

A MODEL OF SIX-STEP PROCESS OF EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION

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ABSTRACT

The motivation process is based on the motivational system that encompasses many generic causal variables (primary/secondary, internal/external, intrinsic/extrinsic, qualitative/ quantitative, measurable/non-measurable, etc.). Given their possible clustering, we develop an outline of a model of employee motivation to reveal clear differences between motivation, satisfaction before triggering, involvement, performance and satisfaction (fulfillment). In this context, we try to find as many answers to these questions: What are the components of the direct and continuous motivational system's impact on work? Will a motivated employee always get maximum performance? Is satisfaction always perceived by all the motivated employees? Will the motivated, satisfied and engaged at work employees always have superior performance?

From our point of view, the answers to the last three questions are actually some disclaimers: there are no elements of motivation, which alone have a direct and continuous impact on performance (even though most managers consider that a motivated staff keeps the company competitive); there is no guarantee that all motivated employees always perceive satisfaction; it is not guaranteed that motivated, satisfied and committed employees will always get superior performance. In this article we will try to argue these points of view.

KEYWORDS: involvement, motivation, satisfaction, self-motivation, work performance.

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1. INTRODUCTION

When it comes to motivation, managers take various actions and invest significant amounts of time, energy and money in improving the employees' labor performance. We believe, however, that some practitioners focus on identifying and satisfying the employees' needs alone (of physiological, material, social, professional, moral, spiritual, cognitive nature, etc.), ignoring the fact the efficiency and effectiveness of a motivational process are influenced by other constituents of the motivational system, also.

It is our duty to point out from the very start that a clear line should be drawn between the motivational system and the process of motivation (although simultaneous and complementary), starting from the assumptions below (Popa & Salanță, 2012):

1. Motivation is considered to be the process through which an employee is able to gain superior work performance as a consequence of going through the following phases: motivation, satisfaction, self motivation, work involvement;
2. The motivational system is an ensemble of very diverse components that include a multitude of interconnected physical, mental and moral (spiritual) variables, which influence the process of motivation.

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Causal models of most variables have been researched over the years by many researchers. By reviewing specialist literature, we were able to notice that the constituents that influence the labor performance motivation process are highly complex and varied. They can be even classified in a way that sheds light on the direct and/or indirect influences on labor performance.

The earliest approaches to motivation research (beginning of the 20th century) were developed by psychoanalysts and behaviorists working in the field of organizational psychology. However, as Zlate (2006) points out, psychologists are yet to agree on a variety of basic relevant issues, such as the definition of motivation itself, its particularities and its role in explaining behavior.

There are virtually hundreds of definitions of motivation in specialist literature and most of them converge to a representation as a complex of *forces that determine behavior* (forces that trigger an effort and determine its orientation, level/amount and persistence). For now, we will ignore the characteristics of the efforts and consider the triggering forces only.

Referring to the performance attributes, Mitchell (1982) believes that the relationship motivation - performance is irrelevant, because some factors such as industrialization and the skills of employees have a decisive impact on work outcome. To support his point of view, the author highlights four major factors: the role expectations (knowing what to do), the required skills to perform the task, motivation, environment, allowing implementation of intentions into action, as the actual behavior.

The evolution of the correlation between satisfaction and labor performance came under Latham's scrutiny (2007), who identified several key moments / periods, listed below (in Buzea, 2010):

