

DOES A SALARY INCREASE REALLY MOTIVATE EMPLOYEES?

To assist in providing some organizational dimension to the discussion of compensation as a motivator for employees we must apply some of the more recognized motivational theories. Understanding and applying these theories will provide the basis for our analysis and eventual reasoning as to whether money is a motivator.

We approach this analysis realizing there is no one single motivation theory that is going to provide a formula type answer. The cause for the complexity of this phenomenon is the advanced high standard of living and socioeconomic environment. Hence, to understand stimuli for employee motivation it is necessary to pool all the motivational theories to gain a total perspective.

Equity theory draws our attention to the fact that an employee considers the importance of relative levels of perceived pay on a par with their absolute levels of actual pay. If they feel someone else is receiving more pay for similar work this can result in a feeling of inequity. The equity theory avoids any mention of pay as a direct motivator for employees, though.

Herzberg in his two-factor theory suggests a distinction between job characteristics dividing them into "motivators" (which when present cause satisfaction) and "Hygienes" (which when not present cause job dissatisfaction).

Herzberg goes on to categorize monetary compensation as a hygiene since it is generally related to job context (the environment in which the job is performed) rather than a motivator which is related to job content (the nature of the work itself). Herzberg's conclusion maintains that pay is not a motivator but a hygiene, consequently if pay is satisfactory workers will not be dissatisfied. He further contends payment to workers at their expectant level will have no appreciable effect on their behavior.

Maslow's theory establishes a hierarchy of needs in individuals with physiological and more basic needs being satisfied first and the more complex self-fulfillment needs being sought last. The stimulus of motivation appears as the individual attempts to satisfy an unsatisfied need and thus achieves a higher level on his hierarchy of needs. Maslow, though not absolute would tend to associate monetary compensation with the lower order needs. Thus since in our current socioeconomic environment most individuals are already positioned high on the hierarchy of needs ladder (having satisfied physiological and security needs) the monetary compensation objective is not a motivator by Maslow's definition because it has been satisfied with these lower order needs.

From an examination of McClelland's Achievement Motivation Theory we conclude that individuals derive satisfaction from reaching goals. This feeling of successful task accomplishment is more important to a high achiever. From McClelland then we can conclude that high achievers are not motivated by money, but instead use money as a method of "keeping score" of their achievements.

To be able to effectively answer the question "does pay motivate" we must form an accumulated perspective of the phenomenon based on information and conclusions obtained from each theory. The reason for our need to remain open to a composite theory is the fact that financial rewards have multiple meanings to individuals. In addition to being the obvious means by which workers can satisfy basic needs, pay is also an indication of social status, social value, and competence. Consequently, it is possible for workers to satisfy their higher order needs with their paycheck.

A further complication is the degree to which the individual sees his lower order needs being satisfied may change as their income changes. So that while workers may have the basic needs relatively satisfied, a pay increase may increase their level of expectations regarding the lower order needs. For example, if a Ford Pinto satisfies an individual's need for transportation an increase in wages may result in using an LTD for satisfying this basic transportation need. This would be a result of higher expectations of satisfaction as well as the possibility that driving an LTD may satisfy other needs like for instance status.

Clearly, we can arrive at no simple answer with clearly defined parameters, but rather a composite generalization laden with individualistic exceptions. These individualistic variances to the rule are roughed out of the fact that every worker is different with his own set of personal values, morals, objectives, and life style. An expansion of this aspect can be provided by the theory of operant conditioning. In operant conditioning the importance the individual worker places on pay is a function of how the individual has been conditioned to react to pay as a stimulus in his previous experiences. Some workers place such great emphasis on pay because they have learned to treat pay as high priority, consequently, they are more likely to list pay as a motivator, in contrast to Herzberg's theory.

Gellerman helps shed a little more light on the subject when he indicates that in order for money to motivate, pay increases must be extremely large to create the feeling of "wealth". If a worker sees that increased effort will lead to a significant change in his standard of living, then pay can be considered a motivator.

These complications to a clear answer to pay as a motivator are further accentuated at present by the high inflationary times when it is more difficult for people to establish a definite standard of living and thus a stable hierarchy of needs because of the rapidly changing costs.

In summation, what we have concluded is that which "makes the world go round" the realization that each and everyone of us is different requiring vastly different stimuli to make us tick. But, further recognizing that motivation is a self-inflicted state which can be influenced from outside through a satisfying working environment but, its origination is solely from within.

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