

MOTIVATION AND WORK BEHAVIOR

RICHARD M. STEERS
LYMAN W. PORTER

FOURTH EDITION



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Richard M. Steers

College of Business Administration
University of Oregon

Lyman W. Porter

Graduate School of Management
University of California, Irvine

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PREFACE

Interest in the topic of motivation in work organizations has risen steadily in recent years. Some 30 years ago the level of knowledge and research in the area consisted largely of classic, though singular, efforts to set forth some basic theoretical generalizations based on only fragmentary research data. Beginning in the early 1960s, however, interest in motivational problems of organizations increased significantly. This trend has continued through the 1970s and into the 1980s. It is difficult to pick up a current research journal in organizational behavior, industrial psychology, or the general area of management without finding at least one selection dealing with motivational problems at work.

Such intense interest in the field is a healthy sign that increased knowledge will be gained on this important topic. Simultaneously, however, a potential problem exists in ensuring that the various research efforts are somehow integrated and synthesized so that we can maximize our understanding of the main issues involved. This book is largely the result of our concern for this potential problem. Several major theories of motivation have been advanced and tested during the past decade or so. Moreover, while a great deal has been written concerning the relation of motivational processes to various other important organizational factors (such as job design and group dynamics), this literature has also been largely fragmentary. Our hope in organizing this book, then, is to bring together in one volume the major contemporary theories, research, and applications in the area of motivation and work behavior.

It is our belief that a thorough knowledge of motivation as it affects organizational processes requires at least three important inputs. First, the reader must gain a general knowledge of what is meant by the concept of motivation, as well as of historical approaches to the study of motivation. Also, the reader needs a fairly comprehensive framework for analyzing the various theories and applications that exist. We have attempted to deal with these matters in Part One of the book. Second, it is our contention that the serious student of motivation must be conversant with the major theories that exist in the field today. These theories—and the research associated with them—are described in Part Two. This part in the fourth edition focuses particularly on cognitive and reinforcement theories. Finally, we feel that theories alone are of little value unless the student can understand how motivational processes relate to other organizational variables. Such interrelationships are covered in detail in Parts Three and Four. In Part Three of this edition, new sections have been added on careers in organizations, man-

aging marginal performance, and motivation in other contexts. Part Four then attempts to review and synthesize what has been learned concerning the role of motivation in organizational settings.

Throughout the fourth edition, readings have been updated. This edition includes 13 new selections. In addition, the text has also been updated and expanded somewhat.

The approach taken here is to integrate text materials with selections authored by some of the foremost scholars in the field. The major focus in the text and readings is on a blend of theoretical formulations with practical applications. Thus, the chapters (especially in Part Three) generally contain some major theoretical propositions, some research evidence relevant to the theories, and some examples of how such models have been or could be applied in existing organizations. Furthermore, each chapter contains a set of questions to stimulate discussion and analysis of the major issues.

This book is designed primarily for students of organizational behavior, industrial psychology, and general management. It also should be useful for managers who wish to gain an increased understanding of problems of work motivation. It is assumed that the reader has had some previous exposure to organizational behavior, perhaps through an introductory course. This volume attempts to build upon such knowledge and to analyze general organizational processes, using the concept of motivation as the basic unit of analysis.

We wish to express our sincere appreciation to all those who have contributed to the realization of this project in its various editions. In particular, our thanks go to Keith Davis, Arizona State University; Peter Dubno, New York University; Mark Fichman, Carnegie-Mellon University; Jerald Greenberg, Ohio State University; Ralph Katerberg, University of Cincinnati; Terence Mitchell, University of Washington; Richard Mowday, University of Oregon; Greg Oldham, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; and Eugene Stone, Bowling Green University for their helpful comments and suggestions. We are also indebted to Cindy P. Lindsay and Janet Black for their valuable assistance in preparing the manuscript for publication. In addition, we are grateful to our respective schools, the University of Oregon and the University of California, Irvine, for providing stimulating motivational environments in which to work. Finally, a special note of appreciation is due our wives, Sheila and Meredith, for their support and encouragement throughout the project.

