



Unit 9 Creating a Motivational Climate

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Create a motivational climate
- ✓ Design a motivating job

Unit 9

Creating a Motivational Climate

Behavioral (Reinforcement) Theory

A Focus on Feedback

We respond to praise and positive feedback, almost regardless of where it comes from or for what. Success is a very powerful force and it seems most of us can never get too much praise or too many compliments. We need to feel we are capable, competent people, and positive feedback provides this.

On the other hand, criticism and negative feedback takes the wind out of our sails. We feel less good about ourselves and lose interest in continuing what we are doing. Again, criticism is a very powerful force and even when it is not justified or when the person giving it is not in a position to criticize or judge us, we can still become de-motivated.

While this appears to be a case of external motivation or de-motivation, it really isn't. We decide whether to listen to the person's praise or criticism and how to react to it, although we are strongly conditioned to react almost automatically to praise and criticism.

Reinforcement doesn't only apply to external reward and punishment. If we tell ourselves that we are doing a good job, we reward ourselves and feel good. If we criticize ourselves (even when our performance is good), we tend to feel bad and become de-motivated.

Reinforcement Theory

Reinforcement theory (also called the **behavioral theory**) says that people do, and are motivated to do, what gets rewarded. We avoid doing, or become de-motivated, when we get punished for what we do.

How can you, as a supervisor, use this theory to provide a motivational climate in the workplace? By praising, giving positive feedback, congratulating people when they perform well. As Ken Blanchard puts it, catch people doing things right and praise them.

What are some other methods of rewarding people for good performance?

The Big Question

Should you, as a supervisor, praise mediocre work?

Generally, no, as you will reinforce mediocrity. However, when people are unwilling or unable to perform at a high standard, you should begin by praising progress. Set your expectations and standards low and then move them higher as the person's performance improves.

This is the same process that is described in Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard's Situational Leadership Model. In this model, support (which is viewed as positive) is increased and direction (which tends to be viewed more negatively) is decreased, as individuals or groups increased their task readiness (ability and willingness to accept responsibility for setting and achieving high performance targets).

Expectancy Theory

Expectancy theory was developed by Victor Vroom. It assumes that people, when faced with the need to make a decision about how to behave, will be influenced by the possible costs and benefits of each course of action. Individuals will select the course of action with the greatest perceived expected net (positive minus negative) outcomes.

Obviously, if you can get a person to change their perception of the value of a particular outcome or change their estimated likelihood of achieving an outcome, you would change their estimated utilities or expected net outcomes. If, for example, a person began to see more value in a promotion than they previously did, the attractiveness of that outcome (and therefore the motivational "pull" of that outcome) would increase. Perhaps the supervisor could point out some things about getting a promotion that the person had not considered. Likewise, if the supervisor could get the person to modify their expectation of receiving a promotion, they would change the person's level of motivation toward that outcome. Perhaps the person does not consider the likelihood very high of getting a promotion. If the supervisor can (honestly) convince the person that his/her chances are better than they think, the motivational pull will increase.

This theory tends to put things in a pretty simplistic light, and has sometimes been criticized. Even Vroom admits to the simplicity of his theory. However, it does give us a good platform for discussion, and even a debate about how some of the things we try can backfire. For example, if a person works hard to get a raise, but they know the raise will bump them into a higher tax bracket and they will actually take less pay home, then the money itself is not a motivator and the raise could actually be a demotivator.

McClelland's Needs Theory

David McClelland developed the theory that humans were motivated by three major needs (later expanded to four). These are:

- Need for Achievement: Desire to accomplish something worthwhile, need to set and achieve difficult but realistic goals
- Need for Power (Authority)
- Need for Affiliation: Feeling part of a group, being accepted by others.
- He later developed the notion that the Need to Avoid Failure also plays a major motivation role for some people.

How could you use McClelland's Needs Theory to create a positive motivational climate?

Applying Your Skills

Situational Analysis

Scenario One

The Acme Airlines Company was in big trouble. With a global recession going on, sales were down, and their largest airplane was frequently grounded for inspections and repair. Imagine the CEO's surprise when the company's employees joined forces, raised \$30 million, and bought the company a new plane.

What do you think motivated them to do this?

Scenario Two

The Acme Manufacturing Company has a line of exceptionally prepared organic baby food. One day a factory employee was shopping in the local supermarket and she came across a shelf full of jars of baby food from her factory, and all the labels were crooked. She bought all of the jars that the store had and took them to work with her the next day.

What do you think motivated her to do that?

Scenario Three

Up to about 1970, piecework was the most common form of payment in the Swedish engineering industry. But in the late 1960's companies came under a lot of pressure to adopt fixed-wage systems, mostly from people in politics and trade unions who felt that piecework was demeaning, undemocratic, and unnecessary when dealing with an educated, responsible workforce. A lot of companies did change. A study of 73 of these, carried out in late 1971, revealed that, on average, productivity had fallen 10-20% in the three months following the change from paid piecework to fixed salary.

