

## *Work as a Motivator*

**New insights indicate that an individual's work  
is a more important source of motivation  
than conditions surrounding his job**

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IN ORDER to understand this discussion of motivation it will help the reader to list briefly (write down) several situations or circumstances in which there have been feelings of exceptional satisfaction on the job as an Extension worker (or in some other responsibility). Second, describe briefly several situations (times) when there have been feelings of exceptional dissatisfaction on the job. In selecting these periods of extreme feelings it will help to think of concrete or specific occurrences or situations that have actually happened. *These periods of exceptional feelings should be noted down before reading further.*

An organization needs people who are productive in their work, who like their work, and who have the ability to maintain and develop the organization through their work.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, individuals are the core of an organization's resources and are responsible for its success or failure. It is being discovered through research on behavior within organizations that work is quite compatible with an individual's need for growing and developing as a person as well as in his job. Current studies support the idea that growth and development of the Extension worker—and his clientele—can be enhanced by emphasizing factors directly associated with work.

The purpose of this article is to bring to the attention of Extension workers (agents, specialists, supervisors, administrators) and

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<sup>1</sup>For an overview of what social scientists have contributed to the understanding of individual performance in an organizational setting, see George B. Strother, *Individual Performance and Corporate Purpose* (Madison: School of Commerce, Bureau of Business Research and Service, University of Wisconsin, 1962).

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other adult educators a new way of looking at motivation in the organizational setting. The bases for this idea were developed from an intensive survey of several hundred job attitude studies.<sup>2</sup> It was concluded from this survey that when people were asked what they liked about their jobs one group of factors with common characteristics emerged; when asked what they did not like about their jobs a different set of factors emerged. Consequently, a study was designed to answer more conclusively what people want from their work.<sup>3</sup>

In an attempt to determine what happens when people have satisfying or dissatisfying experiences on the job, Herzberg and his associates interviewed engineers and accountants in nine industrial companies. From such a study they concluded that job satisfaction was associated with a set of factors that differed from factors associated with job dissatisfaction. Studies in different types of organizations indicate that this way of looking at motivation may be applied to jobs other than those originally studied. For example, a similar study was conducted with skilled and unskilled personnel in a Veterans Administration hospital.<sup>4</sup> In this study it was found that the factors leading to job dissatisfaction were quite similar while factors leading to job satisfaction varied depending upon the nature of the work and technical training required. A study involving county Extension administrators in one state revealed that job satisfaction was frequently associated with one factor while job dissatisfaction was associated with several factors. In addition, it was found that persistent day-after-day, long-range relationships were the most important contributors to both job satisfaction and dissatisfaction.<sup>5</sup>

#### APPROACHES TO MOTIVATION

Two examples from the author's study of county Extension administrators will supplement the reader's list of periods of extreme feelings. One respondent described a satisfying feeling in this manner: "There was a severe insect infestation in the county, so we set up a field demonstration for the purpose of providing education

<sup>2</sup> Frederick Herzberg, et al., *Job Attitudes: Review of Research and Opinions* (Pittsburgh: Psychological Services of Pittsburgh, 1957).

<sup>3</sup> Frederick Herzberg, Bernard Mausner, and B. B. Snyderman, *The Motivation to Work* (New York: John Wiley, 1959).

<sup>4</sup> Frederic Anderson, "Factors in Motivation to Work Across Three Occupational Levels" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Utah, 1961).

<sup>5</sup> Denzil O. Clegg, "The Motivation of County Administrators in the Cooperative Extension Service" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1963).

information. The Extension specialist, farmers, and interested companies cooperated in developing, carrying out, and evaluating the demonstration which was exceptionally successful." The following were key statements made by the agent: ". . . the demonstration had accomplished the major objective. . . . I was successful in doing my job. . . . The people were most cooperative and appreciated the work that had been accomplished. . . ."

Another respondent described a situation which gave a dissatisfying feeling in this manner: "The interpersonal relationships in the county office are bad. One of the agents won't cooperate with other members of the staff. This agent does good work, but will not conform to office policies. We aren't doing our best work in this office. The tension is high and most uncomfortable. We cannot seem to work as a professional group. Little things become more important than our work." \*

Notice the difference between these two examples. The first example revolves around statements associated with *doing the work*. The respondent felt good about his achievement on the job. From the organization's standpoint, here was an individual who had been productive, who was able to fulfill his own need for success, and who had developed an effective program in time of stress.

The example denoting dissatisfaction revolves around statements associated with the *conditions or setting* in which work was performed. The primary concern of the respondent was the bad relationships within the office. Such conditions or settings in which work is performed often receive the focus of the attention of Extension administrators and supervisors. However, findings being discussed in this paper suggest that major emphasis should be placed on *doing the work*. In other words, the focus of attention should be placed on the growth and development of the individual in performing the responsibilities of his position rather than on the structure and processes of organization (e.g., rules, policies, procedures, etc.).

