

# Motivation in the Workplace

The focus of this workshop is twofold: 1) Identifying and understanding the factors that influence motivation on a day-to-day basis in the workplace; and 2) Providing sound and practical suggestions for leaders who are interested in developing a motivating work environment. You will also have the opportunity to take a self-assessment to determine your own motivational drivers and their congruence with your workplace.



UNIVERSITY OF  
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**ORGANIZATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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## Learning Objectives

At the end of this workshop, participants should be able to:

- Identify the major factors that influence workplace motivation
- Understand the theoretical framework for workplace motivation and how those theories vary
- Determine the motivational principles that are most relevant to your workplace
- Complete a motivational self-assessment and identify the factors that are most influential for your own motivation

## Which Motivational Theory Do You Ascribe to?

\_\_\_\_\_ The reward theory: provide incentives that draw people toward objectives.

\_\_\_\_\_ The fairness theory: treat people fairly in terms of compensation, benefits, and other factors, and motivation will sort itself out.

\_\_\_\_\_ The empowerment theory: give people wide latitude in making decisions and they will thrive.

\_\_\_\_\_ The carrot-and-stick theory: strike the appropriate balance between perks and consequences.

\_\_\_\_\_ The forget-about-it theory: I am already paying them well. They should motivate themselves.

\_\_\_\_\_ None of the above, or all of the above, or some of the above....I'm not really very sure.

Confusion abounds on this topic. Many sociologists, business leaders, organizational psychologists, and organizational experts have spent their careers trying to identify the key elements of motivation in the workplace. Some theories have stood the test of time, while others have flashed into our consciousness and faded away. What is a leader supposed to do to create a motivational work environment? Where does someone start?

How about with a story?

## A Motivation Story

*Read through the following scenario and answer the questions at the end.*

Ruth Anderson is a Program Coordinator in an academic department at a major university. Her primary duties include managing the application process for prospective graduate students into two master's degree programs, handling student issues related to their academic progress in these two programs, assisting faculty members with issues related to both programs, and she serves as the liaison with the Center for Teaching Services. In the latter role, she is responsible for ensuring a smooth transition of one of the programs to an online presence by monitoring progress for the online course development and keeping the faculty and Dean informed of any issues that may arise. Ruth has a lot of interest in the online course design area and she would like the opportunity to do more than just her monitoring duties.

Ruth generally enjoys her job. After graduating a little over a year ago from a college several hundred miles away with a degree in Instructional Design, she sought out a position in higher education that she thought would allow her to gain some critical experience. While her current position was not exactly what she was looking for, it did allow her to utilize some of her knowledge. In addition, she got along with most of her co-workers. They were mostly older than she is and had families, so they did not socialize outside of work much. Her concern was that the people in her office seem to be somewhat competitive with each other and she prefers a more collaborative and relaxed environment. The behavior in her group seemed to be in contrast to the online course designers. They seemed to really be a close group who readily shared knowledge with one another and several were friends outside of work.

Personally, things are a little more challenging for Ruth. Because she doesn't make a lot of money, and this town is more expensive than what she is accustomed to, she has a roommate with whom she shares expenses in a rental home. Their lifestyles sometimes clash and she would really like to get her own place, but because of her student loan obligations, she cannot afford to move out at this time. She has considered getting a part time job to supplement her income, but has been hesitant to do so because she figures that she would never be home to enjoy her free time if she had to work two jobs. Also, she would probably have to give up her work in a non-profit organization that she joined about six months ago. She really enjoys the people she has met there and has found that she has a lot in common with several of them. This group has become her "family" in town and she enjoys the sense of belonging.

Ruth has a good relationship with her supervisor, Sarah Sims. Sarah had given her an opportunity to get her foot in the door by hiring her even though she wasn't the prototypical job candidate. During the performance evaluation planning stage discussion they agreed upon some performance goals for the upcoming year. During the discussion, Sara commended Ruth for her past year's performance. She also told Ruth that if she could consistently meet the higher demands of her other job duties due to increased enrollment, she would allow her to spend more time with the instructional design staff (who worked under another supervisor) and become familiar with the online course design. Ruth was excited about this opportunity and was determined to meet these increased demands. She did not expect the higher volume to be

overwhelming. Besides, she had a good system worked out to handle the workload. In addition, she appreciated Sarah's recognition of her past performance and confidence in her ability to take on a greater challenge. Sarah had also mentioned that she might be able to convince the Dean to approve a performance pay increase for Ruth if things continued to go well. This was really good news for Ruth because it might help solve her living arrangements problem without her having to get another job.