- Thorndike's study (1917) that revealed that the pace and quality of work remain constant even if work satisfaction declines.
- 1925 – 1950, when measuring work attitudes was regarded as a key to discovering work motivation; satisfaction became the most frequently measured attitude.
- 1950 – 1975, when further research revealed that there is no, or very little, statistical correlation between satisfaction and performance. The most frequently quoted research papers belong to Brayfield & Crockett (1955) and Vroom (1964).
- Lawler and Porter's proposition (1967) that performance leads to satisfaction and not the other way around. The two authors have developed the expectation theory and argued that there is a reverse correlation between satisfaction and performance: if people improve their performance, the satisfaction they can expect will be greater, also. To put it plainly: people love to do things that they are good at.
- Significant developments in 1975 – 2000 include the cognitive social theory, developed by Bandura (1989), and the goal setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990). According to the former theory, people experience a sense of satisfaction when a valued level of performance is reached; according to the latter theoretical model, satisfaction is the outcome of reaching the valued targets.
- More recent studies show a stronger correlation between the two variables, when the measurement of global performance is replaced with more specific facets of performance: commitment towards the organization, citizenship behavior within organizations, etc.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The authors' contribution to this article consists in classifying the causal variables in a way that makes their complexity, dynamism and importance more conspicuous. Therefore, as henceforth shown, the constituents of the motivational system will be clustered starting from the idea that the individual motivation process can be divided into six stages (see Figure 1), as listed below: (1) motivation; (2) satisfaction (before triggering behavior), (3) self-motivation, (4) involvement, (5) performance and (6) satisfaction (fulfillment). This group is not exhaustive and was devised only to highlight some features of the motivation process phases, and makes no claim to be a clear, complete and complex approach.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The most relevant components of the motivational system that influence the process of motivation are illustrated in Figure 1. The responsibility for the improvement of performance lies not with the working employee alone. Even if an employee is able to cover this complex of needs, wants, reasons, etc. through work, the company must provide all the needed facilities and organizational support to help him successfully perform all his daily tasks in order to keep him satisfied at his workplace. Furthermore, managers have to be constantly concerned about striking a fair balance between what the employee gives (for example, time, effort, abilities, knowledge, skills, devotion to work, etc.) and what the employee receives (for example, money, recognition, respect, training programs, career plans, etc.).

In the context of our model, *satisfaction* occurs in the 2nd and 6th phase, albeit with different meanings; namely a satisfaction perceived before triggering the relevant behavior (work) in the second phase and a satisfaction derived from the gratification of needs as a consequence of achieving the predefined goals, in the sixth. Therefore, the employee's satisfaction is influenced, on one hand, by a set of personal variables (for example, beliefs, convictions, affects, emotions, feelings, experiences, reflection, judgment, perceptions, etc.) and by several issues pertaining to the workplace (working relations, variety and importance of work, reward systems, training programs, career plans, working hours, etc.), on the other.

We believe that the likelihood of optimal labor performance is higher if the employee is permanently involved, which depends on the employee's self-motivation capacity, i.e. his capacity to realize and appropriate the following variables: will, intentions, desires, aspirations for maximum performance, belief in the efficiency and effectiveness, cognitive engagement, excitement, etc.

An employee will be successfully *involved* in the completion of the daily tasks not only if he possesses some personal variables (for example, skills, abilities, knowledge, capability, competence, self confidence, experience, empowerment, active conduct, participatory activism, etc.), but also if the company will concern itself with constantly supporting and mobilizing him. Furthermore, proper consideration should be given to: relationship and trust building behavior, the complexity of tasks, employee autonomy, performance standards for employees, support strategies, action guiding techniques and tools, collective mobilization by managers, colleagues, subordinates, etc.

