

**Modern Managerial Motivation**

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Business 1050: Foundations in Business

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### **Introduction**

Ideas, theories or concepts sometimes can be easier to write about and discuss than to actually implement in actuality. Many of the theories discussed in class have been, at times, talked about as foreign concepts that have no real meaning. This paper is designed to show how management theory is being implemented today. Through attracting the best employees, motivating the current staff and retaining highly skilled and motivated personnel, companies today can create a workforce that is both empowered and willing to stay with the company.

### **Theory and Thought**

According to Bates in Getting Engaged (2004), “For generations, U.S. employers maintained a paternalistic approach to the workforce, virtually guaranteeing lifetime employment to competent workers, providing predictable benefits and building the competencies of those deemed worthy of advancement (page 3).” This history is the foundation for the ideas brought forth by Douglas McGregor. The thought provoking book by Douglas McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise*, describes McGregor’s theories on two management styles, ‘Theory X’ and ‘Theory Y.’ Gallas, n.d., states, that while Theory X managers “assume that man has an inherent dislike of work and as a result needs to be coerced and directed in order to be productive,” Theory Y managers “assume that work is natural and that most employees have many untapped resources (page 2).”

In today’s economy and business world “neither workers nor employers expect long-term relationships. Employees want to move from job to job, to take control of their careers, to bail out of unsatisfying situations, to leverage experience in one organization for a better job in the

next. Employers, on the other hand, don't want to be saddled with workers who don't meet expectations or who become expendable as markets or internal strategies change (Bates, page 3)." In my own experience in the workforce, when a difficult boss or a job is not compelling enough for the worker, the employee has quickly left the company and sought a better situation elsewhere. Employers are also more quickly letting personnel go that are not a good fit with the company.

A third theory, known as "Theory Z" was later proposed by William Ouchi. Theory Z managers "help workers develop a team spirit; they involve workers in decision making and provide them with training experiences that help ensure their employability for life (Gallas, 3)." These three theories of management are the basis for nearly all management styles in use today.

### **Attracting the Best**

In order to attract the right person for the right job, the manager must understand their own personality and realize when they understand themselves then they can manage others effectively. "Interviews that prove attitudes" should be used to evaluate "personality style to ensure the selected candidate responds to the demands of the role and complements the existing team – including the employer's style (Ryan, 2007, Page 52)." Effectively interviewing candidates for "personality style can be the single biggest contributor to success in staff selection and relationship management. They enable supervisors to better understand their team and develop strategies to manage them (Ryan, page 52)." If the supervisor manages people using theory X methods of compulsion to work, it would be difficult to train, motivate and retain a worker who would be most successful in a Theory Y self-regulating style company. For example, I am motivated by finding creative solutions to issues but once worked for a manager

who believed that management must direct the workers and control their actions. I did not stay in the position long because I felt restricted from succeeding. As Ryan points out, "success starts with selecting the right people. This is fundamental to enduring relationships (page 51)."

About the interview process Lou Adler, CEO of the Adler Group, says, "you don't want just any passionate person. You want someone who is going to be passionate about this job." (Fisher, 2006). Not only is it important for the manager to understand his or her management style, but the nature of the position itself for which the manager is hiring. As you consider candidates for a specific job, "the more likely you are to get someone who can direct his or her passion where you need it to go," Adler says (Fisher). According to David Sanford, an executive vice president at recruiting and staffing firm Winter, Wyman & Co, "too many employers pay lip service to the idea of passion but in fact they want cookie-cutter thinking, which is why they end up with cookie-cutter hires. They want everyone to stay in his or her neat little box (Fisher)." Taking the first steps to create a Theory Y or Theory Z workplace can be difficult and at times seem to be the wrong thing to do, but the reward will come as the staff begins to work cohesively and is highly productive.

### **Motivating the Rest**

Attracting the best is only the beginning. Motivating existing staff members is also crucial to the success of the group and production. "These days, both companies and employees are healthier if employees have multiple skills, if they can move easily across functional boundaries, and if they are comfortable switching back and forth between regular duties and special projects (Waterman, et al, Toward a Career-Resilient Workforce, 1994, page 88)." One of the most important responsibilities of managers is showing you personally care, asking

employees for their opinions and ideas, providing support and involvement, and encouraging learning and development (Rosalind Jeffries, “Are You Neglecting Your Company’s Steady Eddies?”, 2004, 7).” As workers learn and develop, this can drive the effectiveness and production of the company, which ultimately increases the success of the company.