These examples are typical of the traditional and of the newer ways of viewing individual and organizational motivation. Table 1 will help clarify the point. The traditional approach to motivation stresses organizational conditions that *surround* doing the job. In other words, motivation to work is imposed on the individual by the organization (in Table 1 the traditional approach to motivation is shown by the factors in column A). Studies by the Herzberg group, Anderson, and Clegg have shown that job dissatisfaction is more often associated with the "A" factors, at least for professional employees. These studies show that the "A" factors are more often

associated with impaired performance and with negative attitudes. However, when the traditional factors causing the dissatisfaction are removed, performance and attitudes do not improve beyond a neutral point (a factor associated with negative performance and attitudes will not become a positive factor). Correction of the condition merely erases the factor.

Table 1. Two contrasting approaches to motivation\*

A Organization provides setting or conditions for work	B Organization stimulates self-actualization through work
1. Inter-personal relationships	1. Opportunities for achievement in work
2. Policies and administrative practices	2. Recognition for work done
3. Supervision	3. Interesting and challenging work
4. Physical working conditions	4. Responsibility for own work or work of others
5. Salary and fringe benefits	5. Advancement resulting from work done

\* It should be pointed out that *all* of the above ten factors are important. For example, the organization needs to have good inter-personal relationships, adequate policies and practices, and competent supervision. However, the "A" factors should not be emphasized to the exclusion or expense of the "B" factors. The table summarizes information from studies by the Herzberg group, Anderson, and Clegg.

The newer conception of motivation emphasizes the individual's need for *self-actualization* in his work. If factors in column B are emphasized, an individual can meet his need for growing and developing as a person, as well as in his job, through his work. The "A" factors have a positive effect on an individual's performance as well as on his attitude.

Specific factors leading to either job satisfaction or job dissatisfaction tend to vary, depending on the nature of the work and the problems of organizations. For example, data from the study of county Extension administrators (Table 2) show the relative importance of factors leading to either job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Achievement was by far the most important factor, being associated with 70 per cent of the experiences leading to job satisfaction. What the respondents appear to have wanted most from their job was to see successful results of their work. Recognition was the second most important factor in terms of frequency of

relation with job satisfaction. Recognition of some kind provided needed approval for the individual in his work.

Except for interpersonal relations with clientele, the remaining factors in Table 2 were more frequently associated with job dissatisfaction (these are factors which are more often associated with conditions surrounding the performance of the job). Some of the factors shown in Table 1 are not included in Table 2. Apparently the organization was providing these particular needs at the time of the study.

Table 2. Relative importance of factors leading to job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction<sup>a</sup>

Factors	Job satisfaction	Job dissatisfaction	Significance level <sup>b</sup>
Achievement in work	70	6	.001
Recognition for work	28	15	.05
Interpersonal relations:			
Clientele	20	19	NS
Advisory board	0	14	.01
Subordinates	0	12	.01
Superior	0	8	.05
Supervision	0	8	.05
Policy and administration	0	17	.001
Working conditions	2	14	.05

<sup>a</sup>The factors were taken from the respondent's statements and are shown as percentage frequencies of occurrence. The percentages total more than 100 since more than one factor can appear in any single statement of job satisfaction or job dissatisfaction.

<sup>b</sup>Significance levels of .001, .01, and .05 indicate the extent of likelihood of the differences between the two columns being differences that could not have occurred by chance. "NS" indicates that differences were not significant.

In two subsequent and less formal surveys with Extension personnel, the idea of work as a motivator was indicated as an important source for job satisfaction, although the relative importance of factors tended to differ between groups studied. For example, a check sheet was used with 91 county administrators in a different area. This survey indicated that these county administrators were motivated more often by the "B" or "doing the work" factors. In addition, a class of Extension workers studying 4-H at the University of Wisconsin Summer School felt that, although "doing the work" factors were important, they wanted job security and good interpersonal relationships among the other staff members. Consequently both of these less formal surveys support the idea that all

10 factors in Table 1 are important. In other words, an organization needs to supply a good work setting as well as an opportunity for self-actualization through work. The concern is in regard to the relative importance of the two types of factors as motivators.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR EXTENSION WORKERS

Findings of studies reviewed in this paper support the argument that an individual's work is more important as a source of motivation than are conditions surrounding the job. In addition to studies of the Herzberg group, Anderson, and Clegg, work by Barnes<sup>6</sup> supports the idea that the need for personal growth and development can be met through an individual's work. Barnes and a number of other social scientists are just beginning to focus their efforts on ways of promoting personal growth and development through work.

