CHAPTER 4

Engaging Employees in More Productive Ways of Working

# Suggestions for engaging people by (i) responding to their needs and (ii) designing more interesting and engaging work

Job design is different today than it was several years ago when these models were introduced. It is also different in public service organizations. The website will provide additional ideas for adapting these models to the context of contemporary organizations.

**Readings:**

***‘Engaging employees in more productive ways of working’*** inCunningham, J.B. (2016). SHRM in the public arena: A managerial perspective. Palgrave-MacMillan, Chapter 4, pp. 68-88.

# Introduction to engaging employees

There are various ways to implement the chapter objectives in illustrating how to apply the various frameworks for enriching a job’s design and improving motivation. I like to encourage people to initially develop a set of principles for engaging employees and then apply these principles using various job enrichment approaches.

You might ask yourself about the assumptions you have about motivating different people (women, union workers, millennials, for example). Then, you might rank order how you would motivate a group of people (such as a group of managers and union employees (E.L. 2).

At the end of your rankings, you might ask about your assumptions and principles you would use.

The lesson here for me is: Try not to make assumptions but, instead, ask people what motivates them? When it is difficult to ask them, it is more appropriate to think that they have the same needs as we do.

I end this part of the exercise by asking people about the assumptions they had about managers and union workers when they completed the exercise and if their assumptions closer to Theory X and Theory Y. Most people will suggest that neither Theory X or Y are appropriate as they are polar opposites. However, in the exercise, some of their views might reflect Theory X assumptions. I, then, encourage them to develop their own theory of motivation based on updated evidence of what people say they need. I give them my set of principles which are neither Theory X or Y, but are Theory ‘B’ (‘B’ stands for my name).

**Job enrichment**

A key part of this chapter focuses on way to enrich jobs and improve the organizational designs where people work.

Herzberg nicely points out that engagement and motivation results from the design of work. You might review the youtube connection on Herzberg. The basic idea he had was that managers will drive themselves crazy by trying to be overly responsive to people and all their unique hygiene needs. If managers continually try to address hygiene needs, this is short term motivation and, in many cases, managers will find themselves in a never ending cycle and trying to do more and more. The only true motivation, according to Herzberg is when the catalyst for action is within the person. And, the only way to get this is through designing intrinsically.

While the Hackman and Oldham framework is more popular among researchers, Herzberg is useful. As with all frameworks, they need to be upgraded for the new realities we are finding in organizations. In doing this, I begin with Herzberg and update his factors with current research such as that which is being conducted in the U.K.[[1]](#endnote-1)

After reviewing different models, pick a public sector organization and define 5-6 key motivational factors building on the assumption that we need to be flexible in adapting our models for certain organizations given that there might not be a universal model which is applicable to all organizations and jobs.

# References

1. Parker, S.K., & Wall, T. (1998) Job and work design: Organizing work to promote wellbeing and effectiveness. London: Sage; Parker, S.K., Wall, T.D., & Cordery, J.L. (2001) Future work design research and practice: Towards an elaborated model of work design. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 74: 413–440; see also: Hackman, J.R., & Oldham, G. R. (2010) Not what it was and not what it will be: The future of work design. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 31: 463-479. This issue of the Journal of Organizational Behavior has an update on the field. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)