Can you draw any conclusions about motivation from this?

Scenario Four

Car factories are the original and best known examples of production line work. People who work in them

stand beside a constantly moving track, repeating the same task over and over again. The pace of their work is dictated by the speed of the line. Suppose that everyone on the line was provided with a button which they could use, at their own discretion, to stop the track running.

What would you predict would happen? Would it motivate people? Would it affect productivity? Why?

Case Studies

Acme Widgets Company

You are high-paid consultants to the manager of the Acme Widgets Company. Drivers pick up widget shipments from the factory and deliver them to a shipping facility, where the appropriate paperwork is processed, and the packages are sent on conveyers to cargo loading docks, where they are routed for the appropriate flights. Each dock handles shipments for a particular destination. Because of the ease of handling, small shipments intended for the same destination fly at lower rates when shipped together in large, standard-sized boxes, called bulk cargo containers, rather than separately as many small packages. Thus, the Acme Widgets Company can reduce its freight costs considerably simply by making more use of bulk cargo containers on the loading docks.

Managers responsible for the shipping facility were under the impression that bulk containers already were being used most of the time. A study showed, however, the bulk containers are being used for only 45 percent of all possible such shipments.

The employees on the shipping dock seem indifferent about whether they use bulk containers or not. The amount of time and effort they have to expend is the same for either method. Relations between them and their supervisors are good.

How can the usage of bulk containers for small shipments be increased?

Acme Telephone Company

You are consultants to the district traffic manager of a telephone company. The traffic department is responsible for information service, long-distance calls, and certain customer inquiries. Most of your employees are operators, both directory assistance (information) and long distance. About 85 percent are women and most are in their late teens and early twenties.

Tardiness and absenteeism have been big problems in this district. As a result, the traffic manager has had to schedule 20 percent more operators than she needs for each shift in order to have fully staffed boards. The personnel costs caused by this overstaffing are unbearable, and action must be taken. If each operator would just show up for work each day, at the appointed time, personnel costs would drop back to their budgeted level.

Develop a plan that will motivate operators to come to work each day and to come on time.

Designing Motivating Jobs

Designing My Job

Think of a job that would meet your motivational needs. What are some characteristics of that job?

There are five key characteristics of motivating jobs.

Diversity

A motivating job challenges the employee by drawing on different skills and abilities. Not very many people want to do the same single task over and over again each day. Even basic jobs, like operating a cash register at a grocery store, have different components. (Think of all the different things that a grocery store cashier does: scanning items, doing math, providing customer service, and interacting with their teammates.)

Completion

Most people like the satisfaction of completing a project from start to finish. Even if some pieces are done by others, it's nice to see the final result of your hard work.

Importance

We all want to feel like our work matters to others and the organization. To make jobs motivating, show employees how their work counts.

Independence

Giving employees control over their work environment and processes can be very motivating. We've spoken to call center employees whose greatest complaint wasn't the stress, difficult customers, or high workload. Their biggest issue was that their washroom breaks were mandated down to the second.

Guidance

Earlier, we paraphrased a quote from Ken Blanchard: catch people doing things right and praise them. Constructive, consistent feedback is an essential motivational element for any job.

Techniques for Job Design or Redesign

List some specific techniques that you could use to incorporate the five key characteristics into a job.

Characteristic	Techniques
Diversity	



Completion	
Importance	
Independence	
Guidance	

A Motivational Checklist

What are the top ten things that you can do to help motivate your employees on a daily basis?

Personal Action Plan

I am already doing these things well:

I want to improve these areas:

I have these resources to help me:

As a result of what I have learned in this workshop, I am going to...	My target date is...	I will know I have succeeded when...	I will follow up with myself on...

Further Reading:

- ✓ Chandler, Steve. *100 Ways To Motivate Yourself (3rd Edition)*. Career Press, 2012.
- ✓ Chandler, Steve, and Scott Richardson. *100 Ways to Motivate Others (3rd Edition)*. Career Press, 2012.
- ✓ Covey, Stephen. *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. Free Press, 2004.
- ✓ Herzberg, Frederick. *One More Time: How Do You Motivate Employees?* Harvard Business Press, 2008.
- ✓ Hewlett, Sylvia Ann. *Top Talent: Keeping Performance Up When Business Is Down*. Harvard Business School Press, 2009.
- ✓ Marston, Cam. *Motivating the "What's In It For Me" Workforce: Manage Across the Generational Divide and Increase Profits*. Wiley, 2007.
- ✓ Pink, Daniel. *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*. Riverhead Books, 2009.