What motivates employees according to over 40 years of motivation surveys

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Theoretical background

The relationship between people and their work has long attracted psychologists and other behavioural scientists. Psychologists' interests, dating back to the early years of the twentieth century, reflect the development of the industrial psychology and vocational guidance disciplines. Their work dealt with measurement of aptitudes and abilities to improve the job-person fit. The study of motivation now forms an integral part of both industrial and vocational psychology. However, in both fields, concepts like need, motive, goal, incentive and attitude are appearing with greater frequency than are the concepts of aptitude, ability and skill (Vroom, 1995, p. 4).

Three assumptions guide contemporary research on human motivation:

(1) Motivation is inferred from a systematic analysis of how personal, task and environmental characteristics influence behaviour and job performance.

(2) Motivation is not a fixed trait. It refers to a dynamic internal state resulting from the influence of personal and situational factors. As such, motivation may change with changes in personal, social or other factors.

(3) Motivation affects behaviour, rather than performance (Nicholson, 1995: p. 330-1). Initiatives designed to enhance job performance by increasing employee motivation may not be successful if there is a weak link between job performance and an employee's efforts.

Early management theories, such as Frederick W. Taylor's *Scientific Management Theory* suggested using financial compensation to impel motivation and job performance. Personality and learning theories in psychology during the early 1900s led to the development of motivational programmes to enhance performance by creating organizational conditions that matched need satisfaction with on-task efforts. Research on the determinants of choice, from the 1940s through the 1960s, led to the development of predictive models of workplace behaviours, including turnover (Nicholson, 1995, p. 332).

The rise of behaviourism, emphasized B.F. Skinner's *Operant Learning and Reinforcement Theory* as a means of altering workplace behaviour. Behaviour modification techniques were then developed to enhance job performance. And job redesign was used to strengthen employee motivation by creating work environments that promoted a sense of achievement, the perception of

competence, and autonomy. The past two decades have seen tremendous growth in the use of goal setting and management by objectives (MBO) programmes. Thus, modern approaches to motivation may be organized into three related clusters (Kanfer, 1992):

- personality-based views;
- cognitive choice/decision approaches, and
- goal/self-regulation perspectives.

Goal/self-regulation frameworks of work motivation emphasize the factors that influence goal striving which focuses on the relationship between goals and work behaviour (Locke and Latham, 1990). The idea is that goal setting produces high performance. The basic premise of goal setting theory is that an employee's conscious intentions (goals) are primary determinants of task-related motivation since goals direct their thoughts and actions (Locke, 1968). Results of goal/self-regulation research indicate two critical preconditions of a positive goal-performance relationship: acceptance of the goal assignment and provisions for performance feedback. More recently, cybernetic control (Lord and Kernan, 1989), resource allocation (Kanfer and Ackerman, 1989), and social-cognitive theories (e.g. Bandura, 1986) have been used to examine more closely how particular attributes of a goal, a person and a situation influence goal striving and performance (Nicholson, 1995, p. 334). These findings suggest that task demands, self-efficacy, goal commitment, and task orientation are important determinants of the effectiveness of goal setting methods (Nicholson, 1995, p. 334).

Cognitive choice/decision approaches of work motivation emphasize two determinants of choice and action: expectations; and subjective valuations of the consequences associated with each alternative. These expectancy value (EV) theories are intended to predict an individual's choices or decisions. More integrative frameworks have been developed. They incorporate the classic assumptions of EV theories in a broader framework of decision making that includes individual differences in personality and other motivational processes, including self-regulation (Nicholson, 1995, p. 332).

Personality-based perspectives of work motivation provide the main support of the research reported here. Personality-based views emphasize the influence of enduring personal characteristics as they affect goal choice and striving. One type of personality-based work motivation perspective concerns models based on broad theories of personality, such as Abraham Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs Theory.* Workplace behaviour is posited to be determined by a person's current need state in certain universal need categories. A second type of personality perspective considers the influence of a small set of psychological motives on behaviour and performance. This perspective focuses on the role of individual differences in the strength of achievement motives (e.g. Clayton Aldefer's *ERG theory*, discussed below). Individuals with a high need for achievement are more likely to want and/or select challenging tasks. Other motive theories did not stress individual differences, but rather emphasized the conditions that arouse

the motive and its influence on behaviour. For instance, in the *Equity Theory* – primarily from J. Stacey Adams' work – the arousal of the justice motive occurs when an employee perceives an imbalance in his/her inputs and outcomes relative to others' (Bowditch and Buono, 1997, p. 89 and 103; Nicholson, 1995: p. 333). Subsequently, the employee may engage in behaviours to reduce the perceived inequity.

