

ACHIEVING A MOTIVATED WORKFORCE

Hiring people who are motivated to do what employers need remains one of the biggest challenges in business today. Often, employers think that the best motivators for employees are reasonably good pay or good fringe benefits. Some employers think that employees are motivated by “perks” such as bonuses, parties, gifts or outings. Dr. Frederick Herzberg discovered through research that such things do not motivate employees. They merely prevent workers from becoming unhappy. Current research continues to validate his findings.

What motivates people, Dr. Herzberg found, is the work itself. When the work is meaningful, it provides opportunities for learning, recognition and responsibility. That is when employees will be motivated to make full use of their abilities. This is a somewhat radical idea for employers who think “it’s all about money.”

The truth is, according to Dr. Herzberg, that both meaningful work and adequate money and benefits are necessary. Provide both, he said, and you can get a person to do what you need to have done.

Actually, it’s a bit more complicated than that. Dr. Herzberg recognized that an employer could not take **any** applicant and get them to do **any** job in the company. His PSP research showed that people’s aptitudes, interests and personalities also have great impact on vocational success. He concluded that motivation occurs when an individual’s personal qualities match the rewards available on the job.

Why Select Motivated Workers?

Dr. Herzberg discovered that the productivity of workers could be traced directly to the correlation between their personal characteristics and the rewards available in the workplace. He believed that productivity in America, in particular, has been receding because of a focus on money and benefits to the exclusion of responsibility and continuous learning. When workers get money without responsibility, their entitlement quotient goes up and their productivity quotient goes down. When workers are given responsibility without money, they become resentful and less productive. The most productive employees, Herzberg taught, are the ones who are continually challenged as well as compensated fairly.

How much more work can motivated employees do? Dr. Herzberg did not give an answer, but subsequent studies by Dr. John E. Hunter and colleagues show that motivated workers produce 50 percent more work than average workers. Subpar workers produce 50 percent less. Selecting motivated workers

really pays off! They give an honest day’s work, display dependability and reliability, strive for continuous improvement, and achieve results.

How to Select Motivated Workers

One way to assess motivation is to take an inventory of what an individual already has achieved. People who are internally motivated usually have an established track record of results. Depending on age and experience, these results could be in the workplace, in school, in competitive events, or in other activities that demonstrate continuous improvement. Motivated people have a history of mastery.



Another way to identify motivated people is with psychological tests. Industrial psychologists are able to assess a variety of internal “drivers,” including such things as work energy, results orientation, desire for continuous improvement, need for recognition, competitiveness, desire for responsibility, ambition for advancement and desire for intellectual stimulation. In the hands of well-trained professionals, validated and reliable psychological tests can identify job applicants who are motivated by the kind of rewards a particular employer has to offer. Assuming the individual has the necessary skills and aptitudes, matching a person’s desired rewards with the incentives available for a particular job is the best way to hire a motivated and highly productive employee.

Career Development as a Motivator

Once motivated employees are hired, how can an employer keep them motivated? Again, Dr. Herzberg is instructive. His PSP research demonstrated that developing people by enriching their work motivated them. By providing workers with continuous learning opportunity, regular challenge and progressive responsibility, employers can motivate employees to give their best performance on an ongoing basis.

Enriching work through continuous learning is what career development is all about. It benefits both the individual employee and the company. Career development stimulates the employee to improve current performance, as well as to prepare for the future. At the same time, career development helps the company by building bench strength for the succession planning process.

Hiring workers who are internally motivated and maintaining their motivation through career development activities allow companies to increase productivity and competitive advantage.