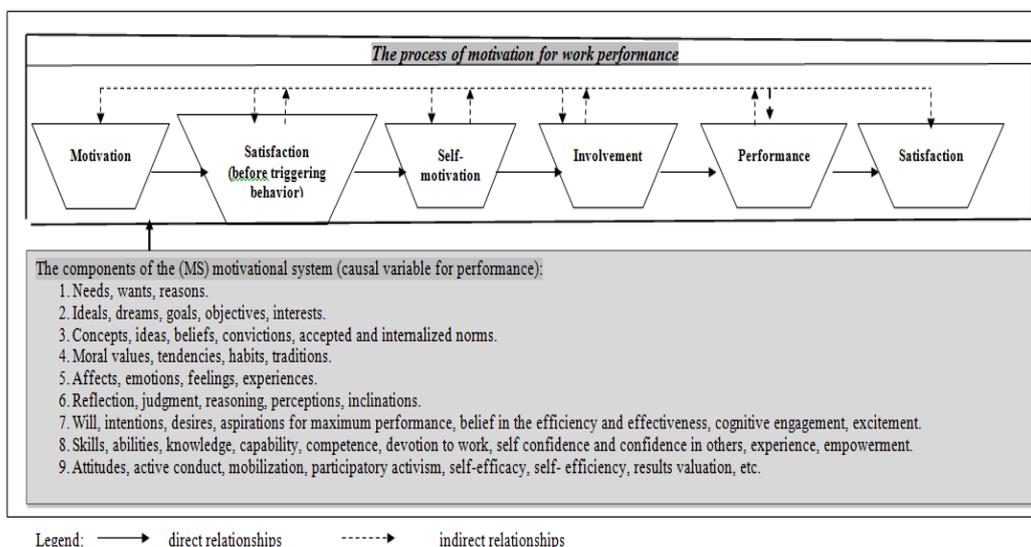


Figure 1. The process of motivation in six steps
 Source: adapted from Popa & Salanță (2012, p.97)

4.1. MOTIVATION

Motivation consists of an ensemble of *forces that determine behavior* (forces that trigger an effort and determine its orientation, level/amount and persistence). Therefore, human motivation includes a multitude of *causal behavior variables* (forces) that can be identified if one attempts to find the answer to the following question: Why a certain action is taken? Motivational system components that are most closely related to the onset of motivation are (the enumeration may not be complete): needs, wants, reasons, motives, ideals, dreams, goals, objectives, interests (see Figure 1). These components are, therefore, sources of motivation (respectively, sources of goal settings that may trigger behaviour). In Figure 1, motivation is regarded as the main source of effort (behavior) and a first step of the motivating processes.

Needs are constituents of motivation that signal a state of physiological, psychological or spiritual disequilibrium. They are experienced as distress, turmoil, enhanced inner alertness, tension. The concept of need traces the source of motivation back to the inner self of man.

In order to clearly discern between need and want, we hereby refer to Beck's opinion (2004) who believes that, although both concepts stem from deprivation, it is the want that energizes the behaviour (involves action), rather than the need. Needs and wants are correlated (although not always) and that's why both terms must be used in a distinct fashion (Beck, 2004).

Desire is want made aware. Starting from the premise that the self exists and that its development depends on the existence of others and on the consequent system of interactions with others, Leathers (1983) proposes an ontological and dialectical approach to motivation theory focused on the concept of desire: desire is considered to be the fundamental connection between self and others, between individual and social, between the conscious and the unconscious. Therefore, desires can be regarded as actual manifestations of human needs, shaped by the individual's personality, social status, cultural heritage and position within his / her economic, technological, political, cultural, legal and geographical environment.

To some, „motive” is the generic name of any constituent of motivation, being defined as a psychological phenomenon that triggers, directs and „fuels” activity. However, motives (the reasons to do „something”) can be regarded as wants of such potency, that they effectively determine and trigger actions that lead to their gratification. Therefore, the concept of „motive” will be understood as the underlying incentive of any particular behavior or action.

The difference between wants and motives is made evident by their different capacities to determine action. Thus, unlike wants, which do not always succeed in triggering action, motives are more likely to initiate and effectively carry out the required gratification-oriented behavior.

In Locke's view (2000), the term „motive” combines values and emotions, being the desire for a specific goal or value. Motives, values and/or targets determine action through three causal cycles (Locke, 2000):

- Adjusting the action's direction by concentrating one's attention and creativity on the valued purposes.
- Influencing the action's intensity according to the importance ascribed to the value in question.
- Influencing the persistence of actions, of prolonged efforts.

Speaking of the correlation between motivation and performance, it should be noted that specialist literature clearly states that performance does not coincide with motivation (Mitchell, 1982).