While these personality-based theories do not necessarily predict motivation or behaviour, they can provide a basic understanding of what energizes (motivates) individuals. The main strength of Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs Theory* is the identification of individual needs for the purpose of motivating behaviour. By appealing to an employee's unfulfilled needs, managers may influence performance.

Alderfer's *ERG Theory* is one attempt to modify Maslow's hierarchy by reducing the number of need categories. Alderfer found only three levels of need:

(1) existence or survival (E);

(2) relatedness (R), dealing with social interaction and the external facets of esteem (recognition and status from others); and

(3) growth (G), focusing on the desire to achieve and develop a person's potential and the internal facets of ego fulfilment (success and autonomy).

David McClelland's *Socially Acquired Needs Theory* proposes that people are influenced by a need for achievement, power, or affiliation and that the strength of that particular need will vary according to the situation. Studies have found that employees with a high need for achievement will set higher goals than will those with lower achievement needs.

Another research-based theory is Herzberg's *Motivator-Hygiene Theory.* Herzberg's research suggested that motivation is composed of two largely unrelated dimensions:

(1) job-related factors which can prevent dissatisfaction, but do not promote employees' growth and development (hygiene); and

(2) job-related factors that encourage growth (motivators).

While there has been some support for Herzberg's thesis, most empirical studies refute predictions based on this theory. Needs for salary, recognition and responsibility, for example, have been shown to operate both as motivators and as hygiene factors (Maidani, 1991).

In general, the theories mentioned here continue to provide the foundation for a significant amount of organization and management development and training, including work redesign and career development. These work motivation theories are a part of the broad field of human motivation study and have direct implications for individual workplace behaviour. Moreover, they may be applied to a variety of management practices aimed at motivating employees.

What motivates employees?

At some point during their lives, virtually every person works. Working is so commonplace that the question, "What motivates people to work?", is seldom

asked. We are much more likely to wonder why people climb mountains or commit suicide than to question the motivational basis of their work (Vroom, 1995, pp. 34-5). This article attempts to address this matter by asking employees "What factors motivate you in your jobs?" Their responses are particularly applicable to the content motivation theories discussed in the previous section.

Exploring the attitudes that employees hold concerning factors that motivate them to work is important to creating an environment that fosters employee motivation. By the 1930s, employee attitude surveys were being used frequently in business to assess employee morale (Schneider, Ashworth, Higgs and Carr, 1996, p. 695). In 1949, Bellows reported that employee attitude surveys constituted a useful means for comparing the effectiveness of supervision and as diagnostics for supervisory training. They still are a direct approach to finding out what employees perceive as job-related motivational factors. With the results of surveys presented here, an organization is likely to gain information that can be used by managers to improve employee motivation (Kovach, 1980, p. 57) and employee performance.

Past studies focusing on this topic have noted what employees say motivates them to do their best work. These studies date back to the 1940s and sought primarily answers to the question, "Why do workers work?" If a company knows what drives employees to work, it is in a better position to stimulate them to perform well (Kovach, 1987, p. 58).

In most instances, employee performance is determined by three things:

(1) ability;

(2) the work environment; and

(3) motivation (Griffin, 1990, p. 437).

If an employee lacks ability, appropriate training can be employed. If there is an environmental problem, altering the environment to promote higher performance is the key. However, if motivation is the problem, the solution is more complex and more challenging. For motivational problems, the best source of information is the employee. Employees must be asked on a regular basis what sparks and sustains their desire to work. Their responses may lead the employer to redesign jobs, increase pay, change the working environment, or give more credit for work done. The key is, however, that managers avoid the assumption that what motivates *them,* motivates their employees as well (Wessler, 1984, p. 29).