Richard M. Steers

Lyman W. Porter

CONTENTS

Preface	xi
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PART ONE INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

1	The Role of Motivation in Organizations	3
	The Nature of Motivation	5
	The Motivational Process: Basic Considerations	6
	Psychological Approaches to Motivation	8
	Managerial Approaches to Motivation	14
	A Framework for Analysis	19
	Plan of Book	23
	<i>Motivation: New Directions for Theory, Research, and Practice</i>	27
	Terence R. Mitchell	

PART TWO THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO MOTIVATION

2	Need Theories of Motivation	43
	<i>Maslow Reconsidered: A Review of Research on the Need Hierarchy Theory</i>	51
	Mahmoud A. Wahba and Lawrence G. Bridwell	
	<i>Murray's Manifest Needs Theory</i>	59
	Richard M. Steers	
3	Cognitive Approaches to Motivation	68
	<i>Valence-Instrumentality-Expectancy Theory</i>	69
	Craig C. Pinder	
	<i>Equity Theory Predictions of Behavior in Organizations</i>	89
	Richard T. Mowday	
	<i>The Ubiquity of the Technique of Goal Setting in Theories of and Approaches to Employee Motivation</i>	111
	Edwin A. Locke	
	<i>Goal Setting—A Motivational Technique That Works</i>	120
	Gary P. Latham and Edwin A. Locke	

4	Reinforcement and Social Learning Approaches to Motivation	135
	<i>Reinforcement Theory and Contingency Management in Organizational Settings</i>	139
	W. Clay Hamner	
	<i>Behavior Modification on the Bottom Line</i>	165
	W. Clay Hamner and Ellen P. Hamner	
	<i>A Social Learning Approach to Behavioral Management: Radical Behaviorists "Mellowing Out"</i>	184
	Robert Kreitner and Fred Luthans	

PART THREE CENTRAL ISSUES IN MOTIVATION AT WORK

5	Reward Systems in Organizations	203
	<i>The Strategic Design of Reward Systems</i>	210
	Edward E. Lawler III	
	<i>On the Folly of Rewarding A, while Hoping for B</i>	228
	Steven Kerr	
	<i>How to Ruin Motivation with Pay</i>	242
	W. Clay Hamner	
	<i>New Approaches to Total Compensation</i>	254
	Edward E. Lawler III	
6	Social Influences on Motivation	268
	<i>Ways Groups Influence Individual Work Effectiveness</i>	271
	Lyman W. Porter, Edward E. Lawler III, and J. Richard Hackman	
	<i>A Social Influence Interpretation of Worker Motivation</i>	279
	Mario Sussmann and Robert P. Vecchio	
	<i>The Development and Enforcement of Group Norms</i>	292
	Daniel C. Feldman	
	<i>The Interaction of Social Influences and Task Experience on Goals, Performance, and Performance Satisfaction</i>	302
	Thomas L. Rakestraw, Jr., and Howard M. Weiss	
7	Careers in Organizations	320
	<i>Organizational Entry: The Individual's Viewpoint</i>	321
	John P. Wanous	
	<i>Toward a Theory of Career Motivation</i>	331
	Manuel London	
	<i>Culture as an Environmental Context for Careers</i>	348
	Edgar H. Schein	

8	Employee Absenteeism and Turnover	360
	<i>Major Influences on Employee Attendance: A Process Model</i>	362
	Richard M. Steers and Susan R. Rhodes	
	<i>The Absence Culture and the Psychological Contract— Who's in Control of Absence?</i>	376
	Nigel Nicholson and Gary Johns	
	<i>Intermediate Linkages in the Relationship between Job Satisfaction and Employee Turnover</i>	390
	William H. Mobley	
	<i>Employee Turnover in Organizations</i>	394
	Richard M. Steers and Richard T. Mowday	
9	Managing Marginal Performance	407
	<i>Behavioral Strategies to Improve Productivity</i>	411
	Gary P. Latham, Larry L. Cummings, and Terence R. Mitchell	
	<i>Punishment in Organizations: A Review, Propositions, and Research Suggestions</i>	431
	Richard D. Arvey and John M. Ivancevich	
	<i>Managing Marginal Employees: The Use of Warnings and Dismissals</i>	445
	Charles A. O'Reilly III and Barton A. Weitz	
10	Job Design and Quality of Work	459
	<i>Work Design</i>	467
	J. Richard Hackman	
	<i>How Volvo Adapts Work to People</i>	493
	Pehr G. Gyllenhammar	
	<i>Creating High-Involvement Work Organizations</i>	504
	Edward E. Lawler III	
	<i>From Control to Commitment in the Workplace</i>	516
	Richard E. Walton	
11	Motivation in Other Contexts	529
	<i>Factors Affecting the Context for Motivation in Public Organizations</i>	531
	James L. Perry and Lyman W. Porter	
	<i>Making Sense of Volunteer Motivation: The Sufficiency of Justification Hypothesis</i>	545
	Jone L. Pearce	
	<i>Does Japanese Management Style Have a Message for American Managers?</i>	554
	Edgar H. Schein	