Levy-Leboyer (2001) shows that being motivated basically means having a goal, deciding to make an effort to reach it and persevering in this effort until the goal is reached (in Vagu & Stegăroiu, 2007). In this context, we believe that the decision to carry out an effort belongs to the employee who is satisfied (prior to the onset of behavior) by the balance between what he gives and what he receives from the organization and becomes aware of the necessity to get involved (i.e. he motivates himself) in order reach his own goals (gratification of needs). We are now going to touch upon the role of perceived satisfaction prior to the onset of effort.

4.2. SATISFACTION (before triggering behavior)

Terry & Franklin (1985) believe that motivation derives from the need or inner dynamism that determines an individual to act in a purpose-driven way and whose force depends on *the level of satisfaction as perceived / anticipated by the individual*, that can be attained if the target is reached (in Vagu & Stegăroiu, 2007). Thus, the employee expects to experience satisfaction (and therefore anticipates this positive/pleasurable state before starting the effort).

In our point of view, labor satisfaction can be regarded as the ultimate goal of the employee who prepares to make an effort. This pleasurable state (related to the gratification of needs) can be perceived not only after the expected level of performance is reached and due rewards are received in return, but also in the preliminary assessment of labor conditions and existing circumstances prior to the start-up of the required activities.

Upon first sight, we are inclined to believe that the causal variables that should be taken into account depend on each individual (inner, personal variables): concepts, ideas, beliefs, convictions, accepted and internalized norms, moral values, tendencies, habits, traditions, affects, emotions, feelings, experiences, reflection, judgment, reasoning, perceptions, inclinations, etc. (see Figure 1).

Most times our perceptions can be influenced by many factors. As shown Sikula (2009), a person filters and interprets stimuli using a learned set of values and assumptions, which may or may not prove objectively true, accurate and trustworthy. Moral managers must remain responsive to both reality and perceptions of reality.

Recognizing one's ethical roles at home or work and in society can help people to not become delusional with false hopes and dreams. Moving toward ethical excellence means to better recognize the differences between a perception of reality and the world as it actually is (Sikula, 2009).

Goldman (2010a) shows that the aim of belief is truth. Thus an irrational belief is one that flies in the face of known or available evidence, since evidence indicates truth. An irrational belief is defeating of its own aim in the way that it is acquired or persists. The aim of action is the fulfillment of the prioritized motivations that prompt the actions. We act in order to fulfill our concerns or motives in acting (Goldman 2010a).

4.3. SELF MOTIVATION

In order to support the introductory inferential logic within the motivation process of this particular phase (self-motivation), we will recall several definitions found in specialist literature: Mescon, Albert & Khedouri (1988) believe that motivation is the process of *self-determination* or determining others to perform an activity in order to achieve certain personal or organizational goals; for Roussel (1996), motivation is a process that involves the *will* to make efforts, to target and sustain one's energy to accomplish labor tasks and goals, on one hand, and to materialize this intention into actual behavior according to personal skills and capacities, on the other; for Mitchell (1982), motivation is *the degree to which an individual wants and chooses* to adopt a certain behavior (motivation is intentional in nature, i.e. it is controllable by man) (in Vagu and Stegăroiu, 2007). Vlăsceanu (2004) considers that motivation is an *individual decision process* by which people opt for the type of behavior that they are going to adopt in order to accomplish their goals.

In our view, self-motivation is influenced by the following variables: will, intentions, desires, aspirations for maximum performance, belief in the efficiency and effectiveness, cognitive engagement, excitement (see Figure 1).

Will is the aspiration of a human being to exert an effort, to accomplish a task and, of course, to gratify its needs.

Weakness of will is not best characterized as failure to do what one explicitly believes one ought to do, but as a failure, usually resulting from an irresistible urge, to act on the strongest reason one is aware of (Goldman, 2010b).

