GLOBAL
EDITION

Essentials of Organizational Behavior

FIFTEENTH EDITION

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$32,000, but it is almost impossible to achieve. Which would you try for? If you selected level three, you are likely a high achiever.

McClelland's theory of needs, unlike Maslow's hierarchy, suggests that needs are more like motivating factors than strict needs for survival.[10] In McClelland and colleagues' theory, there are three primary needs:

- **Need for achievement (nAch)** is the need to excel or achieve to a set of standards.
- **Need for power (nPow)** is the need to make others behave in a way they would not have otherwise.
- **Need for affiliation (nAff)** is the need to establish friendly and close interpersonal relationships.

McClelland and subsequent researchers focused most of their attention on nAch.[11] In general, high achievers perform best when they perceive their probability of success as 0.5—that is, a fifty–fifty chance. They dislike gambling with high odds because they get no achievement satisfaction from success that comes by pure chance. Similarly, they dislike low odds (high probability of success) because then there is no challenge to their skills. Based on prior nAch research, we can predict some relationships between nAch and job performance. First, when employees have a high level of nAch, they tend to exhibit more positive moods and be more interested in the task at hand.[12] Second, employees high on nAch tend to perform very well in high-stakes conditions on the job, like work walkthroughs or sales encounters.[13]

The other needs within the theory also have research support. First, the nPow concept also has research support, but it may be more familiar to people in broad terms than in relation to the original definition.[14] We will discuss power much more in the chapter on power and politics. Second, the nAff concept is also well established and accepted in research—for example, one study of 145 teams suggests that groups composed of employees with a high nAff tend to perform the best, exhibit the most open communication, and experience the least amount of conflict (compared with the other needs).[15] Additional research suggests that our individual differences (discussed in the chapter on personality and values) may affect whether we can satisfy these needs. For example, a high degree of neuroticism can prevent one from fulfilling the nAff, whereas agreeableness supports fulfillment of this need; interestingly, extraversion had no significant effect.[16] Furthermore, some evidence suggests that women may be more likely to have more nAff needs than men.[17]

The degree to which we have each of the three needs is difficult to measure, and therefore the theory is difficult to put into practice. A behavior may satisfy many different needs, and many different behaviors may be directed at satisfying one given need, making needs difficult to isolate and examine.[18] Therefore, the concepts are helpful, but they are not often used objectively.

CONTEMPORARY THEORIES OF MOTIVATION

Contemporary theories of motivation have a reasonable degree of evidence supporting them. We call them "contemporary theories" because they represent the latest thinking in explaining employee motivation. This does not mean they are unquestionably right, however.

Need for achievement (nAch)
The need to excel or achieve to a set of standards.

Need for power (nPow)
The need to make others behave in a way in which they would not have behaved otherwise.

Need for affiliation (nAff)
The need to establish friendly and close interpersonal relationships.

Self-Determination Theory

"It's strange," said Jordan. "I started work at the Humane Society as a volunteer. I put in fifteen hours a week helping people adopt pets. And I loved coming to work. Then, three months ago, they hired me full-time at eleven dollars an hour. I am doing the same work I did before. But I'm not finding it as much fun."

Does Jordan's reaction seem counterintuitive? One explanation can be found in **self-determination theory**, which proposes that employees' well-being and performance are influenced by their motivation for certain job activities, including the sense of choice over what they do, how motivating the task is in and of itself, how rewards influence motivation, and how work satisfies psychological needs.[19] This *meta-theory* (or a collection of related theories behind a common theme) is widely used and contains several sub-theories, including cognitive evaluation theory and self-concordance theory, discussed next.

COGNITIVE EVALUATION THEORY Much research on self-determination theory in organizational behavior (OB) has focused on **cognitive evaluation theory (CET)**, a sub-theory that suggests that extrinsic rewards will reduce intrinsic interest in a task.[20] When people are paid for work, it feels less like something they *want* to do and more like something they *must* do. For example, if a computer programmer values writing code out of a love for solving problems, a bonus for writing a certain number of lines of code every day could feel coercive, and the programmer's intrinsic motivation could suffer.