PART FOUR MOTIVATION THEORY IN PERSPECTIVE

12	Work and Motivation: Some Concluding Observations	575
	The Meaning of Work	575
	Importance of Motivation in Work Behavior	577
	Review of Major Theories	579
	Implications for Management	581
	INDEXES	585
	Subject Index	
	Name Index	

PART ONE

INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

THE ROLE OF MOTIVATION IN ORGANIZATIONS

The topic of motivation at work has received considerable and sustained attention in recent years among both practicing managers and organizational researchers. One has only to ask first-level supervisors what their most taxing work problems are for evidence of the importance of the concept to management. Likewise, one can observe the large number of empirical articles relating to the topic in psychological and management journals for evidence of its importance to researchers. Several factors appear to account for the prominence of this topic as a focal point of interest.

To begin with, managers and organizational researchers cannot avoid a concern with the *behavioral* requirements of an organization. In addition to the necessity to acquire financial and physical resources, every organization needs people in order to function. More specifically, Katz and Kahn (1966) have posited that organizations have three behavioral requirements in this regard: (1) people must be attracted not only to join the organization but also to remain in it; (2) people must perform the tasks for which they are hired, and must do so in a dependable manner; and (3) people must go beyond this dependable role performance and engage in some form of creative, spontaneous, and innovative behavior at work (Katz, 1964; Katz & Kahn, 1966). In other words, for an organization to be effective, according to this reasoning, it must come to grips with the motivational problems of stimulating both the decision to participate and the decision to produce at work (March & Simon, 1958).

A second and related reason behind the attention directed toward motivation centers around the pervasive nature of the concept itself. Motivation as a concept represents a highly complex phenomenon that affects, and is affected by, a multitude of factors in the organizational milieu. A comprehensive understanding of the way in which organizations function requires that at least some attention be di-

rected toward the question of why people behave as they do on the job (that is, the determinants of employee work behavior *and* the ramifications of such behavior for an organization). An understanding of the topic of motivation is thus essential in order to comprehend more fully the effects of variations in other factors (such as leadership style, job redesign, and salary systems) as they relate to performance, satisfaction, and so forth.

Third, given the ever-tightening constraints placed on organizations by governmental regulations, increased foreign and domestic competition, citizens' lobbies, and the like, management has had to look for new mechanisms to increase—and in some cases just to maintain—its level of organizational effectiveness and efficiency. Much of the “slack” that organizations could depend upon in the past has disappeared in the face of these new environmental types of constraints. Because of this, management must ensure that it is deriving full potential benefit from those resources—including human resources—that it does have at its disposal. Thus, organizational effectiveness becomes to some degree a question of management's ability to motivate its employees to direct at least a reasonable effort toward the goals of the organization.

A fourth reason can be found in the nature of present and future technology required for production. As technology increases in complexity, machines tend to become necessary *yet insufficient* vehicles of effective and efficient operations. Modern technology can no longer be considered synonymous with the term “automation.” Consider the example of the highly technologically based aerospace programs in the United States. While mastery of the technological aspects of engineering is a prerequisite for developing complex projects, a second and equally important ingredient is the ability of organizations to bring together thousands of employees, who often must work at peak capacity to *apply* the technology required for success. In other words, it becomes necessary for an organization to ensure that it has employees who are both capable of using and willing to use the advanced technology to achieve organizational objectives.

Finally, while organizations have for some time viewed their financial and physical resources from a long-term perspective, only recently have they begun seriously to apply this same perspective to their human resources. Many organizations are now beginning to pay increasing attention to developing their employees as future resources (a “talent bank”) upon which they can draw as they grow and develop. Evidence for such concern can be seen in the recent growth of management and organization development programs, in the increased popularity of “assessment center” appraisals, in recent attention to personnel planning, and in the emergence of “human resource accounting” systems. More concern is being directed, in addition, toward stimulating employees to enlarge their job skills (through training, job design, job rotation, and so on) at both the blue-collar and the white-collar levels in an effort to ensure a continual reservoir of well-trained and highly motivated people.

