Plantation Leadership: A 19th Century Toolbox in the 21st Century

Jerry Dale Jones
Fayetteville State University,
Fayetteville, USA

Brian A. Phillips
Fayetteville State University,
Fayetteville, USA

Melissa Workman
West Virginia University,
Morgantown, USA

A review of studies from both education and industry on motivation reveals the importance of creating conditions that intrinsically and extrinsically motivate, and providing quality communication and clearly defined employee roles. It is important that accountability systems empower employees in proposed changes in the workplace and satisfy their basic needs, but perhaps the most essential element in motivation is a consideration of the ways that teachers/employees perceive themselves.

Keywords: leadership, employee communication, motivational teaching

Introduction

Teacher advocates often ask, “How can we motivate teachers to change practice?”. The answer is “Motivation cannot be done to someone—It cannot be controlled or commanded into being; it is a complex human dynamic that, at best, we can aim to understand and work to inspire” (Dawn, 2001).

The knowledge base about motivation is relatively recent. The term “intrinsic motivation” was introduced by Robert White in 1959. In fact, most of the findings about motivation have surfaced in the last 20 years. Today, many theories of motivation compete for attention.

Evidence continues to mount that “When people are coerced, they function with diminished capacity and often react with resistance, resentment, and a loss of energy—the antithesis of motivation” (Dawn, 2001, p. 2). Leaders who desire to motivate others must learn to create conditions that motivate growth. They must seek to understand those they would motivate and promote self-motivation, which according to Deci and Flaste (1995) (as cited in Dawn, 2001, p. 6), “is at the heart of creativity, responsibility, healthy behavior, and lasting change”. They must learn to support autonomy, minimize controls, provide choice, enhance competence, optimize the level of challenge, increase relatedness, and cultivate a sense of belonging (Dawn, 2001).

Motivating Teachers

What do we know about work motivation? No general, comprehensive theory exists, but the writings of Maslow, McGregor, Herzberg, and Deci are often cited as the beginning of such theory (Ellis, 1984). Several scholars argue that the proper way to approach work motivation lies in distinguishing between extrinsic and

Jerry Dale Jones, Ed.D., associate professor, Graduate Faculty, Fayetteville State University.

Brian A. Phillips, Ed.D., assistant professor, Department of Education, Fayetteville State University.

Melissa Workman, M.S., M.A., associate director, instructor, College of Education and Human Services, West Virginia University.

intrinsic rewards. Herzberg (1964) (as cited in Ellis, 1984) distinguished between extrinsic rewards (salaries, fringe benefits, and job security) and intrinsic rewards of the job itself (self-respect and sense of accomplishment). McGregor's (1967) Theory X and Theory Y (as cited in Ellis, 1984) represent extrinsic and intrinsic rewards, respectively. Deci's (1975) work (as cited in Ellis, 1984) showed how injudicious application of extrinsic rewards can undermine intrinsic motivation.

Studies by Pastor and Erlandson (1982) (as cited in Ellis, 1984) showed that teachers measure their job satisfaction by factors such as participation in decision-making, use of valued skills, freedom and independence, challenge, expression of creativity, and opportunity for learning. For teachers, high internal motivation, work satisfaction, and high-quality performance depend on the critical psychological states of experienced meaningfulness, responsibility for outcomes, and knowledge of the results of their teaching.

Brodinsky and Neill (1983) (as cited in Ellis, 1984) determined that a majority of school administrators have cited policies of shared governance, inservice education, and systematic, supportive evaluation as those which effectively improved morale and motivated their staffs. Lastly, a good evaluation system can provide teachers with the feedback they need to assess their own professional growth.

Intrinsic Motivation

The Role of Meaningfulness in Motivation

The psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety, and availability are vital elements of the human spirit in the workplace (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004). A survey of 213 employees and managers across all departments in the administrative division of a large insurance firm located in the Midwestern U.S. collected information about how employees react to various aspects of their work and work situations.

