It was a hot sunny day, and a girl was sitting by the side of a dusty road, eating her sandwiches and watching the world go by.

Presently, a man walked past, looking tired and bedraggled, and carrying a heavy stone on his back. The girl asked the man:

"Why are you carrying that stone?"

The man replied: "I am a slave. I have to carry this stone because I have been ordered to."

The man slowly disappeared into the distance, and a few minutes elapsed before another man passed by where the girl was sitting. He was sweating profusely but he too, was determinedly carrying a heavy stone on his back. The girl asked the man:

"Why are you carrying that stone?"

The man replied: "This is my job – I am paid to carry these stones. It is hard work, but there are many worse jobs than this."

The man soon disappeared into the distance, and the girl was preparing to go home when another man passed by. He too had a heavy stone on his back, but was walking briskly and looked tired but content. The girl asked the man:

"Why are you carrying that stone?"

The man replied: "I am building a church."

Anon

Motivation affects how hard a person works and how productive they are. Ensuring that staff feel motivated to do their best at work is important in all workplaces, and the NHS is no exception. In the NHS we strive to be an exemplar employer and thus want all our staff to feel appreciated, involved, challenged and motivated. This section of the website is designed to help you learn more about motivation and how to motivate yourself and your team.

Theory

Motivation can be thought of as the force that drives behaviour. It is about the incentives which make people act.

Motivation is hard to explain and difficult to quantify.
• Why do people behave the way they do?
• What drives one person to work hard, and another person to be lazy?
• Why is it that people doing the same job show different levels of commitment or enjoyment of their task?
• Why is it that the same team can perform differently under different managers?

Various researchers have tried to answer these questions with theories of motivation.

**Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory**

Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory (Frederick Herzberg, Work and the Nature of Man (Crosby Lockwood Staples, 1974) states two different facets of motivation, the first being ‘hygiene’ factors or job context. The second factor is ‘satisfiers’ or job content, i.e. the intrinsic qualities of the job.

**Hygiene factors include:**

- Company policies
- Working conditions
- Salary
- Status
- Security

**Satisfiers include:**

- Achievement
- The work itself
- Responsibility
- Recognition
- Advancement
- Personal growth

Herzberg argues that hygiene factors can act only as ‘dissatisfiers’, i.e. if they are not fulfilled, they will dissatisfy. However, the elimination of dissatisfaction is not enough to motivate: only the ‘satisfiers’ can motivate. So, not only must dissatisfaction be prevented, but employees must also be allowed to realise their personal needs and aspirations.

**Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory**


At the bottom of the hierarchy are the most basic physiological needs of shelter, food, drink, warmth and relief from pain. From this, needs rise from safety and security, social needs and esteem to the highest, that of self-actualisation, or being everything that one is capable of becoming.

Hierarchy of Needs:

1. Physiological (hunger, thirst, sleep)
2. Safety (emotional and physical)
3. Social (sense of belonging, acceptance)
4. Self-esteem (recognition, status)
5. Self-actualisation (fulfilment and personal growth)

Maslow argues that higher needs emerge as lower ones are satisfied, but that a satisfied need does not necessarily satisfy behaviour. Indeed, all employees have material needs, and if these are fulfilled they will satisfy and motivate to a certain extent, but personal needs and aspirations then take over and play an important role in motivation.
McGregor’s Theory X and Theory Y

Douglas McGregor (Douglas McGregor, The Human Side of Enterprise (Higher Education, 1960)) developed the theory that there are two basic management behaviour types, Theory X managers and Theory Y managers, each of which has a very different set of assumptions about others.

**Theory X Assumptions:**

- People have an inherent dislike of work and will try to avoid it at all costs
- People need to be coerced, controlled and threatened in order to work hard
- People aren’t ambitious and dislike responsibility, preferring to be directed
- Above all else, people want security

Theory X managers are authoritarian and controlling, using threat and punishment to coerce people into working hard. They tend not to produce high levels of performance from their teams.