About six months later Ruth and Sarah met for a status check of Ruth's performance. She had been able to keep up with the increased workload, although it was heavier than she had expected. Unfortunately, the increased workload had kept her from spending a lot of time with the online design team. She did not feel that she had learned much. She asked Sarah if she had any suggestions and Sarah said that everyone was overloaded right now, but she hoped that things would slow down a little bit soon and she told Ruth that more opportunities would come. After this meeting Ruth was determined to work harder to free up some time.

Eventually performance evaluation time rolled around again, and without question Ruth had exceeded the goals set for the year. She had dealt with the increased volume successfully and freed up a little time to learn more about the online course design. Unfortunately, there were only a couple of courses left in the program she coordinated that needed redesign and Ruth felt that her opportunity to be involved at a higher level was getting lost. Sarah agreed that it was unfortunate how things had worked out during the past year. However, Sarah also had some good news when they met. She had received an approval from the Dean to give Ruth a five percent pay increase.

Ruth was happy about the pay increase. Maybe now she could start looking for her own place to live. However, she was really disappointed in Sarah's reaction to her concerns about the lost opportunity to work with the online course design group. Ruth went into a little slump. Some days she was angry – not so much at her supervisor, but at her organization– for not investing in her growth. While she still liked the nature of her work, her enthusiasm was waning and her performance started to slide. She had also started to become more annoyed by the lack of teamwork displayed by some of her co-workers and really longed for a friendlier environment. She started looking around for a job in instructional design. But until she found something she'd have to make the best of where she was now.

Sarah was puzzled by the dip Ruth's performance and by the changes in her behavior. She had worked hard to get her that performance increase. She knew that Ruth was disappointed in her missed opportunity, but it wasn't Sarah's fault that the volume of work had exceeded expectations. She had asked Ruth what was bothering her, but had only received vague replies. About two months later, Ruth informed Sarah that she was planning on taking a position with the instructional design group that had come open. Ruth had not mentioned that she had applied and the job paid what Ruth had been making prior to her pay increase. Sarah, while disappointed, wished her well in the new position.

**Questions:**

1) What were some of Ruth's motivational factors?

2) What could Sarah have done differently in addressing Ruth's motivational factors?

3) What lessons are there for us in this scenario?

In the *Flexible Leadership* workshop we discuss two factors that influence someone's ability to perform tasks effectively. The first factor is **competence**, which refers to a person's knowledge, skills and experience with a task or responsibility. The second factor is **commitment** which refers to a person's interest, motivation and confidence in performing a task or responsibility. The combination of these two factors in a person as they relate to a particular task or assignment should guide us in determining which leadership style we should use for that person on that task. But how can we be sure what motivates a person?