CET suggests that some caution in the use of extrinsic rewards to motivate is wise, and that pursuing goals from intrinsic motives (such as a strong interest in the work itself) is more sustaining to human motivation than are extrinsic rewards. In support, research confirms that intrinsic motivation contributes to the quality of work, while incentives contribute to the quantity of work. Also, effects of intrinsic motivation may be weaker when incentives are directly tied to performance (such as a monetary bonus for each call made in a call center).[21]

SELF-CONCORDANCE An outgrowth of self-determination theory is **self-concordance theory**, which considers how strongly people's reasons for pursuing goals are consistent with their interests and core values. OB research suggests that people who pursue work goals that align with their interests and values are more satisfied with their jobs, feel they fit into their organizations better, and perform better.[22] Across cultures, if individuals pursue goals because of intrinsic interest, they are more likely to attain goals, are happier when they do, and are happy even if they are unable to attain them.[23] Why? Because they feel like they are more competent at accomplishing the goal and like they fit better with their organization.[24]

BASIC PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS Similar to Maslow's and McClelland's theories, discussed in the prior section, self-determination theory also suggests that there are several basic psychological needs that affect work motivation. When they are satisfied, we tend to be more motivated; when they are frustrated, we tend to be less motivated. *Need for relatedness* is very similar to nAff, discussed in the prior section. However, **need for autonomy** and **need for competence** are two newer needs that correspond with the need to feel in control and autonomous at work and the need to feel like we are good at what we

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Self-determination theory
A meta-theory of motivation at work that is concerned with autonomy, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and the satisfaction of psychological work needs.

Cognitive evaluation theory
A sub-theory of self-determination theory in which extrinsic rewards for behavior tend to decrease the overall level of motivation, if the rewards are seen as controlling or reduce their sense of competence.

Self-concordance
The degree to which people's reasons for pursuing goals are consistent with their interests and core values.

Need for autonomy
The need to feel in control and autonomous at work.

Need for competence
The need to feel like we are good at what we do and be proud of it.

do and are proud of it.[25] Of all the three needs, however, the autonomy need is the most important for attitudinal and affective outcomes, whereas the competence need appears to be most important for predicting performance.[26] Also, when using extrinsic rewards, need satisfaction matters less for performance when the rewards are directly salient and clear.[27]

What does all this mean? Managers need to design jobs so that they are motivating, provide recognition, and support employee growth and development. Employees who feel autonomous and free in what they choose to do are likely to be more motivated by their work and committed to their employers. Furthermore, employees can satisfy many of these needs through helping others.[28] As Walmart leadership coach, Lucy Duncan, suggests about Walmart associates, if you take the time to incorporate self-determination theory in your workplace, "you will be blown away with associate satisfaction."[29]

Goal-Setting Theory

Goal-setting theory
A theory that specific and difficult goals, with feedback, lead to higher performance.

You've likely heard this a number of times: "Just do your best. That's all anyone can ask." But what does "do your best" mean? Do we ever know whether we have achieved that vague goal? Research on **goal-setting theory** reveals the impressive effects of goal specificity, challenge, and feedback on performance. Under the theory, intentions to work toward a goal are considered a major source of work motivation.[30]

SPECIFICITY, DIFFICULTY, AND FEEDBACK   Goal-setting theory is well supported. Evidence strongly suggests that *specific* goals increase performance; that *difficult* goals, when accepted, produce higher performances than do easy goals; and that *feedback* leads to higher performance than does non-feedback.[31] Why? First, goals that are specific explicitly direct attention toward what needs to be accomplished. Second, once a difficult task has been accepted, we can expect the employee to exert a high level of effort to try to achieve it. Third, people do better when they get feedback on how well they are progressing toward their goals—that is, feedback guides behavior. But all feedback is not equally potent. Self-generated feedback—with which employees can monitor their own progress or receive feedback from the task process itself—is more powerful than externally generated feedback.[32]

If employees can participate in the setting of their own goals, will they try harder? The evidence is mixed, although across studies it appears that they will not perform any better.[33] In some studies, participatively set goals yielded superior performance; in others, individuals performed best when assigned goals by their boss. If goals are not set by the employee, then the manager needs to ensure that the employee clearly understands its purpose and importance.[34]

GOAL COMMITMENT, TASK CHARACTERISTICS, AND NATIONAL CULTURE   Three factors influence the goals–performance relationship: *goal commitment, task characteristics*, and *national culture*.

1. **Goal commitment**. Goal-setting theory assumes an individual is committed to the goal and determined not to shirk or abandon it. The individual (1) believes they can achieve the goal and (2) wants to achieve it.[35] Goal commitment is most likely to occur when employees expect that their efforts will pay off in goal attainment, when people of higher status are watching and aware of the goal, and when accomplishing the goal is attractive to them.[36]

2. **Task characteristics.** Goals themselves seem to affect performance more strongly when tasks are simple rather than complex, and when the tasks are independent rather than interdependent.[37] On interdependent tasks, group goals along with delegation of tasks are preferable. Unplanned disturbances also play a role. If distractions or events outside your control limit how quickly you can make progress, chances are you will become frustrated and less enthusiastic.[38] For example, co-workers who constantly slow down progress on projects can be very frustrating.

