



Factsheet

Understanding Motivation

UNSOURCES: Daniel Pink's *Drive: The Suprising Truth About What Motivates Us* (2009) and Two-Factor Theory (aka Herzberg's Theory) published in 1959, by Herzberg, Mausner and Snyderman. The Two-Factor theory explains the different factors which motivate and demotivate. Herzberg discovered that the absence of some factors led us to feel demotivated, but their presence alone wasn't motivating; these he termed 'hygiene factors'. For example being paid less than your peers is likely to demotivate, but being paid fairly is unlikely to lead to high levels of motivation on its own.

He also identified a set of 'motivators' which make the difference between feeling satisfied and motivated. These are clearly linked to the self-actualisation needs in Maslow's model.

Demotivators ('hygiene factors')	Motivators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quality of supervision• Social activities• Rate of pay• Job security• Working conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feelings of achievement• Development• Interesting tasks• Recognition & feedback• Responsibility

Herzberg's model suggests two ways to improve motivation, as follows:

- 1) to eliminate those things which demotivate – unfair pay, poor working conditions, job insecurity, poor line-management and
- 2) to enable those factors which motivate – rewarding work, positive feedback, opportunities for development.

In his book *Drive*, Daniel Pink explores motivation further, drawing an important distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and de-bunking some common myths about motivating performance. Extrinsic motivation involves rewards and punishments, often known as 'carrot and stick'; whereas intrinsic motivation is about meeting needs and often about wanting to learn or improve how we do things; contribute to a purpose beyond ourselves and the need for freedom in how we work.

He presents research that suggests the traditional extrinsic ways of motivating people do not work in the majority of situations. Rewarding with money and public recognition – and punishing the behaviour we want less of - only works for the most mechanical of tasks. In fact, many studies have found that for situations and tasks where even the most basic creative thinking skills are required that rewards lead to worse results.

So what does motivate us? Pink identified 3 key intrinsic factors which, because they address innate psychological needs, can result in higher motivation and performance:

Purpose – a sense that what we do contributes to something bigger than us. Knowing how our role enables something that matters to us personally – whether that’s about providing great finance support to our colleagues or raising awareness of climate change. That doesn’t mean we can only feel motivated if our job is saving the world, but we need to understand why we are being asked to undertake a task and feel it is worthwhile. Consider how you feel if asked to do something you don’t think is worthwhile or you’re unsure why it needs to be done?

Autonomy – choice in how and when we undertake our work. So whilst the employer might specify the role or outcome desired, we have freedom in how we achieve this. Research shows that most people are willing to take a job that pays 10% less if they have flexibility about their working hours. And, on the other hand, think about how you feel when you are micro-managed – someone insists you do something in a very specific way, without allowing you any choice in how best to do it?

Mastery – getting better at what we do/ how we do it. We gain satisfaction from doing things to the best of our ability and the challenge of improving what we do builds motivation and better results. This is what is meant by ‘taking pride in doing a good job’. And conversely, imagine how it feels when you are so busy – or lack the tools/ resources - so that you can’t work to the standard you like to do things?

FURTHER RESOURCES:

Daniel Pink’s highly-readable book *Drive* includes summaries of the research and stories about motivation, as well as several exercises around improving your motivation. This short RSA animated [video](#) is a great introduction to the book and the ideas in it.

Herzberg’s work is based on Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs – info sheet available.