## Five Motivational Theories in Brief

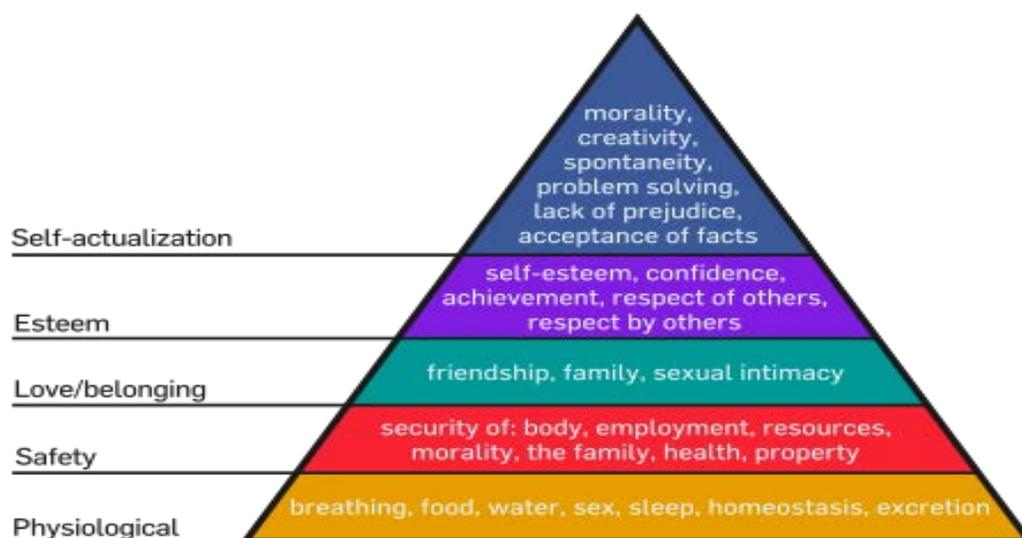
Each of the following theories, presented from the oldest to the newest provides us some insight to human motivation. Although none of them may completely satisfy us by themselves, each one provides a critical lens through which to look at how people and performance come together, or not, in the workplace. Let's try to apply these six theories to the story that we just read and discussed.

### 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a theory in psychology proposed by Abraham Maslow in his 1943 paper "A Theory of Human Motivation" in Psychological Review. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is often portrayed in the shape of a pyramid with the largest, most fundamental levels of needs at the bottom and the need for self-actualization at the top. While the pyramid has become the de facto way to represent the hierarchy, Maslow himself never used a pyramid to describe these levels in any of his writings on the subject.

The most fundamental and basic four layers of the pyramid contain what Maslow called "deficiency needs" or "d-needs": esteem, friendship and love, security, and physical needs. If these "deficiency needs" are not met – with the exception of the most fundamental (physiological) need – there may not be a physical indication, but the individual will feel anxious and tense. Maslow's theory suggests that the most basic level of needs must be met before the individual will strongly desire (or focus motivation upon) the secondary or higher level needs.

The human mind and brain are complex and have parallel processes running at the same time, thus many different motivations from various levels of Maslow's hierarchy can occur at the same time. Maslow acknowledged the likelihood that the different levels of motivation could occur at any time in the human mind, but he focused on identifying the basic types of motivation and the order in which they should be met.



## 2. Herzberg's Two Factor Theory

The two-factor theory (also known as Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory) states that there are certain factors in the workplace that cause job satisfaction, while a separate set of factors cause dissatisfaction. It was developed by psychologist Frederick Herzberg in 1959, who theorized that job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction act independently of each other.

Two-factor theory fundamentals: Attitudes and their connection with organizational mental health are related to Maslow's theory of motivation. His findings have had a considerable theoretical, as well as a practical, influence on attitudes toward management. According to Herzberg, individuals are not content with the satisfaction of lower-order needs at work; for example, those needs associated with minimum salary levels or safe and pleasant working conditions. Rather, individuals look for the gratification of higher-level psychological needs having to do with achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, and the nature of the work itself.

This appears to parallel Maslow's theory of a need hierarchy. However, Herzberg added a new dimension to this theory by proposing a two-factor model of motivation, based on the notion that the presence of one set of job characteristics or incentives leads to worker *satisfaction* at work, while another and separate set of job characteristics leads to *dissatisfaction* at work. As a result, satisfaction and dissatisfaction are not on a continuum with one increasing as the other diminishes, but are independent phenomena. This theory suggests that to improve job attitudes and productivity, administrators must recognize and attend to both sets of characteristics and not assume that an increase in satisfaction leads to decrease in dissatisfaction.



### 3. McClelland's Human Motivation Theory

Psychologist David McClelland also built on Maslow's work in his 1961 book, The Achieving Society. He identified three motivators that he believed we all have: a need for achievement, a need for affiliation, and a need for power. People will have different characteristics depending on their dominant motivator. According to McClelland, these motivators are learned (which is why this theory is sometimes called the Learned Needs Theory).

McClelland says that, regardless of our gender, culture, or age, we all have three motivating drivers, and one of these will be our dominant motivating driver. This dominant motivator is largely dependent on our culture and life experiences.

