Motivation at Work

Module Preview

Work meets several human needs. Work that puts us in flow is both satisfying and enriching. The growing field of industrial-organizational psychology attempts to match people to work, enhance employee satisfaction and productivity, and explore strategies for effective workplace management.
People who excel are often self-disciplined individuals with strong achievement motivation. Effective leaders build on people's strengths, work with them to set specific and challenging goals, and adapt their leadership style to the situation.

Module Guide

Introduction

➤ Lectures: Flow; Flow in "Good Business"
➤ Feature Film: *Mr. Holland's Opus* and Flow
➤ Exercises: A Job, a Career, or a Vocation?; Assessing Flow

39-1. *Explain the concept of flow, and identify three subfields of industrial-organizational psychology.*

Work helps satisfy several levels of Maslow's pyramid of needs. Work supports us, connects us to others, and helps define us. People may view their work as a *job,* a *career,* or a *calling*. When work fully engages our skills, we experience **flow**. We are completely involved and have a diminished awareness of self and time. Flow experiences boost our sense of self-esteem, competence, and well-being.

Industrial-organizational (I/O) psychology aims to apply psychology's principles to the workplace through its primary subfields of personnel psychology, organizational psychology, and human factors psychology. ***Personnel psychology*** applies the discipline's methods and principles to selecting and evaluating workers. ***Organizational psychology*** considers how work environments and management styles influence worker motivation, satisfaction, and productivity. Module 22 introduced *human factors psychology,* which explores how machines and environments can be optimally designed to fit human abilities.

Personnel Psychology

➤ Lectures: The Hogan Personality Inventory—A Strengths Approach to Personnel Assessment and Selection; Graduate and Professional School Interviews; Interviewing for Integrity
➤ Exercise/Project: Self-Confirming Interviews

39-2. *Describe how personnel psychologists help organizations with employee selection, work place-ment, and performance appraisal.*

Personnel psychologists aim to identify people's strengths and match them with specific organizational tasks. The first step to a stronger organization is a strengths-based selection system. Personnel psychologists use various tools to assess applicants and decide who is best suited to the job, including ability tests, personality tests, and behavioral observations. Unstructured interviews frequently foster the *interviewer illusion*—an illusory overconfidence in one's ability to predict employee success. **Structured interviews** offer a disciplined method of collecting information. They pinpoint job-relevant strengths and enhance interview reliability and validity. Performance appraisals include checklists, graphic rating scales, and behavior rating scales. Some organizations practice *360-degree feedback,* in which you rate yourself, your supervisor, and your manager, and vice versa. Personnel psychologists help managers decide which employees to retain, how to appropriately reward and pay people, and how to better harness their strengths. Job appraisals can also serve to affirm workers' strengths and motivate needed improvements.

Organizational Psychology: Motivating Achievement

➤ Lecture: Organizational Citizenship
➤ Exercises: The Needs Assessment Questionnaire; Desire for Control; Achievement and Intrinsic Motivation

39-3. *Define* achievement motivation, *and explain why organizations would employ an I/O psychologist to help motivate employees and foster employee satisfaction.*

Achievement motivation is the desire for significant accomplishment, for mastering skills or ideals, for control, and for rapidly attaining a high standard. Those who achieve the most are distinguished not so much by natural ability as by hard work and daily discipline. Self-discipline has been a better predictor of school performance, attendance, and graduation honors than intelligence scores have been. What distinguishes successful people from their equally talented peers is *grit*.

Organizations turn to I/O psychologists to help motivate employees and foster employee satisfaction because research shows that the most productive and engaged workers are those working in satisfying environments. Positive moods at work foster creativity, persistence, and helpfulness. Engaged workers know what's expected of them, have what they need to do their work, feel fulfilled in their work, and perceive that they are part of something significant. Worker satisfaction and engagement are associated with lower absenteeism, higher productivity, and greater profits.

➤ Lecture: Managers' Implicit Assumptions About Personnel; Charisma

39-4. *Describe some effective management techniques.*

Effective managers discern their employees' natural talents, match tasks to suit those talents, and then give people freedom to do what they do best. They care about how their people feel about their work and reinforce positive behaviors through recognition and reward. To foster productivity, managers work with people to define specific, challenging goals; elicit commitments to implementation plans; and provide feedback on progress.

➤ Exercises: Theory X and Y Orientation Scale; Assessing Leadership Style
➤ Project/Exercise: Describing Good Leaders
➤ Video: Segment 30 of the Scientific American *Frontiers* series, 2nd ed.: The Power of Persuasion

Some managers excel at **task leadership**—setting standards, organizing work, and focusing attention on goals. They keep a group centered on its mission. Task leaders typically have a directive style. Other managers excel at **social leadership**—explaining decisions, mediating conflicts, and building high-achieving teams. Social leaders often delegate authority and welcome the participation of team members. Research suggests that effective managers exhibit a high degree of both task and social leadership. Many successful business have increased employee participation in decision making, resulting in a *voice effect,* the idea that employees who are allowed to voice their opinion in a decision will respond more positively to the decision.