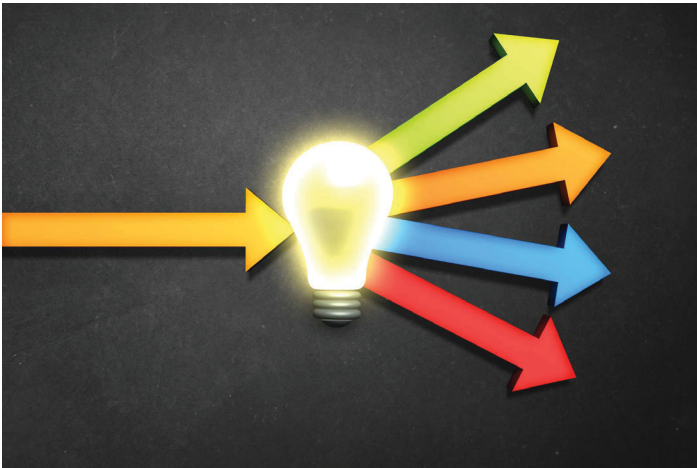


Associates and Motivation¹

Derek Farnsworth, Jennifer L. Clark, Allen Wysocki, Karl Kepner, and Michelle Glasser²



Credits: chaofann/iStock/Thinkstock.com

Introduction

In this article we discuss associates and motivation. What is motivation? Motivation comes from the word “motive,” which comes from the Latin word “to move.” Motivation is anything that moves people to try to perform. Regardless of the reason—fear, money, recognition, peer pressure, self-esteem—if people are trying, they are motivated. It should be recognized, however, that wanting is not synonymous with trying and is therefore not motivation. Think of motivation this way—Motivation = Motive + Action. This implies that associates not only need to have a reason to act a certain way, they must be “moved” into some form of action.

Supervision and Motivation

It is generally recognized that management cannot motivate; motivation must come from within. What then is management’s role regarding motivation? It is the manager’s responsibility to develop and maintain a positive motivational climate. A positive motivational climate involves a work environment where everyone will be motivated to consistently perform at his or her highest level of productivity. As a manager or supervisor, evaluate the extent to which you believe you have created a positive motivational climate with your associates and work unit. How would your associates evaluate the organization’s motivational climate? Studies have shown that approximately 75% of associates say they can be significantly more productive in their work. Therefore, they are obviously not motivated to perform at their highest level of productivity.

Associates and Motivation

Everyone is motivated, but some associates are more motivated than others. This motivation, however, is not always positive. Three types of associate motivational levels can be identified: negative, maintenance, and positive. Each type of motivation has an expected associate performance and productivity level that corresponds to efforts at work.

Type of Motivation	Associate Performance	Productivity Level
Negative	Destuctive	Unsatisfactory
Maintenance	Compliance	Just get by
Positive	Committed	Satisfactory

1. This document is HR004, one of a series of the Food and Resource Economics Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date May 2001. Revised July 2016 and July 2019. Visit the EDIS website at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu> for the currently supported version of this publication.

2. Derek Farnsworth, assistant professor; and Jennifer L. Clark, senior lecturer, Department of Food and Resource Economics Department; Allen Wysocki, associate dean and professor; Karl Kepner, former emeritus professor; and Michelle Glasser, former graduate research assistant; UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

Table 1 lists 24 potential motivational factors in the workplace. Read the twenty-four factors and indicate whether you believe each to be a strong motivator or de-motivator for associates to do their best work. To qualify as a strong motivator, one must be able to answer yes to this question: If I can provide my associates with more of this factor, will they be motivated to work at higher levels of productivity?

From the works and writings of Frederick Herzberg who developed the original theory of workplace motivation, de-motivators are identified as policies, money, status, security, and supervision, while motivators are identified as achievement, recognition, increased responsibility, growth, and learning.

