

Productive Employees: Two Crucial Ingredients

Do you need to rejuvenate your organization's environment?
Here's how to tell, and what to do about it.

By *Monica MacDougall*

As a nonprofit leader, one of your most vital tasks is to be sure workers (both paid and volunteer) are productive and happy in their jobs. The best way to improve job performance and enhance employee skills is through job enrichment – a term developed by Frederick Herzberg.¹

Two Essential Factors to Invigorate Your Work Environment

Herzberg posits that two types of factors are necessary to provide an enriched work environment:

1. Motivator factors are the primary causes of job satisfaction. They include:

- achievement
- the job itself
- responsibility
- opportunity for growth
- advancement.

2. Hygiene factors don't create job satisfaction, but they do reduce dissatisfaction. Being dissatisfied isn't the opposite of feeling satisfied, according to Herzberg. The factors that influence satisfaction are different from those that induce dissatisfaction. Thus, hygiene factors are just as important as motivator factors. Hygiene factors consist of:

- organizational policy
- quality of supervision
- working conditions
- job security.

The Four Possible Job Profiles: Where Do Your Employees Fall?

In an ideal world, both motivator and hygiene factors are strongly present, and employees are completely satisfied. At the opposite end of the spectrum, with no fulfillment in either the motivator or hygiene factors, employees are

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completely dissatisfied. Taking these two extremes and adding two gradations between them, Herzberg has developed four possible job profiles. Each employee falls somewhere within these four groups:

1. High Motivation/High Hygiene: “Best of All Worlds”

In this category, both motivator and hygiene factors are strongly present, and employees are completely satisfied and happy. They're excited by the tasks and the job itself. The nature of the work is challenging. Needs for achievement and recognition are being met and will lead to positive long-term effects. In addition, the employee isn't dissatisfied with the hygiene elements such as organizational policy, job security, and interpersonal relationships.

2. High Motivation/Low Hygiene: “Starving Artist”

This type of employee is both happy and unhappy. “Starving artist” employees find the work satisfying, but aren't pleased with such factors as organizational policy, job security, and quality of supervision.

3. Low Motivation/High Hygiene: “I'm All Right, Jack”

Employees in this category are unhappy with long-term aspects of the job, such as feelings of achievement and a belief that the job will lead to growth and opportunity. On the other hand, these workers are satisfied with organizational policy, relationships with peers, and personal work-life balance. Unfortunately, these hygiene factors tend to be cyclical in nature and don't fulfill the complex needs for recognition and increased job capacity; thus, they aren't enough to lead to superior performance.

4. Low Motivation/Low Hygiene: “Down & Out”

Staff members in this category are unhappy with every aspect of the job. They aren't being fulfilled in any way, and it's possible that the job itself can't be enriched. You can be sure that an employee in this group is looking for a new job.

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“Many nonprofit employees are thinking of leaving their jobs due to a lack of career development.”


Where Nonprofits Shine and Where They Need More Light

Many nonprofit workers fall into quadrant 3, “I’m all right, Jack.” Although they enjoy their interpersonal relationships and other hygiene factors, they lack motivators such as a sense of achievement and opportunities for advancement.

Studies (such as the “Nonprofit Employment Trends Survey”²) show that many nonprofit employees are thinking of leaving their jobs due to a lack of future opportunities and career development. If nonprofit leaders don’t enrich the work environment, they’ll lose knowledge and be unprepared for leadership succession.

What can you do to improve this situation? Begin by expanding the training you offer to employees. Research has shown that training opportunities improve task related knowledge and lead to overall increases in employee performance.³ Learning opportunities boost motivation, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction.

You can customize in-house training to the specific requirements of employees. Other types of learning such as online courses can also add value, extend existing knowledge, and promote active thinking. Many professional associations offer continuing education programs, courses, and conferences throughout the year.

In addition to offering learning opportunities, do whatever you can to remove layers of hierarchy, introduce challenging tasks, and increase employees’ authority. The combination of these factors will enrich the job and move your employees into the “best of all worlds” category. The result will be highly motivated, productive employees who are eager to grow, learn, and help your organization achieve its mission for many years to come. 

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Footnotes

¹See Herzberg’s “Orthodox Job Enrichment: Measuring True Quality in Job Satisfaction,” *Personnel*, 53(5), 54-68, which describes the Herzberg Motivation/Hygiene Theory (or Two-Factor Theory).

²<http://www.nonprofitr.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/2013-Employment-Trends-Survey-Report.pdf>

³For example, see “Strategy and HRM in Nonprofit Organizations,” *International Journal of Human Resource Management* 17, 1707-1725.

How to Move Employees into the “Best of All Worlds” Category

Provide opportunities for growth and career advancement by coaching and mentoring employees.

Encourage an environment of continuous learning by offering tuition reimbursement for those who want to take courses.

Offer challenging work and assign new tasks when opportunities are available.

Ensure all employees are informed of the mission and vision of the organization. Constantly reinforce common values.

Motivate people with recognition programs for going above and beyond.

Make additional training available when improvement is required.

Engage employees by giving them autonomy over their work.

Cross-train employees at different levels to give them experience in a variety of areas, build new skill sets, and develop their leadership abilities.

Communicate expectations clearly.

Survey workers to see what training they want and need. Customize training accordingly.

Remove hierarchal structure when possible to provide increased responsibility.

Discuss potential career paths during employee appraisals.

Be sensitive to employees’ personal needs, and help them create a work-life balance that will reduce stress and boost motivation.

More Paths to Enrichment

For more details on enhancing your work environment, see these articles at NonprofitWorld.org:

How to Present Training Workshops that Educate and Inspire (Vol. 29, No. 4)

Leading from Feeling: Coaching Tools for Interpersonal & Organizational Excellence (Vol. 27, No. 1)

Manage for Today, Mentor for Tomorrow (Vol. 23, No. 5)

Using Training Strategically to Build Organizational Capacity (Vol. 14, No. 4)

The High Cost of Employee Turnover – and How to Avoid It (Vol. 32, No. 3)

Training Programs Need More than Good Information (Vol. 21, No. 2)