Over 40 years of surveys
For many years researchers administered employee surveys in order to address the challenge of employee motivation. One of the first surveys was conducted in 1946 (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969, p. 35). It was done by the Labour Relations Institute of New York and reported in *Foreman Facts.* The subjects included

industrial employees. Similar surveys were administered in 1980 (Kovach, 1980), in 1986 (Kovach, 1987), and in 1992 (reported here).

In 1946, industrial employees were asked to rank ten "job reward" factors in terms of personal preference. At the top of the list (see Table I) was (full) appreciation of work done. At the bottom of the list was (tactful) discipline. In 1980, 200 employees ranked the same ten items presented in the 1946 survey. At the top of the list for employees was interesting work; at the bottom of the list was tactful discipline. In 1986, Kovach (1987) conducted a similar study of 1,000 industrial employees. The list was headed again by interesting work and ended with sympathetic help with personal problems. The present study highlights the importance of good wages. It also confirms the lack of interest in sympathetic help with personal problems.

| Years | Factors | |
	Most important	Least important
1946	Appreciation	Discipline
1980	Interesting work	Discipline
1986	Interesting work	Personal problems
1992	Good wages	Personal problems

Table I.
The most and
least important
motivational factors

In addition to comparing the employees' factor rankings, the 1986 survey analysed the employees' responses by subgroups (e.g. age and income). The underlying assumption was that the motivational potency of the factors might vary according to gender, age, income level, job type and/or organizational level (Kovach, 1987, p. 60).

The present study also was designed to explore the factors that motivate employees in their jobs. It used similar subcategories as those used in Kovach's 1986 survey. Table II indicates the subgroups and the number of respondents for each (i.e. the valid cases in each subgroup). Table III presents comparisons of employee responses from the 1946, 1980, 1986 and 1992 surveys. Table IV presents subgroup rankings based on the means and makes it possible for the rankings for each subgroup to be compared. Finally, Table V provides a summary of the subgroups reporting higher positive significant differences concerning how important each factor is in motivating them to do their best work.

Methods
A list of ten factors developed in the 1946 survey was used to construct a "factors that motivate me" survey in 1992. During 1992 approximately 550 surveys were administered to persons employed in industries such as retailing, services, manufacturing, insurance, utilities, health care and government agencies. Of that number, approximately 460 were usable, including part-time ($n = 133$) and full-time ($n = 326$) employees.

Subgroups	Number of respondents
Gender	
Male	164
Female	296
Age	
<26	85
26-34	86
35-44	66
45-54	55
55>	20
Employment status	
Part-time	133
Full-time	326
Annual income	
<$14,999	80
$15,000-24,999	130
$25,000-34,999	43
$35,000-49,999	38
$50,000>	14
Occupational category	
Clerical	94
Plant/service	69
Sales	22
Professional	39
Technical	27
Managerial	72

Table II.
Descriptions of
subgroups and the
number of respondents

Factors	1946	1980	1986	1992
Full appreciation of work done	1	2	2	2
Feeling of being in on things	2	3	3	9
Sympathetic help with personal problems	3	9	10	10
Job security	4	4	4	3
Good wages	5	5	5	1
Interesting work	6	1	1	5
Promotion and growth in the organization	7	6	6	4
Personal or company loyalty to employees	8	8	8	6
Good working conditions	9	7	7	7

Table III.
Comparisons of
employee responses in
1946, 1986 and 1992

Factors	Status		Gender		Age					Income					Occupation					
	FT	PT	M	F	<26	26-34	35-44	45-54	55>	1	2	3	4	5	Cl	Pl	S	Pr	T	M
Good working conditions	7	6*	8	7*	7	7	7	7	8	7*	7	9*	8	8	7	6	7	6	8	8
Feeling of "being in on things"	9	8	7	8	8	8	8	8	7	8	8	7	7	4	8	9²	8	8	7	7**
Tactful discipline	8	10	9	9	9	9	9	9	10	9	10	8	9	7	9	10	9	9	9	9
Appreciation for work done	2	3	5	2*	3	5	2	2	1	4	3	3	4	1	2	4	2	4	2	2
Personal loyalty to employees	6	7**	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	7	6	6
Good wages	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	5	1	1	1	1	1	1
Promotion and growth in the organization	4	4	2	4	2	2	4	4	4	2	4	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3
Sympathetic understanding of, or help, with personal problems	10	9	10	10	10	10	10	10	9	10*	9**	10**	10	9	10	8**	10	10**	10	10**
Job security	3	5	3	3	5	3	3	3	3	3	2	4	5	4	4	2	5	5	3	5
Interesting work	5	2*	4	5¹	4	4	5	6	5	5	5	5	2	2	5*	7*	4*	2*	5	4*