Measures for the research included the variables of psychological engagement, psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, psychological availability, job enrichment, work role fit, rewarding co-worker relations, supportive supervisor relations, co-worker norm adherence, resources, self-consciousness, and outside activities. The results of the study suggest that managers should attempt to foster meaningfulness through the effective design of jobs. Selecting the proper employees for particular work roles will enhance meaningfulness. Managers should take care to learn more about the personal needs and desires of employees in order to place workers in work roles which will best allow them to express themselves through their work.

Job Satisfaction and Motivation: The Role of Quality of Communication

Orpen (1997) examined the hypothesis that job involvement moderates the relationship between the quality of communication and employee job satisfaction and work motivation. His results, obtained from a survey of 135 manager participants employed by 21 different firms in the United Kingdom, suggest that both job satisfaction and work motivation are positively affected by the quality of communication within the firms.

Highly involved managers were more positively impacted by timely, accurate, and complete communications in their firms than were their less involved counterparts. The results suggest that improving communication transmission and reception within firms should raise managers' motivation and satisfaction, but that strategies for improved communications should be targeted toward highly involved managers and expected to have a greater impact on highly involved managers than upon less involved managers.

Porter and Roberts (1993) (as cited in Orpen, 1997) argued that if employees are deeply involved in their jobs and perceive their work to be central to their sense of self-worth, they are more likely to be affected by the

quality of communication at work than are employees whose jobs are irrelevant to how they feel about themselves. Deeply involved employees want to maintain control over the work environment and are concerned with a good quality of communication because it gives them more control over what happens to them at work.

Job Satisfaction and Motivation: The Effect of Role Clarity

Another aspect of communication is the effect which role clarity has upon employee motivation and job satisfaction. Role clarity, as defined by Burton, Pathak, and Zigli (1977), is “the extent to which required information is communicated to and understood by the employee” (p. 17). Operation managers in a manufacturing plant in the American Southeast were asked to respond to a survey which utilized Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory as operationalized by Porter (1961), Dubin’s nonfinancial incentives as operationalized by Pruden (1972), and Tausky’s (1963) Global Index of Job Satisfaction (as cited in Burton et al., 1977). The Pearson product-moment correlations instrument was used to measure the relationships between perceptions of communicated role clarity and other factors. The sample was then divided into two groups based on the level of role clarity perceived: the HICLAR (high clarity) group and the LOCLAR (low clarity) group.

For the HICLAR group, security, autonomy, and self-actualization were important but so well gratified that they had to be classified as gratified motivators (items that will not motivate work behavior as long as they remain fairly well satisfied). The status incentive was found to be both important and unfulfilled, thus, qualifying as an action motivator. For the LOCLAR group, social need was well satisfied and had to be categorized as a gratified motivator. Security, esteem, autonomy, self-actualization, and power incentives are classified as action motivators and can therefore be used by top management as communication targets aimed to improve job satisfaction and work performance for the LOCLAR managers group.

Impact of Communication Climate on Motivation

Intrinsic motivation is closely tied to communication climate. Krivonos (1978) measured the communication climate of two large manufacturing companies from the perspective of supervisory-managerial personnel. These aspects included supportiveness, openness and empathy, perceived accuracy of downward communication, upward communication satisfaction, perceived information reliability, and the overall openness of communication. His study concluded that intrinsically motivated individuals perceive their organizational (communication) climate as more “ideal” than did the extrinsically motivated individuals. Further consideration of other characteristically different factors (such as productivity, absenteeism, turnover, job satisfaction, among others) between intrinsically and extrinsically motivated individuals would need to be studied before the effect of intrinsic/extrinsic motivation of an organization can be completely understood.

What is intrinsic motivation? Deci and Ryan (1985) defined intrinsic motivation as motivation that is gratified in the process of work; extrinsic motivation, as a result of work. “The goals or rewards which are the object of intrinsic motivation are self-mediated, while the goals and rewards of extrinsic motivation are defined by others and mediated by others” (Krivonos, 1978, p. 54). Deci and Ryan (1985) added, “Whether a man considers himself to be acting as an Origin (intrinsically motivated) or as a Pawn (extrinsically motivated) is the central issue for understanding the effects of personal causation in human motivation” (p. 54).

