

WHY DO WE WORK

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Why do we work? Why do we strive for excellence? How can managers influence subordinate in such a way to bring out the best in them? For what seemed to be quite a straight forward question, the answers may turn out to be very complex. Understanding these facts need full understanding of motivation that which causes, channels, and sustains people's behaviour.¹

Managers today are utilizing the elements of motivation to lead and influence their subordinates effectively. Management, as defined by Mary Parker Follet, is the art of getting work done through people.² However, people are complex figures with unlimited wants. Therefore, the key to understanding motivation is to investigate, analyze and subsequently satisfy these needs and wants accordingly.

However, the common situation faced by subordinates is that, superiors see them as who they should be or supposed to be rather than who they really are. Individuals excel in different and sometimes in strange ways. We cannot and sometimes it is impossible to evaluate someone's effort and behaviour based on a general, ideal or rigid model. In evaluating subordinates too, we need to understand the concepts of motivation. Managers too, need to understand the reasons why do we work?

A. F. Stoner and Charles Wankel in their book "Management", have classified the reasons we work and strive for excellence into three different models. These models are the Traditional, Human Relations and Human Resources Models. The mentioned models will be further elaborated in later parts of this paper. These models are not separate or extensions to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs but as a matter of fact are condensations of the latter.

So, why do we work? Generally, we work due to three reasons.

- 1) We work because of monetary gains.
- 2) We work because of the need to socialize.
- 3) We work in order to gain responsibility, credibility and recognition.

¹ Stoner, James A. F. and Wankel, Charles. Management, Prentice-Hall Inc., 1986 p. 417.

² Stoner, James A. F. and Wankel, Charles. Management, Prentice-Hall Inc., 1986 p. 3.

REASON 1: WE WORK BECAUSE OF MONETARY GAINS.

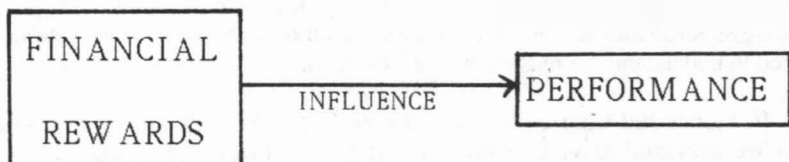
Scenario 1:

We are unemployed. we are desperate for money to satisfy our basic needs. We are willing to do anything to generate income."

From the consensus I got, the answer to the question "do you work for money?" is a big YES. Undoubtedly money is the primary determinant in obtaining our basic needs namely; clothings, shelter, food and transportation. We also need money to acquire other necessities and luxuries of life.

Naturally we are willing to work harder and longer hours to bring more money home. Hence, realising this fact, managers will use financial incentives wisely in lieu of high performance from subordinates.

MODEL A: THE TRADITIONAL MODEL.



This model was introduced by Frederick W. Taylor during the Scientific Management era. He assumed that we are lazy and we only work for money. If there is no money, then there will be no work. The only stimulus and catalyst towards work is financial rewards.³

It is true that we will not accept a job if there is no money in it or if we have to work for free. We will not have the urge to strive for excellence if the financial incentives are not compatible. However, is money the only reason we work for?

3 Stoner, James A. F. and Wankel Charles. Management, Prentice-Hall Inc., 1986 p. 418.

REASON 2:

WE WORK BECAUSE OF THE NEED TO SOCIALIZE

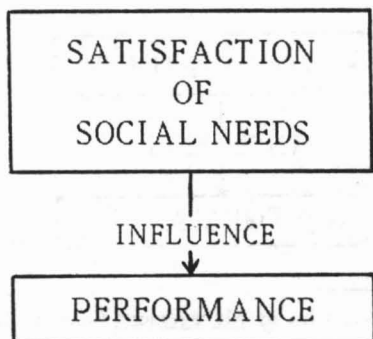
Scenario 2:

*We are paid handsomely for our job.
However, we are constantly under pressure.
Everybody hates our presence and nobody
seems to be giving their utmost cooperation.
How would we feel?"*

We often heard of the phrase " money is not everything". To an extend, the phrase is very true. There is a point where additional money will not motivate us anymore. Through informal interviews that I conducted, a normal reaction to the question " Why do you like to work here? " is "....I like the people here". The fact is, people like to work in an environment where the conditions are favourable. Plainly, people would like to work where the people are nice and friendly. Everybody knows everybody else and everybody has mutual respect for one another.

From the scenario above, we will reach a stage when financial incentives may not be our priority. On top of that, giving us more responsibility will not motivate us and it may hinder our performance due to frustration. We would like to proof to the respective authorities that we not only can fulfill and accomplish our tasks, make decisions and control the flow of operations but more importantly, being able to communicate, socialize and "mix-around" with other members of the organization effectively. Thus in order to motivate subordinates, besides monetary incentives, it is the task of managers to create and provide favourable social and working environment.

MODEL B: HUMAN RELATIONS MODEL



This model presented by Elton Mayo, a behaviourist, suggested that managers could motivate employees by acknowledging their social needs and by making them feel useful and important.⁴

In satisfying the social needs, informal groups play an integral role. This is evident when we have social informal groups such as athletic teams, academic groups, professional groups, sports clubs and ITM's very own Employee Welfare and Sports Club (KKSK). These groups may not serve directly in the achievement of the organisation's objectives, but they do serve the social needs of the organisation members.