Notes * p < 0.01

** p < 0.052

Status: FT = full-time; PT = part-time

Gender: = M = male; F = female

Income groups: 1 = < $14,999; 2 = $15,000-24,999; 3 = $25,000-34,999; 4 = $35,000-49,999; 5 = $50,000>

Occupations: Cl = Clerical; Pl = Plant; S = Sales; Pr = Professional; T = Technical; M = Managerial

Table IV.
The "factors that
motivate me" survey,
ranked by
subgroups (1992)

Factors	Subgroups reporting higher positive significance for a factor's importance				
	Employment status	Gender	Age	Income	Occupational category
Full appreciation of work done		Women			
Feelings of "being in on things"					Managers
Sympathetic help with personal problems				≤$14,999 $15,000-24,999	Plant workers
Job security					
Good wages					
Interesting work	Part-timers	Men			Professionals
Promotion and growth in the organization					
Personal or company loyalty to employees	Full-timers				
Good working conditions	Part-timers	Women		≤$14,999	
Tactful discipline					

Table V.
Summary information: subgroups reporting comparatively higher positive significant preferences for each job factor

The respondents were asked to rank the survey's ten factors according to how important each is in motivating them, as employees, to do their best work. The most important item was to be ranked 1 and the least important factor was to be assigned the number 10. All items had to be ranked and no rank could be used more than once. The respondents also were asked to indicate their:

- gender;
- current age range;
- employment status;
- annual income; and
- occupational category to facilitate other comparisons.

These demographic data comprised the subgroups.

After data were collected on all the factors, descriptive statistics were obtained. Based on the means for each factor under each subgroup, the relative factor rankings were determined. Where the array of means ranged from 3.24 to 8.66, 3.24 was assigned a rank of 1, and 8.66 was assigned a rank of 10. Table IV presents the rankings for each factor under each of the subgroups. Tests of significance were conducted where appropriate on the subgroups of full-time employees. Such analyses revealed whether there were significant differences in the factor means in each subgroup.

Comparisons of the 1946, 1980, 1986 and 1992 research surveys on what motivates employees

The workers surveyed in 1946 came from an environment different from that of workers today. By 1946, America had come out of a depression and had just gone through a relatively labour-intensive war (Kovach, 1987, p. 59). In the years after the Second World War, the information revolution transformed industries; and the computer industry took on the role that the automobile industry had in the 1920s (Chandler, 1992, p. 12).

The leaders in the computer industry were similar to those of earlier industries, but with one striking difference. Most of them were not, as they had been in the past, entrepreneurs. Instead, they were managerial enterprises – hierarchies of lower, middle and top salaried managerial decision makers (Chandler, 1992, p. 12). Over these years the industries and economies changed, and so did the workers' values. By 1980 and 1986, after almost 40 years of relative prosperity, workers had experienced a significant rise in their living standards (Dawson and Dawson, 1991, p. 296; Kovach, 1987, p. 59). By the 1990s, after the acquisitions and mergers of the previous three decades in response to intensified competition (Chandler, 1992, pp. 26-7), it is not surprising that the importance placed on various motivational factors had changed (see Table III).