“H. Dennis found that although organizational climate may be viewed as the parent of communication climate ... communication climate seems to contribute substantially to organizational climate” (Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. 55). De Charms (1968) stated that “Man’s primary motivational propensity is to be effective in

producing changes in his environment” (as cited in Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. 55). This striving, or “personal causation”, is the key to De Charms’ view of intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. 55).

Strengthening Motivation

Today’s successful supervisor must consider the basic human wants of the employee: recognition, communication, belonging, and emotional security. Employees welcome being told why the job is to be done in a certain way. Informal coaching motivates employees to do better work. Supervisors must avoid over instructing, which dulls the creative edge. Supervisors must ask for employee feedback to insure that communication has been understood.

Timbers (1966) believed that supervisors should consult with employees before instituting changes in process, personnel, or equipment. Consultative management improves employee morale because the employee feels his/her input is valued. Timbers (1966) defined communication as “the conveyance of meaning designed to motivate people to take desired action. People act most readily to satisfy their wants” (p. 67).

The two essential, intangible elements in a good communication climate are a people-centered attitude rather than a production-centered one, and an open door in fact as well as in word. Supervisors must motivate people by fostering a communication climate that enables “employees to satisfy many of their basic wants, such as recognition, communication, belonging, and emotional security” (Timbers, 1966, p. 69).

Extrinsic Motivation

Motivation Begins In-house

In service industries, motivation should begin with the customer service representatives (Tansuhaj, Randall, & McCullough, 1988). An effective internal marketing program includes employee recruitment, training, motivation, communication, and retention efforts. Most employees in high contact service jobs are self-motivated to provide good customer service. Managers must believe in their organizations, communicate their enthusiasm and conviction to their employees, and facilitate employee performance. Employee motivation can be strengthened by incentive programs, team-building techniques, seminars, and workshops.

Employees can be motivated if management conducts regular in-house surveys which not only ask for their suggestions, but promptly act upon some of them, which gives employees a sense of empowerment. Competitive salaries and bonus systems can provide extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation (job satisfaction, job involvement, and self-esteem) provide work motivation to “energize, direct, channel, maintain, and sustain an employee’s actions and behaviors” (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999, p. 35). The creation of an atmosphere that encourages and supports sustained improvement can influence the employee’s motivational state.

Accountability Systems

In public schools, today’s accountability systems often focus on the school rather than the district as the unit of improvement; therefore, it becomes essential to select an accountability system that motivates teachers. Extrinsic motivation, successful in the short run, could eventually undermine long-term reform goals because people tend to do just enough to meet reward requirements. Sheldon and Biddle (1998) (as cited in Lashway, 1999) provided evidence that intrinsic motivation built on trust leads to more meaningful learning than control based extrinsic motivation. Mohrman and Lawler (1996) (as cited in Lashway, 1999) argued that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation have their place in determining teacher behavior, but first teachers must believe that

particular goals ordered by administrators are attainable and supported by adequate resources (Lashway, 1999).

Nancy (1999) concluded that state generated standards and assessments that currently drive accountability must be accomplished at the local level (as cited in Lashway, 1999). This can only be done by developing a “positive mindset” at the local level by monitoring vital indicators and aligning professional development with improvement goals. McCary and colleagues (1997) (as cited in Lashway, 1999) attest to the importance of developing a locally owned “culture of accountability” that internalizes and enhances external demands. Local leadership is critical to provide a common vision and a nurturing environment (Lashway, 1999).

Incentives for Accountability

Teachers have long held that the correct incentive will boost student motivation and performance, but ironically, they are among the first to resist efforts to link rewards or punishments to their own performance. Some accountability theorists believe that rewards and sanctions provide teachers a personal stake in the successes of their students, but in practice, the motivational value of such efforts is not clear cut (Lashway, 2001).