<b>Dominant Motivator</b>	<b>Characteristics of This Person</b>
Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Has a strong need to set and accomplish challenging goals.</li><li>• Takes calculated risks to accomplish their goals.</li><li>• Likes to receive regular feedback on their progress and achievements.</li><li>• Often likes to work alone.</li></ul>
Affiliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wants to belong to the group.</li><li>• Wants to be liked, and will often go along with whatever the rest of the group wants to do.</li><li>• Favors collaboration over competition.</li><li>• Doesn't like high risk or uncertainty.</li></ul>
Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wants to control and influence others.</li><li>• Likes to win arguments.</li><li>• Enjoys competition and winning.</li><li>• Enjoys status and recognition.</li></ul>

#### 4. Vroom's Expectancy Theory

In 1964, Vroom developed the Expectancy theory through his study of the motivations behind decision making. The Expectancy Theory of Motivation explains the behavioral process of why individuals choose one behavioral option over another. It also explains how they make decisions to achieve the end they value. Vroom introduces three variables within the expectancy theory which are valence (V), expectancy (E) and instrumentality (I).

Three components of Expectancy theory: **Expectancy, Instrumentality, and Valence**

**Expectancy: Effort → Performance (E→P)**

Expectancy is the belief that one's effort (E) will result in attainment of desired performance (P) goals. This is usually based on an individual's past experience, self-confidence (self-efficacy), and the perceived difficulty of the performance standard or goal. This will affect the individual's decision making process because they will ultimately choose behaviors that will ensure their desired goals. There are 3 components associated with the individual's Expectancy perception. They are self- efficacy, goal difficulty, and perceived control.

**Instrumentality: Performance → Outcome (P→O)**

Instrumentality is the belief that a person will receive a reward if the performance expectation is met. This reward may come in the form of a pay increase, promotion, recognition or sense of accomplishment. Instrumentality is low when the reward is the same for all performances given.

Factors associated with the individual's instrumentality for outcomes are trust, control and policies. If individuals trust their superiors, they are more likely to believe their leaders promises. When there is a lack of trust in leadership, people often attempt to control the reward system. When individuals believe they have some kind of control over how, when, and why rewards are distributed, Instrumentality tends to increase. Formalized written policies impact the individuals' instrumentality perceptions. Instrumentality is increased when formalized policies associate rewards to performance.

**Valence V(R)**

Valence is the value an individual places on the rewards of an outcome, which is based on their needs, goals, values and Sources of Motivation. Influential factors include one's values, needs, goals, preferences and sources that strengthen their motivation for a particular outcome.

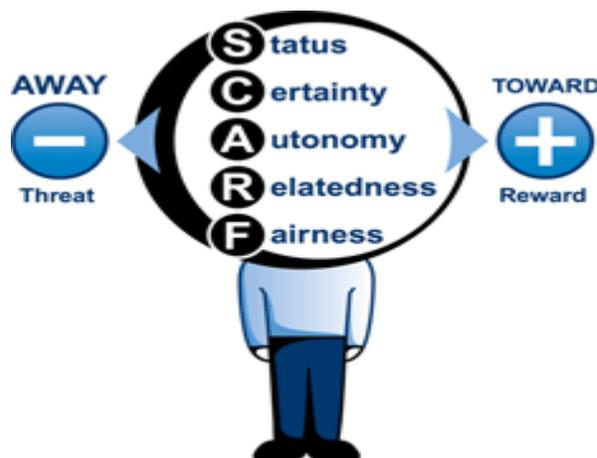
Valence is characterized by the extent to which a person values a given outcome or reward. This is not an actual level of satisfaction rather the expected satisfaction of a particular outcome.

## 5. SCARF

Dr. David Rock of the NeuroLeadership Institute, developed his new model of human motivation – SCARF – in 1996. Its foundation lies in neuroscience, the study of which has been accelerated in recent years by advances in technology such as the widespread use of MRI scans. SCARF is an acronym for:

Status  
Certainty  
Autonomy  
Relatedness  
Fairness

Dr. Rock's research shows these five factors as the constants in human motivation. When organizations and leaders get these factors right, they can lead to a state of high motivation. But when they get them wrong, they can be the root cause of demotivation. For each of the five factors organizations and leaders can create a 'reward state' that enhances motivation, often dramatically, whereas they can also create a 'threat state' that can have an even greater impact in demotivating employees.