3. **National culture.** In collectivistic and high power-distance cultures, achievable moderate goals can be more motivating than difficult ones.[39] Assigned goals appear to generate greater goal commitment in high than in low power-distance cultures.[40] More research is needed to assess how goal constructs might differ across cultures.

Although goal setting can be positive, employees and managers should be careful not to overdo it.[41] For example, goals might impede learning because we become too focused on achievement, we may choose the wrong type or form of goal which may impede performance, and we may fall prey to escalation of commitment (see the chapter on perception and individual decision making) if we are not careful. If you want to maximize the extent to which goal setting is successful, recent research suggests that setting a cadence of accountability can help, and monitoring of goals can lead to more frequent goal attainment, especially when goal progress is publicly announced.[42]

INDIVIDUAL AND PROMOTION FOCI   Research has found that people differ in the way they regulate their thoughts and behaviors during goal pursuit.[43] Generally, people fall into one of two categories, though they can belong to both. Those with a **promotion focus** strive for advancement and accomplishment, and approach conditions that move them closer toward desired goals. Those with a **prevention focus** strive to fulfill duties and obligations, as well as avoid conditions that pull them away from desired goals. Although you would be right to note that both strategies are in the service of goal accomplishment, the way they get there is quite different. As an example, consider studying for an exam. You could engage in promotion-focused activities such as reading class materials, or you could engage in prevention-focused activities such as refraining from doing things that would get in the way of studying, such as playing video games.

> **Promotion focus**
> A self-regulation strategy that involves striving for goals through advancement and accomplishment.

> **Prevention focus**
> A self-regulation strategy that involves striving for goals by fulfilling duties and obligations.

You may ask, "Which is the better strategy?" Well, the answer depends on the outcome you are striving for. A promotion (but not a prevention) focus is related to higher levels of task performance, citizenship behavior, well-being, and innovation; a prevention (but not a promotion) focus is related to safety performance. Ideally, it is probably best to be both promotion *and* prevention oriented, depending upon the situation.[44] Employees and managers should set achievable goals, remove distractions, and provide structure for these individuals.[45] Furthermore, research suggests that if an individuals' focus matches their supervisor's, they will report higher relationship quality and be more committed to the relationship.[46]

GOAL-SETTING IMPLEMENTATION   How do managers set goals in their organizations? That is often left up to the individual manager. Some managers set aggressive performance targets—what General Electric called "stretch goals." For example, Motorola once sought to reduce how long it took to close their year-end books from *six weeks* to *four days.*[47] Some leaders, such as the CEO of Telltale Games, are known for their demanding

performance goals—some of which even suggest game developers to weather the "crunch," a sudden spike in work hours that require them to work as many as 20 hours a day. But many managers do not set goals. When asked whether their jobs had clearly defined goals, a minority of respondents to a survey said yes.[48]

Management by objectives (MBO)
A program that encompasses specific goals, participatively set, for an explicit time period and including feedback on goal progress.

A more systematic way to utilize goal setting is with **management by objectives (MBO)**, an initiative most popular in the 1970s but still used today.[49] MBO emphasizes participatively set goals that are tangible, verifiable, and measurable. As Exhibit 7-3 shows, the organization's overall objectives are translated into specific cascading objectives for each level (divisional, departmental, individual). Because lower-unit managers jointly participate in setting their own goals, MBO works from the bottom up as well as from the top down. The result is a hierarchy that links objectives at one level to those at the next.

You will find MBO programs in many organizations from different industries, and many of these have led to performance gains.[50] A version of MBO, called *management by objectives and results* (MBOR), has been used for over thirty years in the governments of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.[51] However, the popularity of these programs does not mean they always work.[52] When MBO fails, the culprits tend to be unrealistic expectations, lack of commitment by top management, and inability or unwillingness to allocate rewards based on goal accomplishment.

GOAL SETTING AND ETHICS If we emphasize the attainment of goals, what is the cost? The answer is probably found in the standards we set for goal achievement. For example, when money is tied to goal attainment (e.g., getting money), we may focus on the money and become willing to compromise ourselves ethically. Moreover, a focus on the outcome (especially if the goal is difficult) may make unethical behavior more likely.[53] Time pressure also increases as we are nearing a goal, which can tempt us to act unethically to achieve it.[54] Goal setting can lead to unethical behavior in a different way: through depletion.[55] For example, if the kitchen staff is exhausted and overloaded, they might be more prone to take shortcuts in food preparation and cleaning that put food safety in danger.