In 1946, the top motivator selected by employees revealed their need to be appreciated for work done, whereas in 1980 and 1986 the top concern was interesting work. By the 1980s, the focus was on changing the job to make it more interesting. A national random sample of 845 jobholders by the non-profit Public Agenda Foundation confirms this. Its findings indicate an impressive shift in attitudes towards work, from work as a means of survival to work as a means of enhancing self-development and self-expression (Goddard, 1989, p. 7). The importance of interesting work is also supported by Herzberg's *Motivation-Hygiene Theory*. His theory posits that employees are motivated by their own inherent need to succeed at a challenging task. The manager's job, then, is to provide opportunities for people to be motivated to achieve. Herzberg's survey of US workers clearly indicates that about 80 per cent of the factors in satisfying job opportunities come from the intrinsic elements of the job such as achievement, recognition, and the work itself (Herzberg, 1987, p. 29, 30, 32).

The second most important item for employees in 1980 and 1986 was full appreciation for work done. Employees are motivated by feedback and recognition for the work they do. Herein lies the problem. Most employers think they know how to express appreciation for a job well done. Yet, research shows that employers seldom acknowledge appreciation for employees' work; and, when they do, it is done poorly. More than 80 per cent of supervisors claim they frequently express appreciation to their subordinates, while less than 20 per cent of the employees report that their supervisors express appreciation more than occasionally. The three important principles to remember when expressing appreciation are to describe the desired behaviour in specific terms, to explain why the behaviour was helpful and actually to express thanks (Cherrington, 1992, pp. 52-3).

A careful look at the overall employee rankings for 1980 and 1986 implies that organizations were doing an adequate job of satisfying the basic needs of their workers. However, they were not doing such a good job of satisfying their ego or self-fulfilment needs (Kovach, 1987, p. 59). Thus, the employees ranked factors such as interesting work and full appreciation for work done at the top of the list, and good wages and job security near the middle.

The current survey reflects the opposite. It mirrors the increasing stagnation that employees feel as industry battles to survive in a recession and in the midst of global competition. Clearly the 1990s will provide a significant advantage to those companies which are able to resolve the paradox between organizational size and speed in the marketplace (Devanna and Tichy, 1990, pp. 455-6). In addition, the labour cost-cutting strategies of the 1980s left workers very sceptical about satisfying their basic needs, such as wages and job security. They have not recovered from the prevailing activities of that period – hostile takeovers, global competition, organizational transformations and downsizing. That environment placed many workers in a position of insecurity and uncertainty. In such times, the basic needs may resurface as the most important factors (see Table III). Therefore, good wages and job security head the list of motivational factors for employees in the 1990s.

Sandwiched between good wages and job security is the employees' concern about being appreciated for work done. People need to have feedback concerning their work and they need to feel competent. According to the ranking of the motivation factors in this survey, employees may consider good wages to be solid feedback concerning their work as well as a reward for their ability or competence. Rewards, such as wages, that reflect ability may lead to greater intrinsic motivation (Rosenfield *et al.*, 1980). This indicates that it is not necessarily the reward itself that determines how people respond, but rather the type of feedback implied by the reward. Thus, extrinsic rewards such as good pay can increase intrinsic motivation if they are perceived as providing information about competence (Wiersma, 1992, p. 102).

Regardless, the respondents to the 1992 survey were more concerned about the extrinsic rewards. Good wages was chosen as the top motivational factor for employees surveyed during those years. Developing more effective incentive programmes may be part of the solution for those employees (Denton, 1991, p. 46). In Japan, workers receive about 25 per cent of their total pay in the form of flexible bonuses. In the USA, the average is still only 1 per cent (Denton, 1991, p. 46). However, recent survey reports indicate that US workers would like to have more work incentives. In a survey of 689 US workers, from managers and professionals to technicians, artists, salespeople, labourers and clericals, 95 per cent of them rank a cash bonus as a meaningful incentive (Lovio-George, 1992, p. 113).

So far we have looked at the collective responses from the 1992 survey. It is important also to analyse the responses by subgroups (e.g. age, gender, organization level and earnings) to determine if there are variations in the larger respondent group (Kovach, 1980, p. 58). Not all demographic groups of people place the

same importance on each of the ten factors. Individuals at different organization levels, with different earning power, may have different motivational values. Hence what motivates individuals at one level of the organization may not motivate those at another level. This necessitates differentiating by income level and other demographic factors when analysing attitudes for motivational purposes (Kovach, 1980, p. 57).

