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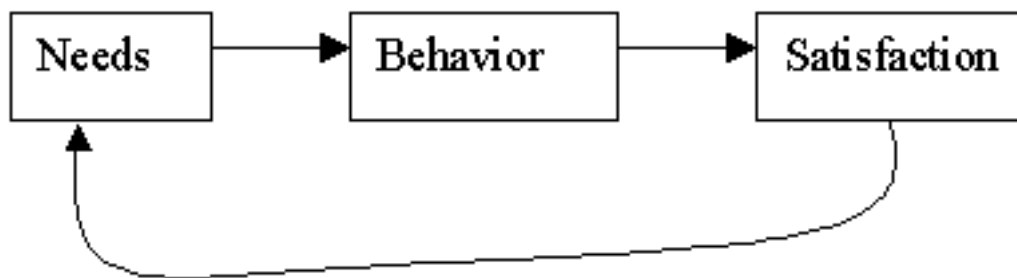
Theories of Motivation

Overview

At a simple level, it seems obvious that people do things, such as go to work, in order to get stuff they want and to avoid stuff they don't want.

Why exactly they want what they do and don't want what they don't is still something a mystery. It's a black box and it hasn't been fully penetrated.

Overall, the basic perspective on motivation looks something like this:



In other words, you have certain needs or wants (these terms will be used interchangeably), and this causes you to do certain things (behavior), which satisfy those needs (satisfaction), and this can then change which needs/wants are primary (either intensifying certain ones, or allowing you to move on to other ones).

A variation on this model, particularly appropriate from an experimenter's or manager's point of view, would be to add a box labeled "reward" between "behavior" and "satisfaction". So that subjects (or employees), who have certain needs do certain things (behavior), which then get them rewards set up by the experimenter or manager (such as raises or bonuses), which satisfy the needs, and so on.

Classifying Needs

People seem to have different wants. This is fortunate, because in markets this creates the very desirable situation where, because you value stuff that I have but you don't, and I value stuff that you have that I don't, we can trade in such a way that we are both happier as a result.

But it also means we need to try to get a handle on the whole variety of needs and who has them in order to begin to understand how to design organizations that maximize productivity.

Part of what a theory of motivation tries to do is explain and predict who has which wants. This turns out to be exceedingly difficult.

Many theories posit a hierarchy of needs, in which the needs at the bottom are the most urgent and need to be satisfied before attention can be paid to the others.

Maslow

Maslow's hierarchy of need categories is the most famous example:

self-actualization
esteem
belongingness
safety
physiological

Specific examples of these types are given below, in both the work and home context. (Some of the instances, like "education" are actually satisfiers of the need.)

Need	Home	Job
self-actualization	education, religion, hobbies, personal growth	training, advancement, growth, creativity
esteem	approval of family, friends, community	recognition, high status, responsibilities
belongingness	family, friends, clubs	teams, depts, coworkers, clients, supervisors, subordinates
safety	freedom from war, poison, violence	work safety, job security, health insurance
physiological	food water sex	Heat, air, base salary

According to Maslow, lower needs take priority. They must be fulfilled before the others are activated. There is some basic common sense here -- it's pointless to worry about whether a given color looks good on you when you are dying of starvation, or being threatened with your life. There are some basic things that take precedence over all else.

Or at least logically should, if people were rational. But is that a safe assumption? According to the theory, if you are hungry and have inadequate shelter, you won't go to church. Can't do the higher things until you have the lower things. But the poor tend to be more religious than the rich. Both within a given culture, and across nations. So the theory makes the wrong prediction here.

Or take education: how often do you hear "I can't go to class today, I haven't had sex in three days!"? Do all physiological needs including sex have to be satisfied before "higher" needs? (Besides, wouldn't the authors of the Kama Sutra argue that sex was a kind of self-expression more like art than a physiological need? that would put it in the self-actualization box). Again, the theory doesn't seem to predict correctly.

Cultural critique: Does Maslow's classification really reflect the order in which needs are satisfied, or is it more about classifying needs from a kind of "tastefulness" perspective, with lofty goals like personal growth and creativity at the top, and "base" instincts like sex and hunger at the bottom? And is self-actualization actually a fundamental need? Or just something that can be done if you have the leisure time?