EXHIBIT 7-3
Cascading of Objectives
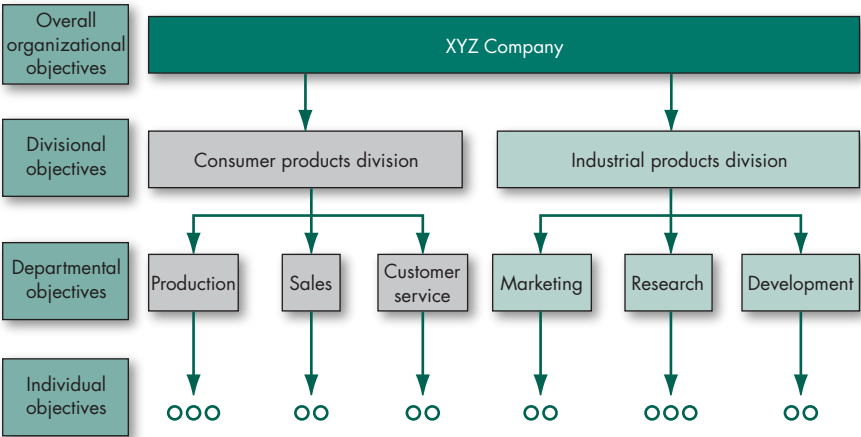
OTHER CONTEMPORARY THEORIES OF MOTIVATION

Self-determination theory and goal-setting theory are well supported contemporary theories of motivation. But they are far from the only noteworthy OB theories on the subject. Self-efficacy, reinforcement, and expectancy theories reveal different aspects of our motivational processes and tendencies.

Self-Efficacy Theory

Self-efficacy theory, a component of *social cognitive theory* or *social learning theory,* refers to an individual's belief of being capable of performing a task.[56] For example, professional basketball players with high self-efficacy believe they can play very well. In difficult situations people with low self-efficacy are more likely to lessen their effort or give up altogether, while those with high self-efficacy will try harder to master the challenge.[57]

Self-efficacy
An individual's belief of being capable of performing a task.

Self-efficacy can (but not always) create a positive spiral in which those with high efficacy become more engaged in their tasks and then, in turn, increase performance, which increases efficacy further.[58] Intelligence and personality are linked to higher self-efficacy.[59] People who are intelligent, conscientious, and emotionally stable are so much more likely to have high self-efficacy that some researchers argue self-efficacy is less important than prior research suggested.[60]

INFLUENCING SELF-EFFICACY IN OTHERS How can managers help their employees achieve high levels of self-efficacy? By bringing goal-setting theory and self-efficacy theory together. As Exhibit 7-4 shows, employees whose managers set difficult goals for them (and, by extension, communicate their confidence in the employees) will have a higher level of self-efficacy and set higher goals for their own performance.

Research also suggests that there are four ways to increase self-efficacy: (1) Give employees relevant experiences with the task (i.e., *enactive mastery*), (2) Enable them to watch someone else do the task (i.e., *vicarious modeling*), (3) Reassure the employees, letting them know that they have "what it takes" to do the task (i.e., *verbal persuasion*), and (4) Tell them to "get psyched up" (i.e., *arousal*)—getting energized will enable the employees to approach the task more positively (although this last step is probably not a good idea if the task is "low key," like writing a sales report. [61]

One of the best ways for a manager to use verbal persuasion is through the *Pygmalion effect,* a term based on the Greek myth about a sculptor (Pygmalion) who fell in love with a statue he carved. The Pygmalion effect is a form of *self-fulfilling prophecy* in which believing something can make it true. Here, it is often used to describe "that what one person expects can come to serve a self-fulfilling prophecy."[62] For example, if we identify those in the office with the highest leadership potential, we may treat them in such a way where they eventually become a leader.[63] However, we may find leaders in unexpected places, as "diamonds in the rough"—Dov Frohman notes, "Leaders are found in the strangest places. Often the best candidates turn out to be people from outside the mainstream … who at first glance one would never expect would have leadership potential."[64] The Pygmalion approach can be effective in the workplace, with replicable results and enhanced effects when leader–subordinate relationships are strong.[65]

Training programs often make use of enactive mastery by having people practice and build their skills. In fact, one reason training works is that it increases self-efficacy,