In her presentation, “Steady Eddies: The Forgotten 90%,” Rosalind Jeffries, president of Performance Enhancement Group defines Steady Eddies as “competent, seasoned, steady, and sharp performers; those employees who provide ballast during transitions; and those dependable contributors who may leave if neglected (Jeffries, page 7).” According to Bates, research has shown that “roughly half of all Americans in the workforce...show up, do what's expected of them, but don't go that extra mile, don't turn on the creative juices, don't get inspired to create great products or services (Page 1).” In working at each of my jobs, I have seen this to be pretty accurate. There are a lot of workers who just try to do their assigned job, not create any issues and then return to their lives outside of work. As a manager of lifeguards for over four years, I found it at times to figure out how to best motivate these workers to do more and really add value to the lifeguard team. I found it is imperative for managers to better utilize the talent that is found inside their companies that are the “Steady Eddies.”

Bates considers that the most considerable finding of the research is this half of the workforce is made up of people who, “for the most part, want to go above and beyond, to be an integral part of the company's success (page 1).” Many times there is something that is causing these workers to not use their potential. “Often a disconnect with an immediate supervisor or a feeling that the organization doesn't care about them--is getting in the way.” Some strategies Jeffries presents to engage these employees are: appreciate their ideas, ask for their input in decision making and say “thanks” (Page 10). I had the privilege to work for a boss who used

these strategies to create an environment where I felt a part of a team that could overcome any obstacle. I was given the opportunities that allowed my creativity to shine through. Though I had many failures, my efforts went along way in building the team from six swimmers to 150 swimmers. This was one of the most growing experiences I have been involved in and it allowed me and the business to be highly successful. “Engagement can make a huge difference in performance. It’s the ultimate prize for employers today,” says Charles H. Watts, a principal of consulting firm Towers Perrin in Boston (Bates, page 2).”

### **Recognition and Retention**

Managers can have a powerful influence on worker “satisfaction, productivity, and retention, they need to fill this efficiency gap—and recognition is their most effective tool (Jeffries, page 10).” Jeffries continues “But not the “usual” recognition program, please.” She points out some of the shortcomings of recognition programs including “recognizing only the top performers in your organization, or positioning recognition as a corporate responsibility—or as a special event.” Instead recognition should become a skill “that must be learned and practiced on a daily basis by all managers to be effective.” As a manager, I strived to always praise in public, but also continuously with meaning. Engaging and empowering the workforce of a company allows for more opportunities to recognize each worker as they strive for success.

Speaking about one of the most misunderstood parts of motivation, education and retention of employees, Bates says “one of the paradoxes that many organizations discover when boosting engagement is that the kind of training that gives workers higher feelings of engagement also gives them more opportunities to leave your firm.” Putting it another way, Bates asks “What if you don’t train them and they stay?” As managers come to understand this, they will be more motivated to empower the staff more, in effect moving toward a Theory Z

management model. Bates also clearly points out that “Perhaps the most crucial element in improving engagement is finding, training and keeping good managers (page 7).”

Retaining workers today requires management to understand the principles that were in effect when Douglas McGregor wrote “people today are accustomed to being directed, manipulated, controlled” in their work assignments and “finding satisfaction for their social, egotistic, and self-fulfillment needs away for the job (“The Human Side of Enterprise”, page 461).” Realizing that many workers still feel that while at work they are there to do a job and the manager will tell them what their every move should be and satisfaction comes only away from work. As managers begin to appreciate this view point and learn to take “responsibility to put employees back in control of their lives” by helping their people “explore job opportunities, facilitate lifelong learning and job movement, and, if it comes to that, support no-fault exits (Waterman et al, pages 89, 90).” Carol Gomen of Kinsey Consulting agrees, “When losing a highly engaged worker, if the organization is smart, it will say: ‘Good luck with the new job. We'll keep in touch. We hope you'll return.’ (Bates, page 7).”

### **Conclusion**

Managers can overcome feeling threatened by either an empowered workforce that has decision-making power, believing it is too difficult to motivate the front-line employees, or that the return of investment of time and energy will be lost as the highly engaged worker leaves the company. Instead they can come to recognize the potential that everyone will benefit from these efforts. Production will increase, employee moral will rise, and dealing with personnel issues such as missed days will be easier to handle. Though there is much work to be done with respect to the concepts presented above, modern managers are striving to use these ideas to create a better staff.

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