Alderfer's ERG theory

Alderfer classifies needs into three categories, also ordered hierarchically:

- growth needs (development of competence and realization of potential)
- relatedness needs (satisfactory relations with others)
- existence needs (physical well-being)

This is very similar to Maslow -- can be seen as just collapsing into three tiers. But maybe a bit more rational. For example, in Alderfer's model, sex does not need to be in the bottom category as it is in Maslow's model, since it is not crucial to (the individual's) existence. (Remember, this about individual motivation, not species' survival.) So by moving sex, this theory does not predict that people have to have sex before they can think about going to school, like Maslow's theory does.

Alderfer believed that as you start satisfying higher needs, they become more intense (e.g., the power you get the more you want power), like an addiction.

Do any of these theories have anything useful to say for managing businesses? Well, if true, they suggest that

- Not everyone is motivated by the same things. It depends where you are in the hierarchy (think of it as a kind of personal development scale)
- The needs hierarchy probably mirrors the organizational hierarchy to a certain extent: top managers are more likely to motivated by self-actualization/growth needs than existence needs. (but try telling Bill Clinton that top executives are not motivated by sex and cheeseburgers...)

Acquired Needs Theory (McClelland)

Some needs are acquired as a result of life experiences

- need for achievement, accomplish something difficult. as kids encouraged to do things for themselves.

- need for affiliation, form close personal relationships. as kids rewarded for making friends.
- need for power, control others. as kids, able to get what they want through controlling others.

Again similar to maslow and alderfer.

These needs can be measured using the TAT (thematic apperception test), which is a projection-style test based on interpreting stories that people tell about a set of pictures.

Cognitive Evaluation Theory

This theory suggests that there are actually two motivation systems: intrinsic and extrinsic that correspond to two kinds of motivators:

- intrinsic motivators: Achievement, responsibility and competence. motivators that come from the actual performance of the task or job -- the intrinsic interest of the work.
- extrinsic: pay, promotion, feedback, working conditions -- things that come from a person's environment, controlled by others.

One or the other of these may be a more powerful motivator for a given individual.

Intrinsically motivated individuals perform for their own achievement and satisfaction. If they come to believe that they are doing some job because of the pay or the working conditions or some other extrinsic reason, they begin to lose motivation.

The belief is that the presence of powerful extrinsic motivators can actually reduce a person's intrinsic motivation, particularly if the extrinsic motivators are perceived by the person to be controlled by people. In other words, a boss who is always dangling this reward or that stick will turn off the intrinsically motivated people.

Note that the intrinsic motivators tend to be higher on the Maslow hierarchy.

Two Factor theory (Herzberg)

According to Herzberg, two kinds of factors affect motivation, and they do it in different ways:

- **hygiene factors.** These are factors whose absence motivates, but whose presence has no perceived effect. They are things that when you take them away, people become dissatisfied and act to get them back. A very good example is heroin to a heroin addict. Long term addicts do not shoot up to get high; they shoot up to stop being sick -- to get normal. Other examples include decent working conditions, security, pay, benefits (like health insurance), company policies, interpersonal relationships. In general, these are extrinsic items low in the Maslow/Alderfer hierarchy.

- **motivators.** These are factors whose presence motivates. Their absence does not cause any particular dissatisfaction, it just fails to motivate. Examples are all the things at the top of the Maslow hierarchy, and the intrinsic motivators.

So hygiene factors determine dissatisfaction, and motivators determine satisfaction. The two scales are independent, and you can be high on both.

If you think back to the class discussion on power, we talked about a baseline point on the well-being scale. Power involved a threat to reduce your well-being, causing dissatisfaction. Hence, power basically works by threatening to withhold hygiene factors. Influence was said to fundamentally be about promising improvements in well-being -- when you are influenced to do something, it is because you want to, not because you were threatened. Influence basically works by offering to provide motivators (in Herzberg's terms).

Equity Theory

Suppose employee A gets a 20% raise and employee B gets a 10% raise. Will both be motivated as a result? Will A be twice as motivated? Will B be negatively motivated?

Equity theory says that it is not the actual reward that motivates, but the perception, and the perception is based not on the reward in isolation, but in comparison with the efforts that went into getting it, and the rewards and efforts of others. If everyone got a 5% raise, B is likely to feel quite pleased with her raise, even if she worked harder than everyone else. But if A got an even higher raise, B perceives that she worked just as hard as A, she will be unhappy.

In other words, people's motivation results from a ratio of ratios: a person compares the ratio of reward to effort with the comparable ratio of reward to effort that they think others are getting.