One of the most enlightening developments presently under study suggests that conditions can be created whereby an individual can be helped to reach fulfillment of his potentialities.<sup>7</sup> These are called conditions for self-actualization. The following discussion represents a modification of the original ideas in terms of what might be done to provide a growing climate for Extension personnel.

1. *Stimulation.* An Extension worker has to *know something*. Knowledge does not relate just to techniques and methods, it relates specifically to subject matter. This condition suggests that agents, specialists, supervisors, and administrators need to provide opportunities for the intellectual growth of the people for whom they are responsible. Findings from the study of county Extension administrators suggest that learning opportunities need to be long range and well planned.<sup>8</sup> Apparently, "fire call" problem solving and "shot gun" training do not provide the best bases for stimulating changes in behavior and attitudes.

2. *Responsible freedom.* The professional Extension worker needs to feel that he has become sufficiently competent to accept more and new responsibility. Before he can accept additional responsibility he has to experience a free and stimulating climate in which to test his abilities, develop a sense of capacity, and rise to a fullness of stature.

The position of county administrator, as studied by Clegg, et

<sup>6</sup> Louis B. Barnes, *Organizational Systems and Engineering Groups* (Boston: Division of Research, Harvard Business School, 1960).

<sup>7</sup> Taken from preliminary reports of the Committee on the Individual in Our Society. This report is to be published by the National Education Association late in 1963.

<sup>8</sup> Clegg, *op. cit.*, pp. 167-68.

seems to encompass the idea of responsible freedom. In the particular situation studied the county administrator is responsible for directing the county program. In addition, he often is free to choose areas for program emphasis, methods for carrying out the program, and clientele groups to be reached. In other words, the spotlight of activity is around him. He has a stimulating and challenging climate for growth and development. However, there is some indication that persons subordinate to the county administrator do not have a free and stimulating climate for growth and responsibility. Frequently, regimentation imposed by the county administrator stifles the creative impulses of subordinates in such a manner that they are reluctant to attempt more difficult opportunities than have previously been undertaken.

3. *Support.* Stimulation and responsible freedom introduce risk-taking and the possibility of failure. Extension workers need to provide beginners, whether new or experienced workers attempting a change in program or organization, support and understanding in those instances involving risk. An individual's confidence in himself (and others) needs to be maintained and developed so that the focus of his energies centers upon the work to be done rather than upon his personal insecurity or on the possibility of rejection by others.

4. *Success.* When an individual experiences the pleasure of work completed, he has a feeling of achievement. This is his reward for steady attention to duty and persevering diligence. Success does not imply an environment free of failures. Having some failures is quite different from being a failure. The author's study suggests that success may contribute not only to increased productivity, but to a decrease in the rate of turnover, improvement in inter-personal relationships, and more positive attitudes.<sup>9</sup>

5. *Commitment.* The experience of standing on the sidelines is not for the Extension worker who has learned what it is like to throw himself into his responsibilities. Commitment is expressed through a balance between "holding on" to what is worthwhile and "letting go" on new approaches, ideas, and work innovations.

Commitment is a basic source of motivation. It is likely to be operative when a person feels that his work requires ability he possesses to a high degree. Also, a person is more likely to perform when he has a feeling of obligation or commitment to another person, group, or a cause.

6. *Self-insight.* When met, the five conditions already discussed

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 138.

provide opportunities for developing the sixth—self-insight. On the job it is important for an Extension worker to understand his relationship to the work to be done—his strengths and his limitations. Employees who (in the eyes of the people they work with and for) are adapted to and understand the work they are doing, approach maturity in their professional development.

#### SUMMARY

Professional people can best be motivated by a working climate that emphasizes factors specific to their job responsibilities. The idea is a new approach to understanding motivation. In this approach primary concern is focused on the growth and development of the individual through his need for self-actualization, rather than on conditions surrounding his work.

Recent studies concerned with work as a motivator support the conclusion that new ways need to be explored for encouraging the growth and development of the Extension worker. Moreover, evidence available indicates that efforts to maintain or extend the period of service of more promising personnel should be carefully scrutinized. Such efforts should be directed toward utilizing the Extension worker's capabilities to the fullest extent in his responsibilities. He needs a challenging job, one that requires the maximum use of his abilities and provides opportunity for self-development. Apparently, one of the most effective methods for stimulating an Extension worker to strive for a higher level of development is through the opportunity for optimum performance of his job responsibilities. By successfully carrying out the work for which he is responsible he can fulfill his and the organization's needs for achievement.

WHAT men are entitled to under democracy cannot be defined as "what men would like to have"; nor is it what they can manage to get; nor is it what the state thinks it can safely allow them. Democracy tries to give men what they must have in order to function fully and freely as men, including the civil liberties—freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, of religious worship, and of petition. . . .

—from statement by The Royal Bank of Canada (contributed by Jean Scheel, Oregon).