**Status** – This relates to people's position in relation to others such as their peers, their colleagues, their manager, their friends and associates. It can be affected by public recognition, public criticism, job title, salary and softer factors like having an office versus having a cube, being invited to key meetings and so on.

**Certainty** – The more certainty people have the more the threat caused by uncertainty reduces. This is why managing change has been one of the most challenging skills that leaders have had to learn in the modern workplace. Change creates uncertainty and therefore, is perceived as a threat which in turn can lead to demotivation and a lack of productivity. It follows that the more certainty a leader can create for staff, the greater the reduction in people's threat levels that is caused by perceived uncertainty.

**Autonomy** – People generally find the freedom to make their own choices as motivational. The less control people have over their own destiny, the higher their level of demotivation. Even giving people control over how they plan their day or manage their workload can have a dramatic effect on motivation levels.

**Relatedness** – The quality of people’s interactions with others has a direct effect on their level of motivation. This can include someone’s relationship with their boss, with other team members, with other people within the organization and those within the supply chain as well as their social relationships.

**Fairness** – From an early age our sense of fairness is developed and honed. One just has to look at sibling rivalry to see this sense of fairness played out in the social world. At work, people’s sense of whether they are being treated fairly has a direct effect on their level of motivation. Moreover, if a staff member perceives they are being treated unfairly it is likely to have a significant demotivational impact.

An online test available at SCARF Solutions, offered by NeuroLeadership Group, that can be taken by individuals or teams. The output of the test provides a useful indicator as to which of the five factors are most and least relevant to each individual.

### Assessing Motivation during the Interview

Motivation ranks high as a desirable characteristic or attribute in the employees you hire. But, how do you spot true motivation during a job interview? Especially, what is an employer listening for as candidates answer their job interview questions about motivation?

The job interview questions you ask, and the interview question answers your candidate supplies, are crucial to your assessment of the candidate's knowledge, experience, and potential cultural fit within your organization. What are you trying to learn when you listen to your candidate's interview question answers about motivation?

When you consider the answers your candidates supply to questions about motivation, you are assessing several factors. You want to understand what motivates your candidate. You want to understand the work environment that he or she finds motivating. You want to determine whether your work environment and the coworkers you provide are consistent with your candidate's needs for motivation.

You are attempting to identify what motivates the individual you are interviewing. A candidate's innate motivation needs to match the job for which he is selected. For example, you don't want to hire a candidate who most enjoys working alone for your customer service position.