Of course, in terms of actually predicting how a person will react to a given motivator, this will get pretty complicated:

1. People do not have complete information about how others are rewarded. So they are going on perceptions, rumors, inferences.
2. Some people are more sensitive to equity issues than others
3. Some people are willing to ignore short-term inequities as long as they expect things to work out in the long-term.

Reinforcement Theory

Operant Conditioning is the term used by [B.F. Skinner](#) to describe the effects of the consequences of a particular behavior on the future occurrence of that behavior. There are four types of Operant Conditioning: **Positive Reinforcement**, **Negative Reinforcement**, **Punishment**, and **Extinction**. Both Positive and Negative Reinforcement strengthen behavior while both Punishment and Extinction weaken behavior.

- Positive reinforcement. Strengthening a behavior. This is the process of getting goodies as a consequence of a behavior. You make a sale, you get a commission. You do a good job, you get a bonus & a promotion.
- Negative reinforcement. Strengthening a behavior. This is the process of having a stressor taken away as a consequence of a behavior. Long-term sanctions are removed from countries when their human rights records improve. (you see how successful that is!). Low status as geek at Salomon Brothers is removed when you make first big sale.
- Extinction. Weakening a behavior. This is the process of getting no goodies when do a behavior. So if person does extra effort, but gets no thanks for it, they stop doing it.
- Punishment. Weakening a behavior. This is the process of getting a punishment as a consequence of a behavior. Example: having your pay docked for lateness.

	Apply	Withhold
Reward	positive reinforcement (raise above baseline)	negative reinforcement (raise up to baseline)
Stressor	punishment (bring down below baseline)	extinction (stay at baseline)

Reinforcement schedules.

The traditional reinforcement schedule is called a **continuous reinforcement schedule**. Each time the correct behavior is performed it gets reinforced.

Then there is what we call an **intermittent reinforcement schedule**. There are fixed and variable categories.

The **Fixed Interval Schedule** is where reinforcement is only given after a certain amount of time has elapsed. So, if you decided on a 5 second interval then each reinforcement would occur at the fixed time of every 5 seconds.

The **Fixed Ratio Schedule** is where the reinforcement is given only after a predetermined number of responses. This is often seen in behavior chains where a number of behaviors have to occur for reinforcement to occur.

The **Variable Interval Schedule** is where the reinforcement is given after varying amounts of time between each reinforcement.

The **Variable Ratio Schedule** is where the reinforcement is given after a varying number of correct responses.

Fluctuating combinations of primary and secondary reinforcers fall under other terms in the variable ratio schedule; For example, Reinforcers delivered Intermittently in a Randomized Order (RIR) or Variable Ratio with Reinforcement Variety (VRRV).

	Fixed	Variable
Interval	<p>give reward after first proper response following a specified time period</p> <p>(yearly raise)</p> <p>[short term]</p>	<p>give reward after a certain amt of time w/ the amt changing before the next reward</p> <p>(unexpected bonus based on merit)</p> <p>[medium term]</p>
Ratio	<p>punishment (subtract from baseline)</p> <p>(commissions or piecework pay)</p> <p>[medium term]</p>	<p>give reward after a number of responses, w/ that no. changing before the next reward</p> <p>(team-based bonus)</p> <p>[long term]</p>

Expectancy Theory (Vroom)

This theory is meant to bring together many of the elements of previous theories. It combines the perceptual aspects of equity theory with the behavioral aspects of the other theories. Basically, it comes down to this "equation":

$$M = E * I * V$$

or

$$\text{motivation} = \text{expectancy} * \text{instrumentality} * \text{valence}$$

M (motivation) is the amount a person will be motivated by the situation they find themselves in. It is a function of the following.

E (expectancy) = The person's perception that effort will result in performance. In other words, the person's assessment of the degree to which effort actually correlates with performance.

I (instrumentality) = The person's perception that performance will be rewarded/punished. I.e., the person's assessment of how well the amount of reward correlates with the quality of performance. (Note here that the model is phrased in terms of extrinsic motivation, in that it asks 'what are the chances I'm going to get rewarded if I do good job?'. But for intrinsic situations, we can think of this as asking 'how good will I feel if I can pull this off?').

V(valence) = The perceived strength of the reward or punishment that will result from the performance. If the reward is small, the motivation will be small, even if expectancy and instrumentality are both perfect (high).



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