Our aspirations emerge in certain social, economical, professional, political, cultural, religious circumstances, etc., progressively setting in motion higher and more complex needs. Needs and

aspirations are therefore influenced by the economic, political, legal and value systems of the various segments of society.

4.4. INVOLVEMENT

In our view, the effort made by the employee in the course of his work that is most likely to ensure the accomplishment of performance can be analyzed and monitored in the phase involvement.

Involvement may be considered as an important phase of the motivation process, which supports the desired behavior and persistence in efficient actions. Involvement is more predictable in its effects than motivation and, thus, more manageable by the company whose best interest is to encourage and further it.

For instance, social and functional integration in the workplace milieu, acceptance of responsibilities, efficient communication, etc. is more or less influenced by the employee's level of involvement. In our view, the employee's involvement at his workplace can be highlighted by the following variables (see Figure 1): skills, abilities, knowledge, capability, competence, devotion to work, self confidence and confidence in others, experience, empowerment, attitudes, active conduct, mobilization, participatory activism, self-efficacy, self- efficiency, results valuation, etc.

If a company's manager wishes to have a more accurate understanding of the employees' degree of involvement, he may resort to permanent highly elaborated labor behavior assessment system. Furthermore, not only employee performance and involvement assessment systems have to be implemented within every organization, but also an efficient system for monitoring and assessing the employee's potential and capacity for improvement, as well as an employee comparison system (based on multiple facets of performance, personality and workplace conduit).

In spite of our recommendation concerning the assessment system, we fully endorse an opinion expressed by Sikula et al. (2001), namely: if this is the age of the "knowledge worker" - in which the application of employees' intelligence, imagination, and creativity increasingly will drive future gains in productivity - we clearly are heading in the wrong direction by placing emphasis on close supervision and continuous evaluation.

Skills and abilities involve functional, dynamic structures that comprise processes of very different nature, from perception and memory processes to thinking processes. The development of skills can take substantial advantages of pre-existing work habits, as they can be integrated and applied as operational elements in the structure of skills. Of course, a successful accomplishment of labor tasks does not rely solely on skills and abilities, but also on the amount of motivation and interest elicited by the tasks in question, on labor conditions, interpersonal relationships, etc.

In order to explain the fact that a motivated, satisfied and highly skilled / trained employee (with adequate skills and abilities) does not always equal performance, we must distinguish between human "*can-do*" versus "*will-do*". This is further evidence that supports the importance of the self-motivation phase that precedes the involvement phase.

Sikula et al. (2001) demonstrate the fact that attitudes are more important than abilities, showing that:

- A person can have a tremendous amount of energy and potential, but it is for naught unless it is directed and applied.
- *The can-do input* is often a physical asset; *the will-do factor* is a mental or spiritual state.
- Thoughts control actions more than vice versa.
- Human behavior is the product of ability (can-do) and attitude (will-do).
- Morals and ethics are part of the will-do attitude.
- Can-do is more important than will-do in explaining animal behavior. However, will-do is more important than can-do in explaining human behavior.

In our opinion, involvement in work is most related to performance and it can also be regarded as a strong source of motivation that supports the required behavior and the energy that drives it. Motivation may increase in time, with the increase of involvement and may also decrease when decreasing involvement (Meyer et al., 2004).

4.5. PERFORMANCE

In our point of view, high performance is directly or indirectly influenced by all the variables described above and several more, such as: identification with the organization, conviviality, physical and mental health and, last but not least, organizational culture, labor conditions, management strategies, etc. that are not under the employees' control.

Some specialist surveys have shown that when the intensity of motivation is excessive, performance tends to drop (we must consider the negative effect of overexertion in this context). It becomes obvious that work schedules and tasks have to be designed in a way that allows all employees to restore and preserve their physical and mental balance, so they can easily cope with their daily assignments.

