

24.1: Reading- Introduction to Motivational Theory

Introduction to Motivational Theory

Motivation is defined as “the intention of achieving a goal, leading to goal-directed behavior” (*Columbia Encyclopedia*, 2004, New York: Columbia University Press). When we say that someone is motivated, we mean that the person is trying hard to accomplish a certain task. Motivation is clearly important in order for someone to perform well. However, motivation alone is not sufficient. **Ability**—having the skills and knowledge required to perform the job—is also important, and is sometimes key to being effective. Finally, environmental factors—having the resources, information, and support one needs to perform well—are also critical to reaching one’s goals.

What makes employees willing to “go the extra mile” to provide excellent service, market a company’s products effectively, or achieve the goals set for them? Answering such questions can help us understand and manage the work of peers, subordinates, and even supervisors. As with many questions involving human behavior, though, the answers are anything but uniform or simple. Instead, you’ll find a number of theories that explore the concept of motivation and attempt to explain its source.

The following video on the motivational strategies used by Zappos is a good place to begin our discussion of motivation in business:



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