

# Reflections on Motivation

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## ABSTRACT

One of the essential attributes regulating the Human Resource is motivation; it prompts action and is fundamentally the most potent reason behind doing a thing. This project throws light on this fundamental attribute, intends to explore various factors influencing it and also highlights how managers shall tailor this attribute to fit best the organizational needs. The paper highlights techniques that can be followed to motivate the most valuable asset of an organization and guidelines to which management shall adhere while motivating the employees.

**Key Words:** Motivation, Management, Need Theory and Rewards

“I just want you to know that if you are out there and you are being really hard on yourself right now for something that has happened ... it's normal. That is what is going to happen to you in life. No one gets through unscathed. We are all going to have a few scratches on us. Please be kind to yourselves and stand up for yourself, please.”

— Taylor Swift

## INTRODUCTION

In our everyday lives, we confront a host of moral issues. Once we have deliberated and formed judgments about what is right or wrong, good or bad, these judgments tend to have a marked hold on us. Although in the end, we do not always behave as we think we ought, our moral judgments typically motivate us, at least to some degree, to act in accordance with them. When philosophers talk about moral motivation, this is the basic phenomenon that they seek to understand. Moral motivation is an instance of a more general phenomenon—what we might call normative motivation—for our other normative judgments also typically have some motivating force. When we make the normative judgment that something is good for us, or that we have a reason to act in a particular way, or that a specific course of action is the rational course, we also tend

to be moved. Many philosophers have regarded the motivating force of normative judgments as the key feature that marks them as normative, thereby distinguishing them from the many other judgments we make. In contrast to our normative judgments, our mathematical and empirical judgments, for example, seem to have no intrinsic connection to motivation and action. The belief that an antibiotic will cure a specific infection may move an individual to take the antibiotic, if she also believes that she has the infection, and if she either desires to be cured or judges that she ought to treat the infection for her own good. All on its own, however, an empirical belief like this one appears to carry with it no particular motivational impact; a person can judge that an antibiotic will most effectively cure a specific infection without being moved one way or another. (Moral Motivation; Jul 7, 2016)

Although motivating force may be a distinguishing feature of normative judgments, the phenomenon of normative motivation seems most significant in the case of narrowly moral judgments. Moral motivation has, in any case, received far greater attention than motivation in connection with other normative judgments. Morality is widely believed to conflict, frequently and sometimes severely, with what an agent most values or most prefers to do. Perhaps because of the apparent opposition between self-interest and morality, the fact of moral motivation has seemed especially perplexing. How is it that we are so reliably moved by our moral judgments? And what is the precise nature of the connection between moral judgment and motivation? Of course, the less perplexing and more mundane moral motivation comes to seem, the more perplexing failures of moral motivation become. If we are to explain moral motivation, we will need to understand not only how moral judgments so regularly succeed in motivating, but how they can fail to motivate, sometimes rather spectacularly. Not only do we witness motivational failure among the deranged, dejected, and confused, but also, it

appears, among the fully sound and self-possessed. What are we to make of the “amoralist”—the apparently rational, strong-willed individual who seemingly makes moral judgments, while remaining utterly indifferent? (Moral Motivation; Jul 7, 2016)

In day-to-day life, we observe many events such as a man drinking water, a boy going to college and a man working out at a gym. It is to be understood that the man drinking water wouldn't have drunk water if he had not been thirsty. Similarly, the boy and the man wouldn't have gone to college and office respectively if doing so wasn't necessary for them. In short, we may conclude that everyone has a reason behind doing something or the other.

It might have been that:

- i) The man drank water with the motive to quench his thirst
- ii) The boy went to college with the motive to secure the minimum percentage of attendance required to sit in the examinations
- iii) The man is working-out at the gym with the motive to build a solid and attractive body

The three aforementioned events might appear to be very different from each other but in reality, all these events imbibe a common factor, that is, the reason or motive behind doing a thing. The term “motivation” is incumbent of the word “motive”, meaning the reason behind doing a thing. Motivation can also be considered a force compelling an individual to take appropriate steps to change the status quo.

“The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking.

It cannot be changed without changing our thinking.”

— **Albert Einstein**

The term “status-quo” mentioned above simply refers to the situation that would have subsisted if appropriate actions weren't taken beforehand to sabotage it. For instance, if the man had not drunk water, then he would have remained thirsty; if the boy had not gone to school, his attendance would have remained low and likewise physical health of the man would remain as it is if he refused to workout.

Sources of Motivation

A rational person may derive motivation from various means and sources. For example, athletes are motivated by the prize they will get after winning. While, a coach is motivated by the belief that he/she will train, enlighten and guide the minds of talented yet perplexed athletes and play a vital role in developing them into skilled professionals. In the first example, the athletes are pooling in their

efforts to win a prize, whereas, in the second example, the coach is pooling in his efforts and getting a sense of accomplishment that is not in the form of a tangible reward. Hence, we infer that a man/woman either works for rewards that are either tangible (what one can see) or intangible (what one can feel) in nature.