Any effective manager knows that he must first of all act rationally and systematically to correctly manage all resources in order to maximize the effort / outcome ratio. We believe that a higher success rate in motivating human resources can be scored if the resources and attention will be targeted primarily towards highly valuable, self-motivated and involved employees. This does not imply that the behavior and performance of other employees he is responsible for will be ignored; it means that he will invest the bulk of the resources to make sure that the higher level performance that is likely to be achieved will allow for the recovery of the employee motivation investment, with the prospect of instituting an efficient organizational climate.

Moreover, we must keep in mind the most valuable employees (motivated, satisfied, engaged and with exceptional capabilities) which may be experience exhaustion due to excessive and prolonged labor, and may even be at risk in terms of health. Thus, having a moral behavior is to be viewed in relation with achieving better performance, without jeopardizing the employees' health. Therefore, one should be careful when setting performance standards for the employees, making sure they enjoy all the facilities and organizational support to successfully perform all their daily tasks (Popa & Salanță, 2012).

Obviously, the level of an employee's performance will determine the level of reward or penalty. The reward / penalty system applied by the organization, as well as the related strategies, may exert a significant influence on the degree of satisfaction.

4.6. SATISFACTION

If we regard labor satisfaction as an appreciation (subjective or objective), an assessment-like judgment concerning the relationship between effort, performance and rewards, on one hand, and the individual's needs, desires or expectation, on the other hand, it means that the perception of labor satisfaction involves both cognitive and emotional processes.

In order to measure labor satisfaction, the following factors have to be simultaneously considered:

1. Organizational variables (external to the individual): labor condition and variety, rewards, various benefits, relations between employees, workplace security, organizational communication, procedural justice, organizational climate, policy, organization management and procedures, etc.;
2. Job-related factors: the work itself, the importance and attractiveness of work, the assignments' level of complexity, the variety and autonomy of assignments, work schedules, work results, promotion possibilities, skill deployment opportunities, status;
3. Personal (inner) variables: personality traits, temperament, genetically-determined inclinations, the pleasure of performing an interesting work, etc.

The relationship between employee satisfaction and financial performance is likely to be indirect and this indirect relationship is likely to be mediated by customer satisfaction. The findings of Chi & Gursoy's study (2009) suggest that employee satisfaction is one of the significant determinants of customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction indirectly influence financial performance. As suggested by the service-profit chain, if employees feel that the company takes good care of them, they are, in return, likely to take time to provide better service to meet and/or exceed the customer's

expectations. While the findings suggest that customer satisfaction has a significant impact on financial performance, findings also suggest that employee satisfaction has no direct impact on financial performance because the relationship between employee satisfaction and financial performance is an indirect one, which is mediated by customer satisfaction (Chi & Gursoy, 2009).

5. CONCLUSIONS

The six phases of the model detailed in Figure 1 cannot be temporally dissociated, as they are complementary (and sometimes even simultaneous) (even some causal factors are temporally inseparable). This analysis has been performed only to easily perceive the multitude of cognitive processes and the role of personality traits in the cause – effect analysis of the relations between these phases.

Satisfaction (before or after triggering behavior) isn't always perceived by all employees motivated. Unfortunately, even if an employee is motivated, satisfied and sincerely willing to get involved at work (all components of motivational system considered so far are favorable), it is uncertain whether performance and efficiency are to be expected or not.

The motivational system components such as: attitudes, active behaviors, mobilization, participatory activism, self-efficacy, self-efficiency, results valuation, are the most closely linked with performance and they provide the answer to the question: "What effort must be made and what results (quantitative and qualitative) should be expected/valued?" These causal variables must be necessarily accompanied by support strategies to help guide the actions needed to feed its cognitive commitment to teach employees about strategies, techniques and tools they can relevantly use.

Motivation (alone) is not definitely a certain determinant of performance. We must take into account the degree to which an employee perceives satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) (before triggering work or after obtaining performance) with respect to work and daily tasks. Compared with motivation and satisfaction, involvement is the one that has direct links to performance.

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