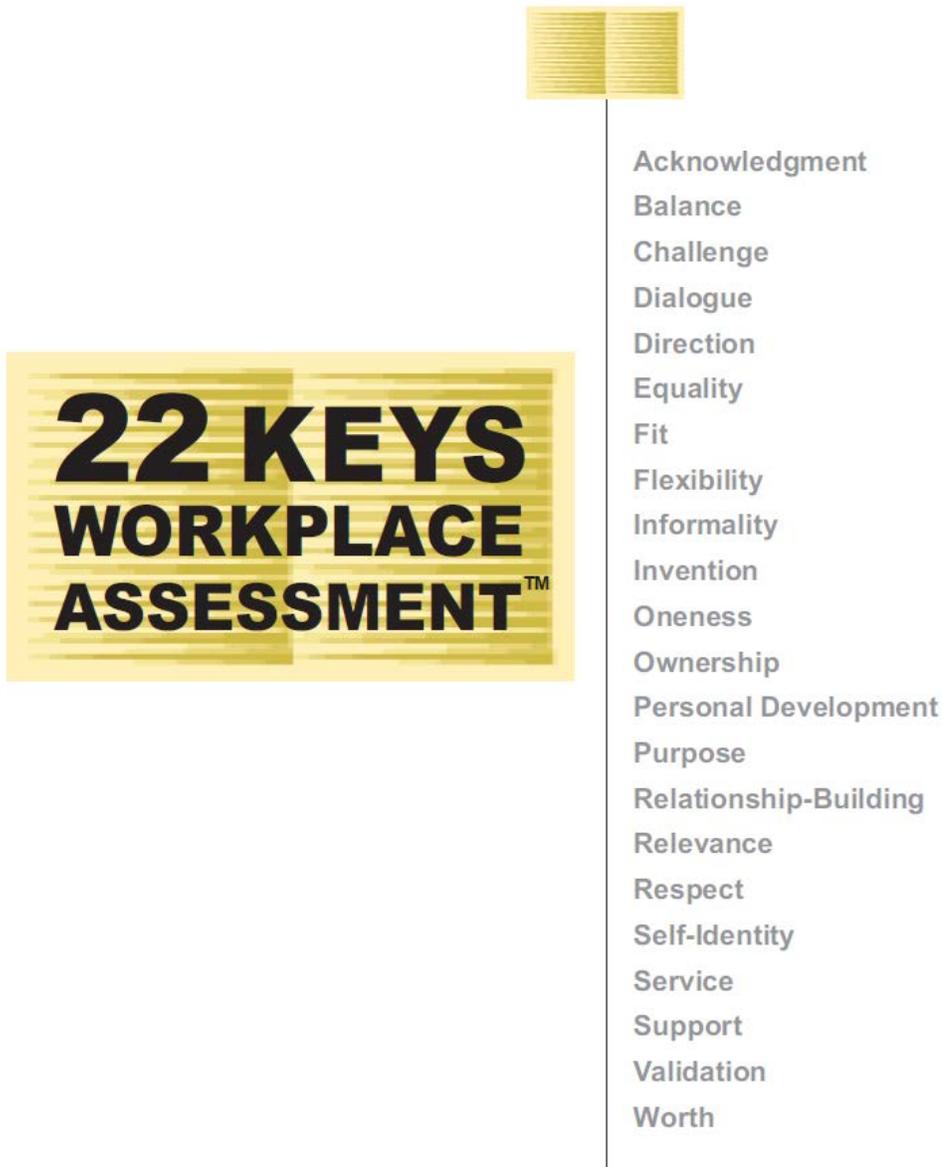
You are also obtaining a sense about whether work motivates your candidate. You want to select employees who are willing to bring to daily work that hard-to-define quality called discretionary energy, the willingness of an employee to invest his or her utmost in work.

### Some Questions You Can Use in Interviews

- Describe the work environment or culture in which you are most productive and happy.
- Imagine that you have received a coveted national award five years from now. Why did you receive the award, what is the award, and what are the circumstances under which you are receiving the award?
- What do you think motivates your co-workers?
- How would you define “success” for your career? At the end of your work life, what must have been present for you to feel as if you had a successful career?
- In your experience, what draws forth your discretionary energy and effort, that willingness each person has, to go the extra mile, push harder, spend more time, do whatever it takes to get the job done?
- What, in your experience, motivates your best, most successful performance? Can you give us an example of this motivation in action in the workplace?
- What role does your manager or supervisor play in your personal motivation at work?
- Describe the actions and behaviors of your manager or supervisor that you respond to most effectively?
- Tell me about your work history in terms of your motivations in moving from position to another and how those moves helped to put you in the position that you are in today?

### **Assessing Motivation on the Job**

While there is no perfect assessment for workplace motivation, the following instrument provides a simple, valuable tool for determining an individual’s key motivators.



Tom Terez breaks down these motivators into sub-groups that help us understand where they fit into the bigger picture: 1) Mission Keys (Purpose, Direction, Relevance, Validation), 2) People Keys (Respect, Equality, Informality, Flexibility, Ownership), 3) Community Keys (Dialogue, Relationship Building, Service, Acknowledgement, Oneness), 4) Me Keys (Self-Identity, Fit, Balance, Worth), and 5) Development Keys (Challenge, Invention, Support, Personal Development).

## **A Motivation Story (Revisited)**

Let's go back to where we started. Look over the story and consider the following things:

1. Could any of the issues Sarah encountered with Ruth have been avoided prior to hiring Ruth for this position? What would have been some useful questions to ask?

2. How might the 22 Keys, or some similar tool (like SCARF), have been useful? When could this have been used? In what context could it have been used?

3. How are things like effective goal-setting, rewards and recognition, and the overall work culture related to the application of these motivational concepts?