**Theory Y Assumptions:**

- People naturally put as much effort into their work as they do into play or rest
- People will exercise self-direction and self-control if they are committed to a goal
- People will be committed to an organisation if they are satisfied in their job
- People relish and seek responsibility
- People are good at creative problem-solving
- People’s talents and skills are normally underused

Theory Y managers are democratic, consultative and empowering, helping people to develop and encouraging them to take the initiative. These enlightened managers tend to achieve the best results from their teams.

Some more recent studies have questioned the validity of the model. However, the basic principle of the model remains valid. Although an authoritarian style of leadership is occasionally necessary, in crisis situations for example, the positive and participative Theory Y style is generally accepted as more effective for motivating people. People will contribute more to their job and organisation if they are treated as emotionally mature, responsible and valued employees and are given challenging work.

The Hawthorne Effect

In the 1920s and 30s, Harvard professor George Elton Mayo conducted a series of experiments on human behaviour at work at the Hawthorne Western Electric Plant in Illinois.

He began by investigating the effect of light on productivity and later began to analyse the psychological aspects of work and their impact on productivity.

When divided into groups and allowed to build relationships with their supervisors, personal motivation and output increased dramatically, regardless of the changes in working conditions that Mayo implemented. This was attributed to the sense of belonging, value, self-esteem and recognition that people felt when working in a social environment with a caring supervisor.

The studies revealed that people are motivated by much more than financial self-interest and that motivation, generated when people feel valued and cared for, increases productivity.

Equity Theory

Equity Theory (J S Adams, ‘Toward an Understanding of Inequity’, Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 67 (1963), pp 422-36), as the name suggests, is based on the notion of fairness and justice and how people form perceptions of what this means.
According to Adams, author of the theory, people judge the fairness of their work situation by comparing the inputs that they contribute to the outputs that they receive from their job.

**Inputs**
- Skills and experience
- Effort
- Loyalty
- Personal sacrifice
- Trust
- Working hours
- Patience
- Tolerance
- Flexibility
- Enthusiasm
- Support of others

**Outputs**
- Financial reward and benefits
- Praise
- Recognition
- Sense of achievement
- Status
- Reputation
- Responsibility
- Respect
- Trust
- Security
- Personal development

Where there is a balance between the two, people tend to be satisfied and perform effectively. However, where people feel that their inputs far outweigh the outputs they receive in return, motivation and productivity slumps.

The greater the perceived disparity between the inputs and the outputs, the greater the demotivation. This can result in reduced effort, a negative and disruptive attitude, or, most drastically, resignation.

**Expectancy Theory**

The Expectancy Theory (Victor Vroom, Work and Motivation (John Wiley, 1964)), developed by Vroom, bears many similarities to Equity Theory - people expect a return (i.e. outputs) for their efforts (i.e. inputs), and they base decisions on their behaviour on three factors:

1. The perceived performance outcome – will the effort result in the desired performance?
2. The perceived return on investment for their effort – will there be a reward?
3. The perceived value of the reward – is it worth it?

This model explains motivation as a subjective reality, based on personal perceptions of worth and value. In other words, when making a decision about their behaviour, people are asking themselves ‘what’s in it for me?’

So, the questions that managers should be asking themselves in order to tap into the motivational energy of others is ‘what’s in it for them?’
Goal-setting Theory

Developed by Locke, goal-setting theory (E A Locke, ‘Toward a Theory of Task Motivation and Incentives’, Organisational Behaviour and Human Performance, 3 (1968), pp 157-89) states the now widely accepted concept that goals drive behaviour.

Commitment to goals and the energy and productivity resulting from this depend on the nature of the goal - specific and demanding goals lead to greater results than ‘easy’ or vague goals.

People make decisions about their behaviour based on their desired goals, and focus their behaviour towards achieving these goals. Goals that are externally imposed are less effective than those created by, or with the consent of, the individual.

The way to encourage high performance is to help people to set themselves goals that they find meaningful as well as challenging. Feedback is also crucial to the success of goal-setting theory - as well as participating in the setting of the goals, individuals need feedback on how well they have performed in order to understand what behaviours they should adopt in the future and to provide them with incentives to achieve their next goals.

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