Motivation and Productivity

MOTIVATION

AND

PRODUCTIVITY

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American Management Association, Inc.

Seventh Printing

For
Henry and Peter
and their generation

Author's Preface

ACTION IS THE BEGINNING OF EVERYTHING. IN BUSINESS AS in every other human activity, nothing of any consequence happens until an individual wants to act. What he accomplishes depends to a considerable extent on how much, and on why, he wants to act. That much is obvious; beyond that point the nature of human motivation becomes complex and subtle.

All men have purposes, and these purposes affect the way they work. This is why there has been such a growing volume of research by social scientists on the motives of people at work. This research has motives of its own: It began with a wave of humanitarianism in industry in the late 1920's; since World War II it has been spurred by an interest in increasing productivity; and more recently the field has attracted students who consider companies and organizations as worthy objects of study in their own right.

This book has three main purposes: to draw together the most significant achievements in the study of work motivation; to present a theory that puts most of this research into a single, understandable perspective; and to show the practical implications of all this research and theory for management policy. In presenting the viewpoint of other writers, I have tried to state their ideas as authentically and sympathetically as possible, even though I may not always agree with them, and above all I have tried to express their ideas, which were often addressed in their original form to a professional audience, in terms that laymen could readily understand.

There is so much research in motivation that any attempt to be encyclopedic would easily have stretched this book into several long, probably boring, volumes. It has been necessary to pick and choose among many valuable studies to determine which should have a place in this book, and I have often had to make an omission regretfully. The selected materials represent, in my best judgment, either "older" studies (ten years old or more) that have lasting significance or recent material that makes an important contribution to the understanding of work motivation.

Ever since Hawthorne, researchers and theorists have been tracing the many ways in which workers are affected by their managers. There is no longer much doubt that an individual worker's motivation, or lack of it, is at least partially the result of the actions or attitudes of the people who direct his work. It is also clear that his motivation is affected by attitudes and actions of his own, many of which have roots that reach far back into his pre-employment history and even, in some cases, into his childhood. It is the continuing interplay of the motivating environment, which is largely a matter of how an enterprise is managed, with the personal motivations of the individual that produces his long-term motivational trends as well as his momentary ups and downs.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part deals with motivation from the standpoint of the environment, that is, the various kinds of rewards and pressures within which people operate at work. Most studies in this field are concerned specifically with industry and are therefore fairly well known in the literature of management. The second part considers motivation from the standpoint of the individual himself: his needs and purposes and how he acquires them. Most of the studies in this field were done by psychologists who were not primarily concerned with industrial applications, and therefore they may not be well known in management circles even though their implications are very important. In the third part I attempt to show how the environment and the individual interact and, more than that, how most of the studies considered in parts one and two can be integrated by a set of linked ideas that accommodates most of what is presently understood about work motivation. In the final chapters a number of major managerial problems are analyzed in the light of this theory: leadership, recruitment, morale, organizational change, and labor unions.

Since so much of this book represents the work and ideas of other men, it is difficult to single out those to whom I am most indebted. Many of the leading students of work motivation are mentioned in the text. However, I particularly want to thank Chris Argyris, Alan McLean, and David McClelland, all of whom read sections of the manuscript and offered helpful comments. I would also like to thank the editors of the American Management Association, who first perceived the need for the book and then waited patiently for two and one-half long years while it turned, in my hands, from an interesting little project into a labor of love.

In a book that draws so largely on other men's work, it is perhaps fitting that the preface be concluded by another man, too. Robert L. Kahn of the University of Michigan has written a succinct statement of what the professional psychologist owes to management, and it is also a fair summary of what I have tried to accomplish here. The psychologist, according to Kahn,[1]*

> Can help management avoid the dismal sequence of oversold devices, unrealistic expectations, and undiscriminating disillusionment. He can offer the assistance of what research has already learned, and the realistic comfort of knowing when decisions must still be based on managerial intuition.

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* All references in brackets are listed in the Notes to the Text, which appear at the end of the book.

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PART I

The Motivating Environment

Introduction to Part I

During the past quarter-century most theories about the motivation of workers have been dominated by what is loosely called the human relations viewpoint. It is today's best-known, most widely practiced and malpracticed theory of why workers behave as they do and how they ought to be treated by management. Like many another popularized concept, this one has been grossly oversimplified and is far better known in various watered-down versions than in its authentic form. The gospel has been spread far and wide, but it usually bears little resemblance to the complex, still-evolving set of ideas that began the process.

Contemporary human relations *practice,* as distinguished from the theory, is suffering from a bad case of superficiality. It probably deserves much of the barbed comment that has been heaped upon it by professional iconoclasts in the business press and by some hard-shelled managers who feel that any form of "coddling" workers is a serious mistake.

On the other hand, human relations *theory* has respectable scientific underpinnings and important implications for both management and society. Homilies and gimmicks notwithstanding, there is no easy way to apply it; in fact it has yet to be demonstrated that it can be practiced on a wide scale at all. But there is ample evidence that it *ought* to be applied as widely as possible. The first essential step in this direction is to acquire an understanding of what the theory is all about; beyond that its applications will depend largely on the manager's ingenuity and his tolerance for change.

The best way to understand human relations theory is to trace its development from the moral climate which made its emergence inevitable, through the classical studies on which it is based, to its present exponents and condition. This is what the first part of this book will attempt to do.

That a theory could have gotten such a hold as this one has on the thinking of American management, even if in a diluted form, is evidence enough that it touches a very responsive chord. In retrospect, it is not at all surprising that the human relations idea caught on as quickly as it did. In fact, given the conditions of the American industrial scene prior to the 1930's, it is a fairly safe bet that something like human relations theory would have become popular even if there had been no Hawthorne experiments to launch it.

It was the strong streak of moralism in American culture—the same force that inspired the abolitionists and the muckrakers—that effectively set the stage for the emergence of human relations theory. America seems to have bred its full share of men who find it hard to be indifferent to their consciences. Despite a fashionable cynicism in some quarters, a strong sense of what is right and wrong continues to exert a powerful influence in our business, political, and cultural lives. Many a once-powerful man has learned the hard way that it is wiser to stay within the bounds of common morality than to give the public an appetite for reform.

Reform movements have swept through industrialized America repeatedly. They have, in fact, done as much to mold today's industrial scene as have compulsory education, technological changes, and the free enterprise system itself. They set the tone of eras in which generation after generation of managers grew up, were educated, and then forged their own ideas in the long course of experience. Gradually, American moralism began producing generations of managers who could hardly avoid bringing a social conscience to their work, because it had been woven into their personalities by the environment in which they were raised. These men, through their own inbred sympathies and predilections, were to stamp American industry with its own unique hallmark of enterprise blended with compassion.

Just how sweeping this "capitalist revolution" has been could be argued endlessly. From the perspective of history, at least, we have come a long way since the era of sweatshops and goon squads, and today American capitalism frequently prides itself on its skill in creating viable employee relations. On the other hand, there remains a stubbornly proletarian spirit among many American workers which questions the sincerity with which every benefit is offered and holds that no concessions have been forthcoming from management that