Rewards that a rational person gets after doing a thing can be further classified into two categories mentioned as follows:

- 1) Extrinsic rewards: these are the tangible rewards an individual gets after accomplishing an assigned task.<sup>i</sup>
- 2) Intrinsic rewards: these are intangible rewards an individual gets from within after successfully accomplishing the work entrusted to him.<sup>ii</sup>

It is not necessary for a rational person to derive motivation to do a thing; at times, a rational person might get motivated to abstain from doing a thing due to the fear of its consequences. For example, a man avoids breaking the law so as to avoid punishment. It is also pertinent to take note of the fact that doing a thing or acting in furtherance of an objective includes either act or omission. For instance, for building a strong and attractive body, a man has to rheostat his diet for which he must stop the intake of junk food containing high amount of calories, sugars, additives etc. and simultaneously go through an appropriate training program.

In the preceding example, for facilitating the objective of building a strong and attractive body, the man abstained from consuming foods that were unhealthy and had limited nutritious value (Omission). Whereas, when that man undergoes a certain training program for facilitating the objective of building a strong and attractive body, he does something in furtherance of the objective (Act). Apart from rewards and fear, the most rudimentary attribute of humans imparting motivation is their basic needs and requirements that are necessary to be fulfilled. Although human wants and desires have no limitations, every individual is highly motivated to achieve the most basic needs like food and water. Moreover, in a country like India, it is observable that in order to fulfil these needs, a helpless human being does not even hesitate to beg. Hence, three major sources of motivation are rewards (intrinsic & extrinsic), fear and needs.

Motivation in an Organization

Management is often referred to as the art of getting work done by others.<sup>iii</sup> It is important to understand that the term others mentioned above refers to human beings, and human beings have needs and wants of their own. It will be impossible for the management of any organization to extract any amount of work from the workers without giving them a good reason to do a certain job. For example, if a rational person knows that he won't get paid for pooling in extra efforts or doing extra work as demanded by the management, then he/she will refrain from pooling in extra efforts or doing extra work. Thus, it is of utmost importance for to connect with the workers and make sure the workers connect to the organization. In doing so, management shall motivate workers and give them a good reason to work and perform better by resorting to appropriate strategies.

#### Needs and Motivation

Needs motivate an individual more than anything else; management shall identify their needs and then give them a challenging yet possible way to achieve that need to extract the maximum amount of quality work.

Need theory of motivation suggests that, in general, individuals are motivated by unmet needs. For example, a hungry man will be motivated to get something to eat, and this motivation ceases as soon as he eats something. Needs are basically the physical and emotional requirements that are required to be met in order to ensure the very existence and well-being of an individual.<sup>iv</sup>

Abraham Maslow proposed the need theory of motivation, which suggests that individuals are motivated by physiological, safety, belongingness, esteem and self-actualization needs.<sup>v</sup> Further, Douglas McGregor relied on Maslow's needs theory while defining motivation. He classified physiological and safety needs as lower-order needs and belongingness, esteem and self-actualization as higher-order needs. He framed a set of assumptions about individuals who are motivated by lower-order needs and individuals who are motivated by higher-order needs.<sup>vi</sup>

Douglas McGregor propounded the following two theories for managing individuals with lower order as well as higher-order needs:

- 1) Theory X: Containing guidelines for managing individuals with lower-order needs.
- 2) Theory Y: Containing guidelines for managing individuals with higher-order needs.

Theory Y pertains to the management of ambitious, hardworking, multitasking and flexible individuals; and supports the idea of employee engagement and involvement for enhancing overall

performance. Theory X pertains to management individuals who are indolent, lack ambition, resist change and do not like to take responsibilities; the theory suggests that these individuals shall be given minimal autonomy and their work must be thoroughly monitored and supervised.

John Mackey, the founder and CEO of Whole Foods strongly relies on Maslow's needs theory in order to motivate the employees at his organization.<sup>vii</sup> Alike John Mackey management of any organization shall carefully assess and determine the needs of the employees and so as to facilitate this process companies shall conduct surveys within itself. Dan Amos the CEO of Aflac (A company wherein 70% of employees are females) once conducted a survey within the company and found that majority of its female employees required more recognition at work along with an on-site day-care. Following the survey Amos set up a flexible scheduling program and, in this case, just by assessing and fulfilling the requirements of the company employees to a reasonable extent and managed to reduce its employee turnover rate to a very significant extent.<sup>viii</sup> Hence, at times it is much better to directly ask employees what they need.

