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Two-Factor Theory of Motivation

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by **Frederick Herzberg**

One of the main content theories of motivation, the Two-Factor Theory was proposed by American psychologist Frederick Herzberg. According to this theory, there are two types of factors that influence motivation and satisfaction among individuals, particularly those who work in the employment sector.

Note: Not to be confused with the “Two-Factor Theory of *Emotion*”, by Schachter and Singer.

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Origin of the Theory

In 1959, Herzberg conducted a study with 200 engineers and accountants as the subjects. They were asked to recollect their experiences and feelings (positive or negative) they had at work, and the reasons behind the way they felt. Based on the subjective data from the respondents, Herzberg began to analyze their job attitudes. From the study, he proposed a two-factor approach when attempting to understand motivation among employees.

The Two-Step Approach

The Two-Factor Theory includes two types of factors that affect how motivated or satisfied an employee is at work. These are comprised of hygiene factors and motivator factors.

Hygiene Factors

Hygiene factors are those that need to be addressed by a business in such a way that they would not result to the employee's unpleasant experiences and feelings at work. The satisfaction of hygiene factors motivates employees in their work. The hygiene factors are:

1. Wages, salaries and other financial remuneration
2. Company policy and administration
3. Quality of interpersonal relations
4. Working conditions
5. Feelings of job security
6. Quality of supervision

Motivator Factors

Motivator factors emerge from the need of an individual to achieve personal growth. Job satisfaction results from the presence of motivator factors. Moreover, effective motivator factors do not only lead to job satisfaction, but also to better performance at work. The motivator factors are:

1. Challenging or stimulating work
2. Status
3. Opportunity for advancement
4. Responsibility
5. Sense of personal growth/job achievement
6. Acquiring recognition

Application

The two-factor theory of motivation can be used to analyze any evidence of de-motivated employees at work. Applying Herzberg's model, these evidences may include a low level of productivity, poor quality of production and/or service, poor employee-employer relationships, strikes and industrial disputes concerning pay and/or working condition complaints. Following a thorough assessment on the hygiene factors of the business and the motivator factors concerning employees at work, Herzberg suggested that the business' management to apply three methods in which work can be rearranged:

1. Job Enlargement
2. Job Rotation
3. Job Enrichment

Supportive Evidence

The study focusing on the Two-Factor Theory has been repeated 16 times in various

populations and work settings, according to Herzberg. The results of the latter two-factor theory studies had been in agreement with the findings of the original study. This proves that the Two-Factor Theory deserves being one of the well-regarded theories on job attitudes, particularly in intrinsic motivation of employees.

Criticisms

The Two-Factor Theory has been criticized by behaviourists due to its general assumption that satisfied workers have greater productivity. In addition, critics said that a statistical theory such as this explains that a management must work primarily to satisfy the employees, which may lead to lower business output.

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