In summary, then, there appear to be several reasons why the topic of motivation has been receiving increased attention by both those who study organizations and those who manage them. The old simplistic, prescriptive guidelines concern-

ing “economic man” are simply no longer sufficient as a basis for understanding human behavior at work. New approaches and greater understanding are called for to deal with the complexities of contemporary organizations.

Toward this end, this book will attempt to assist the serious student of motivation to obtain a more comprehensive and empirically based knowledge of motivation at work. This will be done through a combination of explanatory text and readings on current theories, research, and applications in the field. Before discussing some of the more current approaches to motivation, however, some consideration is in order concerning the nature of basic motivational processes. This consideration is followed by a brief history of early psychological and managerial approaches to the topic. Finally, a conceptual framework is presented to aid in the comprehension and evaluation of the various theories and models that follow. Throughout this book, emphasis is placed on the comparative approach; that is, we are primarily concerned with similarities among—and differences between—the various theories and models rather than with the presentation and defense of one particular theory. Moreover, because of the pervasive nature of the topic, we feel that the concept of motivation can best be understood only by considering its role as it affects—and is affected by—other important variables which constitute the work environment. Thus, special emphasis is placed throughout on the study of *relationships* between major variables (for example, motivation as it relates to reward systems, group influences, and job design) rather than on the simple enumeration of facts or theories.

THE NATURE OF MOTIVATION

The term “motivation” was originally derived from the Latin word *movere*, which means “to move.” However, this one word is obviously an inadequate definition for our purposes here. What is needed is a description which sufficiently covers the various aspects inherent in the process by which human behavior is activated. A brief selection of representative definitions indicates how the term has been used:

. . . the contemporary (immediate) influences on the direction, vigor, and persistence of action. (Atkinson, 1964)

. . . how behavior gets started, is energized, is sustained, is directed, is stopped, and what kind of subjective reaction is present in the organism while all this is going on. (Jones, 1955)

. . . a process governing choices made by persons or lower organisms among alternative forms of voluntary activity. (Vroom, 1964)

. . . motivation has to do with a set of independent/dependent variable relationships that explain the direction, amplitude, and persistence of an individual’s behavior, holding constant the effects of aptitude, skill, and understanding of the task, and the constraints operating in the environment. (Campbell & Pritchard, 1976)

These definitions appear generally to have three common denominators which may be said to characterize the phenomenon of motivation. That is, when we discuss motivation, we are primarily concerned with: (1) what energizes human

behavior; (2) what directs or channels such behavior; and (3) how this behavior is maintained or sustained. Each of these three components represents an important factor in our understanding of human behavior at work. First, this conceptualization points to energetic forces within individuals that *drive* them to behave in certain ways and to environmental forces that often trigger these drives. Second, there is the notion of goal orientation on the part of individuals; their behavior is directed *toward* something. Third, this way of viewing motivation contains a *systems orientation*; that is, it considers those forces in the individuals and in their surrounding environments that feed back to the individuals either to reinforce the intensity of their drive and the direction of their energy or to dissuade them from their course of action and redirect their efforts. These three components of motivation appear again and again in the theories and research that follow.

THE MOTIVATIONAL PROCESS: BASIC CONSIDERATIONS

Building upon this definition, we can now diagram a *general* model of the motivational process. While such a model is an oversimplification of far more complex relationships, it should serve here to represent schematically the major sets of variables involved in the process. Later, we can add to this model to depict how additional factors may affect human behavior at work.

The basic building blocks of a generalized model of motivation are (1) needs or expectations, (2) behavior, (3) goals, and (4) some form of feedback. The interaction of these variables is shown in Exhibit 1. Basically, this model posits that individuals possess in varying strengths a multitude of needs, desires, and expectations. For example, they may have a high need for affiliation, a strong desire for additional income, or an expectation that increased effort on the job would lead to a promotion. These “activators” are generally characterized by two phenomena. First, the emergence of such a need, desire, or expectation generally creates a state of disequilibrium within the individuals which they will try to reduce; hence, the energetic component of our definition above. Second, the presence of such needs, desires, or expectations is generally associated with an anticipation or belief that certain actions will lead to the reduction of this disequilibrium; hence, the goal-orientation component of our definition.

In theory, the following is presumed to be the chain of events: On the basis of some combination of this desire to reduce the internal state of disequilibrium and the anticipation or belief that certain actions should serve this purpose,

EXHIBIT 1
A generalized model of the basic motivation process. (After Dunnette & Kirchner, 1965.)