For any management, it is of utmost importance to cater to its employees' basic needs to retain them. For instance, an individual receiving a pay with which he may barely survive in a metropolitan city is more likely to leave that organization for an organization that can pay him a better amount or provide other facilities and services essential for surviving in that city. Consistent with the idea of satisfying lower order needs, in a survey of 12,000 employees, it was found that the foremost reason for employees to leave an organization is inadequate compensation (a very basic need for any individual).<sup>ix</sup>

Individuals with higher-order needs can prove to be an asset to the organization. Still, while managing this category of individuals, the management must ensure to carefully determine and take appropriate steps to cater to their needs. While working such individuals, the management shall keep the following points in mind:

- 1) An individual pooling in extra efforts for enhancing the performance of the organization must be treated fairly and shall be reciprocally rewarded for his efforts.
- 2) Talented Employees shall be given autonomy and scope to fail as well so that they can fearlessly uphold responsibility while attempting to do something for the betterment of the organization. This does not only

empower them but also fosters a sense of belongingness.

- 3) Individuals with higher-order needs shall be given challenging roles that give them a thrill, a sense of excitement and an opportunity to improve their skillset.
- 4) Performing individuals with higher-order needs shall be given competitive pay and other benefits to make them stick to the organization.
- 5) Average Skilled Individuals having higher-order needs shall be given a platform whereby they can learn new skills and contribute to the betterment of the organization.

#### Motivating Employees

##### Need To Keep Employees Motivated

It is essential to understand that humans working in organizations are not an ordinary resource. Without humans, a gigantic and well-equipped organization is as good as Titanic without a captain. Human Resource mobilizes and puts other resources to use so as to run an organization. Without humans, it will be impossible for an organization to function, and a similar will be the case if employees of an organization lack motivation. Motivation prompts action, and as mentioned above, it provides a reason for doing a thing. When a rational person feels it is pointless to put in the effort to do something due to any reason, they tend to withdraw his/her efforts. Hence, it is extremely important to keep the ones driving machines and mobilizing capital to yield results satisfied and motivated simultaneously.

##### Difference Between Satisfaction and Motivation

It is important to understand that there is a difference between being motivated and satisfied. Being satisfied means feeling a sense of accomplishment after finishing a task, whereas being motivated means being optimistic and consciously putting in efforts to achieve the desired outcome. In simple words, satisfaction provides happiness, and motivation promises to provide a thrilling experience in the course of achieving an objective for the organization. Thus, it can be concluded that motivation may be used as a means to satisfy employees but not vice versa. A rational person needs both to stay and stick to an organization until he reaches his career plateau.

##### Ways of motivating employees

**Job Rotation:** At times, a well-paying job comprising a single or multiple fixed roles may make an individual numb, bored and even less productive, which may prompt an individual to give up on that job and render his/her resignation to

the organization. Job rotation is a technique following which an employee is shifted from one task to another with similar skill requirements.<sup>x</sup>The use of this technique showcased increased job satisfaction as well as organizational commitment.<sup>xi</sup>This technique motivates employees to explore different dimensions of the business, learn new skills and discover how valuable their service is to the organization, which intrinsically motivates them to work harder and thus, improves productivity. Singapore Airlines, which stands among the best globally, use this technique to keep its employees motivated.<sup>xii</sup>

**Job Enrichment:** At times, an individual is willing to do more and simultaneously undertake more responsibilities; in job enrichment, duties fastened to an individual are increased so as to reciprocally increase his performance and level of motivation. Consistent with Herzberg's theory, this motivational technique increases motivation by adding the motivating factors, that is, responsibilities.

**Flexible Work Hours:** In India, 9 to 5, 5 days a week culture is very prevalent, but if we broadly rethink then, it is near about 40 hours of work in a week. It is pertinent to understand that for each and every individual, it will not be possible to work with complete dedication during that particular time slot and then, in order to complete tasks assigned for that 40 hours, they may even take more than 40 hours which inevitably disturbs the work-life balance. Flexible work hours tend to enhance motivation, job satisfaction, increase organizational commitment and performance of employees.

**Participation:** When employees play an active role in the decision-making process, they feel a sense of belongingness, derive motivation, and perform their jobs in a much more dedicated manner. Organizations promoting employee participation are more likely to get high productivity, low absenteeism & better returns.<sup>xiii</sup>

**Rewards:** One tends to work harder if he/she gets something in return for it. Rewards and benefits provided by a company in return for services rendered by employees make them keep going. Jobs nowadays in 2022 are not that easy to carry out; many require specializations and multitasking; for getting work done nowadays, it is crucial for organizations to reward and recognize the ones who perform such jobs simultaneously. In a survey carried out by the American Psychological Association, more than 60% of respondents mentioned that they were not changing their employers because of the pay and benefits they were getting from their current employer.<sup>xiv</sup>At



times, rewards offered by the employer prompt an employee to perform much better than usual. For instance, an employee pools in as much effort as he can for bagging a promotion, which increases his performance level.