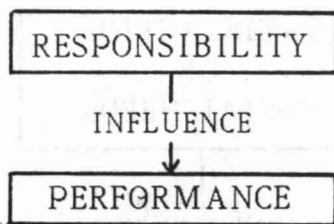
REASON 3: WE WORK IN ORDER TO GAIN RESPONSIBILITY AND CREDIBILITY.

Scenerio 3:

"We are given the appropriate financial incentives. We like the working enviroment. But, we are not given the opportunity to participate in the organisation's decision making process."

We as humans, naturally, do not want to stay in one place for a long time. We would like to move on for better things in our life. We want to develop our skills. We want to explore new horizons of knowledge. We would like to show and prove that we can perform when given the task and responsibility. We want to be a positive contributor towards the development of the organisation. However, how can we show our ability, capability and credibility if we are not given the chance?

MODEL C: THE HUMAN RESOURCES MODEL.



4 Stoner, James A. F. and Wankel, Charles. Management, Prentice-Hall Inc., 1986 p. 418.

Theorists such as McGregor, Maslow, and researchers such as Argyris and Lickert disagree with the Traditional and Human Resources models founded by Frederick Taylor and Elton Mayo respectively. The theorists (Maslow and McGregor) pointed out that employees don't just work for money nor just to satisfy their social needs, but more importantly, employees work to achieve satisfaction through high performance of task. Subordinates seek meaningful jobs and responsibility. They view money as bribery and satisfying social needs as manipulation of employees. Instead, managers should share responsibility for achieving organisational and individual objectives, with each person contributing on the basis of his or her interest and abilities.⁵

WHICH IS THE BEST MODEL?

Management is neither a science nor an art. Management is a combination of both science and art. There is no one best way. Therefore, the answer to the question above is NONE. Managers will have to integrate the applications and implications of these models in order to influence subordinates to perform in accordance with the goals and objectives of the organisation.

Organisational members are the moving force behind the success of an organisation. Managers need to uphold the sociological and psychological sentiments if the organisation in an attempt to create or maintain a conducive working and social environment which consequently will induce maximum performance from subordinates concerned.

Again, the sociological and psychological sentiments will revolve around three fundamental issues: money, social and responsibility. Realising these facts, that is why it is essential for managers to view the Traditional, Human Relations and Human Resources models as one; not three distinct models. It is the task of managers to strike the balance.

⁵ Stoner, James A. F and Wankel, Charles, Management, Prentice-Hall Inc., 1986 p.419.

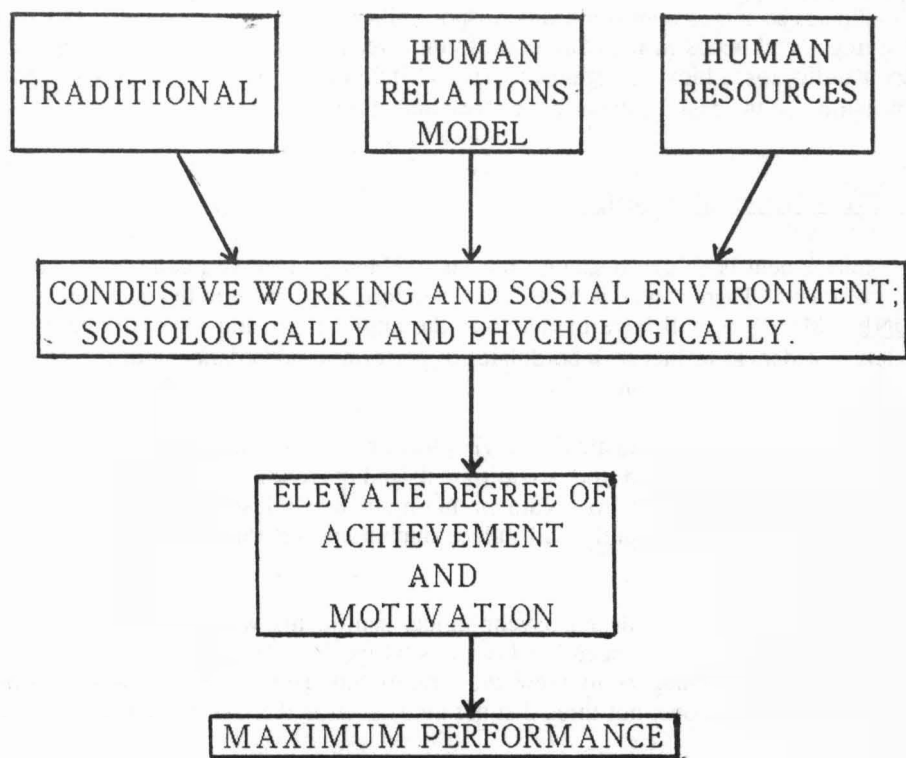


Figure 1.: Integration of the Traditional, Human Relation and Human Resources Models.

CONCLUSION:

Motivation varies with needs. Today, we may work for money. Tomorrow we may have a different reason for striving. The fact is, when our needs change, so do our motive to work. Therefore to understand why we work, we must first identify our needs. According to Abraham H. Maslow, only needs which are not yet satisfied can motivate subordinates.

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