which we can fit into the larger process of social comparison: job equity - employees compare their compensations to those of others with similar jobs, company equity - employees compare their own compensations to those of other job categories within the organization, market/occupational equity - employees compare themselves to employees that have similar jobs in other organizations, cohort equity - employees compare themselves to their „peer“ group and self equity - comparison to one's previous performance.

For the job motivation evaluation effort to be efficient it is essential to identify the way the employees deem the exchange (motivated, unmotivated through negative inequity, unmotivated due to positive inequity) and the „standard“ category (the „peer“ category).

The Adams model facilitates the identification of the equity/inequity/equilibrium ratio regarding the „exchange“ between the employee and the organization. Thus a proportion between inputs and outputs can be established, the employee's general comparison scheme can be identified, as well as the reference group, the „peer“ group.

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