#### Guidelines

While attempting to motivate employees, the management shall:

- 1) Assess and determine the needs of the employees and take requisite steps so as to abridge those needs.
- 2) Praise, acknowledge and recognize the extra efforts made by an employee.
- 3) Adequately reward and offer incentives to the employees who pool in extra efforts for the betterment of the organization.
- 4) Embrace and follow the principle of equity so that employees don't feel over rewarded or under-rewarded.
- 5) Keep things transparent between management and employees.
- 6) Provide counselling to employees rather than resorting to coercive and strict measures.
- 7) Foster and maintain a good and amicable work culture.
- 8) Conduct skill development and training programs.
- 9) Offer flexible work schedules as and when possible.
- 10) Give performance appraisal and ask for the organization's feedback from the employees at regular intervals.

#### Impact

##### Enhances Employee Engagement

Motivation increases employee engagement in an organization either by alluring him/her with incentives, perks, benefits, allowances etc. or by giving him/her a sense of security. When an employee feels engaged, he tends to work harder and pools more effort for doing the task assigned to him/her. Moreover, a research claims that highly engaged teams increase business profitability by up to 21%.<sup>xv</sup>

##### Improves Productivity

When employees are engaged and motivated, they take care of tasks assigned to them with utmost dedication and sincerity, which improves the overall productivity of an organization. Moreover, research conducted by Hay Group's clearly established that workplaces with engaged and motivated employees are 43% more productive.

##### Improves Rate of Retention

Highly motivated employees who are committed to their jobs are less likely to leave an organization. When an employee performs up to mark and performs extraordinarily, then it shall be the duty of management to praise his/her efforts, recognize their performance and then reward accordingly. Small efforts made by management such as empathizing, motivating, praising, encouraging and acknowledging the efforts made by employees can ramp up the rate of retention. The most demotivating situation arises when efforts made by an individual aren't recognized. In 2011 Market Tools, Inc. conducted a survey in which it was found that 66% of 630 U.S. employees who were planning to leave their respective organizations were unsatisfied as they did not get proper recognition at work.<sup>xvi</sup>

##### Improves Image of The Organization

Nobody wishes to be a part of an extremely strict and rigid organization, and it is of utmost importance for management to acknowledge that no work can be accomplished until and unless a human resource that is the most powerful and valuable resource of an organization is satisfied. It is very relevant to keep in mind that man, money, and machines are essential for running any organization, with man being the most important of all. Without man, machines and money are as useless as a fuelled car without an engine. Moreover, it is necessary to take care of the fact that a human resource is not a machine for yielding profits, and it has to be taken care of both emotionally and financially. The well-paying organizations with supportive & motivating management, good work culture, safe and hygienic work environment and friendly HR policies are more preferred by raw graduates and even skilled professionals. Thus, small steps taken by management to keep the workforce motivated improves the overall image of an organization.

## CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that organizations shall consider and treat Human Resource as their most valuable asset. This asset is exceptional and distinguished from other assets as this resource mobilizes and puts other resources to use so as to yield an outcome. Moreover, the value of this resource will never depreciate if management takes appropriate steps to motivate its workforce to get well versed and acquainted with new technologies by providing and conducting various training and skill development programs. Motivation is the fundamental force driving an individual to take

steps in furtherance of an organizational objective, and in order to motivate an individual to go beyond his limits, it is essential to show him mutual benefits in some form or the other. Small steps taken by the management of an organization may prove to be very vital and initiate a bond-building process between an individual and the organization; once that bond becomes strong enough, it fosters a sense of belongingness, tends to impart OCB and converts an ordinary human resource into the most valuable asset an organization can dream of. Moreover, an organization's image also improves considerably when the individuals working there take pride in being a part of that organization.

Managers and employers must understand that humans, though not machines, are very much similar to them. Just like machines require energy, servicing and repairs, Human Resource is required to be taken care of financially, physiologically and emotionally. When a machine stops working, an engineer inspects and rectifies its fault. Similarly, when a human's performance depletes, he shall be counselled, his problem shall be acknowledged by the management and then it shall take appropriate steps so as to resolve the subsisting problem. Yelling or even thrashing a disturbed machine will not have any repercussions whereas, even yelling at a disturbed employee will adversely afflict his/her performance and may even lead to a separation causing an inevitable loss to the organization. Hence, management must be very cautious while dealing with the employees.

Thus, managers must assess and formulate appropriate strategies to cater for the needs of the most valuable resource to get maximum output as when employees are satisfied with their management and organization, they yield better productivity and provide better service to their customers.<sup>xvii</sup>

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