Herzberg's (1991) motivational model illustrates that the primary role of de-motivators is to adjust the level of dissatisfaction. That is, even under the best circumstances, de-motivators can only decrease the level of dissatisfaction; they cannot increase an associate's level of satisfaction. In fact, if the factors in Table 1 are perceived as inadequate, associates will look for ways to make up for these inadequacies (get even with management).

Motivators, on the other hand, can be used to adjust the level of associate satisfaction. That is, effective use of motivators will increase an associate's satisfaction from a level characterized by indifference to a high level of satisfaction.

Given the distinction between de-motivators and motivators, an evaluation of the twenty-four potential motivational factors in Table 1 would indicate that items 4, 8, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, and 24 are motivational factors, and items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 18, 19, and 23 are de-motivational factors. The motivational factors should provide managers with a greater opportunity to create a strong motivational work environment. It would seem appropriate that each manager should identify two or three items from this list to personally use more effectively in the future.

As you study the general categories of de-motivators and motivators, please note that providing a motivating work environment requires little in terms of capital outlay (motivators are essentially non-monetary in nature). The bottom line is that creating a motivating environment requires the manager to appeal to the associate's sense of self-improvement and self-worth as a human being. It should also be noted that strong motivators tend to be controlled by the immediate supervisor rather than by top management.

In a related work (a survey of over 1500 employees), Graham (1982) identified the most important motivating techniques used by managers. The top five techniques were:

1. The manager **personally** congratulates associates who do a good job.
2. The manager **writes** personal notes about good performance.
3. The organization uses **performance** as the basis for promotion.
4. The manager **publicly** recognizes employees for good performance.
5. The manager holds morale-building **meetings** to **celebrate** success.

Graham (1982) also interviewed associates to find out how often managers utilized the top five motivating techniques as part of their management activities. He discovered that less than 50% of the managers in the study utilized item one (personal congratulations for associates who did a good job) and that less than 25% of these same managers incorporated items two through five of the top motivational techniques into their management styles. Take a moment to evaluate the effectiveness with which your management team utilizes these top five motivational techniques. Would your associates agree that your management team effectively utilizes these non-monetary feedback rewards?

Conclusion

By using the information provided in this article, you can determine how your organization stacks utilizes effective positive motivational techniques. The managerial challenge is to create a work climate with opportunities that will stimulate each associate to achieve and maintain his/her highest level of workplace productivity and to provide opportunities for maintaining the highest level of productivity.

References

- Graham, G.H. 1982. *Understanding Human Relations: The Individual, Organization, and Management*. New York: SRA Publishing.
- Herzberg, Frederick. *Herzberg on Motivation*. New York: Penton Publishing.

Table 1. Strong motivator is defined as “more of the factor provided, the greater the productivity observed.”

Potential Motivational Factors		Strong Motivator	De-Motivator
1.	Pension Plan	_____	_____
2.	Rest Breaks	_____	_____
3.	Clear Company Policies	_____	_____
4.	Involvement in Problem Solving	_____	_____
5.	Wages—Good Pay	_____	_____
6.	Steady Employment	_____	_____
7.	Paid Holidays	_____	_____
8.	Recognition for Good Work	_____	_____
9.	Clear Work Instructions	_____	_____
10.	Good Physical Working Conditions	_____	_____
11.	Insurance Program	_____	_____
12.	Having an Effective Supervisor	_____	_____
13.	Feeling My Job Is Important	_____	_____
14.	Opportunity to Do a Good Job	_____	_____
15.	Chances for Promotion	_____	_____
16.	Respect for Me as a Person	_____	_____
17.	Being Evaluated so I Know Where I Stand	_____	_____
18.	Working Under Close Supervision	_____	_____
19.	Knowing I Will Be Disciplined if I Do a Bad Job	_____	_____
20.	Agreement on Work Objectives	_____	_____
21.	Opportunity for Self Development	_____	_____
22.	Work that Is Interesting	_____	_____
23.	Getting Along Well with Others	_____	_____
24.	Feeling of Inclusion in Organization	_____	_____