

# UNDERSTANDING HERZBERG'S MOTIVATION THEORY

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Understanding what motivates people in all walks of life is basic to all who aspire to management. One of the best known of all the writers on motivation is Herzberg. He is noted for – among other things – his ideas on job enrichment, enlargement and rotation. However, his ideas on motivation in the hygiene-motivation theory are particularly useful to our understanding of what motivates people.

This is particularly relevant as the original research was undertaken not in the factory, but in the offices of engineers and accountants.

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## CONTENT THEORIES OF MOTIVATION

Herzberg's motivation theory is one of the content theories of motivation. These attempt to explain the factors that motivate individuals through identifying and satisfying their individual needs, desires and the aims pursued to satisfy these desires.

This theory of motivation is known as a two factor content theory. It is based upon the deceptively simple idea that motivation can be dichotomised into hygiene factors and motivation factors and is often referred to as a 'two need system'.

These two separate 'needs' are the need to avoid unpleasantness and discomfort and, at the other end of the motivational scale, the need for personal development. A shortage of the factors that positively encourage employees (the motivating factors) will cause employees to focus on other, non-job related 'hygiene' factors.

The most important part of this theory of motivation is that the main motivating factors are not in the environment but in the intrinsic value and satisfaction gained from the job itself. It follows therefore that to motivate an individual, a job itself must be challenging, have scope for enrichment and be of interest to the jobholder. Motivators (sometimes called 'satisfiers') are those factors directly concerned with the satisfaction gained from a job, such as:

- the sense of achievement and the intrinsic value obtained from the job itself
- the level of recognition by both colleagues and management
- the level of responsibility
- opportunities for advancement and
- the status provided

Motivators lead to satisfaction because of the need for growth and a sense of self-achievement.

A lack of motivators leads to over-concentration on hygiene factors, which are those negative factors which can be seen and therefore form the basis of complaint and concern. Hygiene factors (often referred to as maintenance factors) lead to dissatisfaction with a job because of the need to avoid unpleasantness.

They are referred to as hygiene factors because they can be avoided or prevented by the use of 'hygienic' methods. The important fact to remember is that attention to these hygiene factors prevents dissatisfaction but does not necessarily provide positive motivation.

Hygiene factors are also often referred to as 'dissatisfiers'. They are concerned with factors associated with the job itself but are not directly a part of it. Typically, this is salary, although other factors which will often act as dissatisfiers include:

- perceived differences with others
- job security
- working conditions
- the quality of management
- organisational policy
- administration
- interpersonal relations

Understanding Herzberg's theory recognises the intrinsic satisfaction that can be obtained from the work itself. It draws attention to job design and makes managers aware that problems of motivation may not necessarily be directly associated with the work. Problems can often be external to the job.

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## IMPROVED MOTIVATION

Managers' understanding that factors which demotivate can often be related to matters other than the work itself, can lead to improved motivation, greater job satisfaction and improved organisational performance by the entire workforce.

Understanding individual goals, coupled with wider skills and abilities, can lead to greater opportunities. Individuals are seen as valuable to organisations and can acquire new skills useful in the future.

Improving skills, opportunities and increasing employee knowledge will, in the longer term, increase the value of an organisation's human assets. Most importantly, it can lead to greater staff commitment, understanding and loyalty.

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