Awarding teachers “merit pay” for performance has a long but unsuccessful record. Odden and Kelley (1997) (as cited in Lashway, 2001) proposed two alternatives to a traditional salary schedule. Competency-based pay rewards can be awarded for demonstrated success in teaching, curriculum, and leadership. Pay for performance compensates teachers for their students’ achievements. Teachers express concerns for fairness with such systems, because student motivation, family support, class size, and adequacy of resources are all important elements of the achievement equation that fall outside the teachers’ control.

Few incentive systems can point to a clear cause-and-effect relationship between teacher incentives and student performance. The Consortium for Policy Research has published an online study (available at <http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/cpre/tcomp>) which concludes that involving teachers in some form of pay for performance seems to provide them with a better understanding of accountability goals and results in greater commitment to goals than to other reform efforts. “Expectancy” theorists conclude that incentives may be less important than the way people perceive them. There is little evidence that material rewards drive teacher classroom performance. They seem to be more motivated by “psychic rewards”, such as seeing small signs of individual student progress (Lashway, 2001).

School Climate/Culture

School culture plays a vital role in motivating teachers and students alike. What is school culture? Anthropologist Clifford Geertz (Geertz, 1973, as cited in Stolp, 1994) stated that culture represents a “historically transmitted pattern of meaning”. Deal and Peterson (1990) (as cited in Stolp, 1994) noted that culture includes “deep patterns of values, beliefs, and traditions that have formed over the course of history”. Heckman (1993) added that school culture has its foundation in “commonly held beliefs of teachers, students, and principals” (as cited in Stolp, 1994, p. 19).

School culture is important because, according to Fyans and Maehr (1990) (as cited in Stolp, 1994), there is strong support for the idea that students are more motivated to learn in schools with strong cultures. For this reason, teachers and principals should be motivated to create a good school environment. School culture also corresponds with teacher attitudes toward their work. Cheng (1993) (as cited in Stolp, 1994) found that stronger school cultures had better motivated teachers.

The best way to change a school’s culture may be to pay close attention to school artifacts (routines,

ceremonies, rituals, traditions, or myths) before changing them, because they can give insight into how school cultures function. National Association of Secondary School Principals' (NASSP) Comprehensive Assessment of School Environments Information Management System (CASE-IMS) is a well-tested, formal instrument which can be utilized to begin cultural change (Stolp, 1994).

A principal's actions will be observed and interpreted by others as representing what is most important in the school's culture. Deal and Peterson (as cited in Stolp, 1994) suggested that principals should strive to create shared visions that are rooted in the school's culture. One principal offered that principals should work on team-building before pushing their own agenda. Principals must nurture and reinforce positive school culture (Stolp, 1994).

Conclusion

Dweck and Leggett (1988) have presented a research-based model that examines how individuals' implicit theories orient them toward particular goals, and how these goals set up different behavior patterns. Implicit theories are an individual's basic assumptions about himself/herself and the rest of the world, and are necessary because they help to create a meaning system by providing a framework to guide personal goals. The model shows how each feature (cognitive, affective, and behavioral) of adaptive and maladaptive behavior patterns can be traced back to the different goals held by individuals.

This work provides a powerful tool for motivating employees. Considering the premise if a leader/manager understands an individual's particular goals, the leader/manager has the potential ability to customize the motivational approaches which will be most effective with that individual. The model documents that patterns of behavior have profound effects on adaptive functioning. It demonstrates the role of learning and performance goals in producing individuals' patterns of behavior. These goals are tied to individuals' implicit theories of their own attributes.

These theories can be viewed as a form of self-concept that can be extended outside the self, assisting them to "hold implicit theories about the characteristics of other people, places and things, and that these theories will predict the goals they adopt vis-a-vis these external variables" (Deci & Ryan, 1991, p. 271). If a supervisor can gain insight into the way an employee views himself/herself through the goals which the individual holds, perhaps future research in this rich area will yield the elusive key to tailoring effective motivational strategies on the individual level.

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