The 1992 survey results according to subgroups
Employment status
When the responses are analysed according to employment status, significant differences are found (see Tables IV and V). A non-parametric test of significance showed that the two groups (full-timers and part-timers) were significantly different in the motivational value placed on working conditions, personal loyalty to employees, and interesting work. Part-timers placed considerably more emphasis on interesting work and more value on good working conditions. The full-timers placed more value on personal loyalty to employees as a motivational factor. Each of these variations was significant at least at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Gender
When the responses of men and women were analysed, significant differences were found in their motivational preferences (see Table IV). A non-parametric test of significance revealed that the means – and resulting rankings – of males and females were statistically different at the $p < 0.01$ level for working conditions, appreciation for work done, and interesting work. Women placed greater importance on appreciation for work done. They also placed more importance on good working conditions. The males, on the other hand, placed more emphasis on interesting work.

Age group
Five age groups were analysed (under 26; 26-34; 35-44; 45-54; and 55 and over) using a one-way ANOVA. The analysis of this subset showed that no two groups were significantly different at the $p < 0.05$ level. The rankings of the motivational factors were very similar among this subgroup. For example, all ages, except the 55 and over age group, decided on good wages as their first choice. Since this difference is not significant, we can generally conclude that good pay is an important motivator regardless of age.

Income
When the responses were analysed by annual income, significant differences were found in the motivational preferences of employees (see Table IV). The income groups were:

- Group 1: <$14,999;
- Group 2: $15,000-24,999;
- Group 3: $25,000-34,999;

- Group 4: $35,000-49,999; and
- Group 5: $50,000>.

A one-way ANOVA revealed that the means and resulting rankings among the different income levels were statistically different at the $p < 0.01$ and 0.05 levels for working conditions and sympathetic understanding of personal problems, respectively.

Two groups, the lower income group (group 1) and the middle-incomers (group 3), differed significantly in the values placed on good physical working conditions. The middle-incomers considered working conditions to be less important than did the lower income group.

The middle-incomers (group 3) also were significantly different in the motivational value placed on "sympathetic understanding of personal problems". While the means for group 1, group 2 and group 3 resulted in similar rankings, analysis of the group means revealed significant differences at the $p < 0.05$ level. According to the means, those with lower incomes (e.g. group 1's mean of 7.61 and group 2's mean of 7.77) placed more value on understanding of personal problems than did those in the middle income group (group 3's mean was 8.74) .

Occupation

A comparison of the six occupational groups (see Table IV) showed significant differences on three factors: the feeling of being in on things; interesting work; and a sympathetic understanding of personal problems. The occupational groups included clericals, plant workers, salespersons, professionals, technicians, and managers.

Compared to the plant workers, the managers placed considerably more importance on the feeling of being in on things. Interesting work was another variable for which there were significant differences between the groups. First, the means of the clericals and professionals were significantly different. The professionals valued interesting work much more highly than did the clerical workers. Second, the means of plant employees and four others in the subgroup (professionals, sales, managers and clericals) were significantly different. The plant workers placed less value on interesting work than did the other four groups.

Sympathetic help with personal problems was the last variable, which resulted in significant differences among the occupational categories. The two pairs of groups with significantly different means were professionals and plant employees, and managers and plant employees. The plant employees placed significantly more motivational value on help with personal problems than did the professionals and managers. According to the professionals' and managers' means and resulting rankings, this variable was the least important in getting them to do their best work.

Recommendations for management

The most striking result of the current survey is the clear indication of money and job security as motivators. Today, the economic circumstances of

employees are very different from those of earlier years. More than ever before, the standard of living and the employment future of the US worker is in jeopardy. Therefore, regardless of employment status, gender, age, income or occupational category, employees seem to be of one accord. They want what they feel is slipping away from them and what they seem to be getting less and less of from their companies: money and job security.

Because employees overall expressed the importance of pay as a motivator, an effective compensation programme is critical. The primary motivating factor that an effective compensation programme provides is the psychological effect on the individual. It is not the material value of the reward, but the boost in self-esteem that public recognition associated with monetary compensation affords (Dawson and Dawson, 1990, p. 80). This also holds true with the matter of job security. Security encompasses more than the employees' financial needs: it relates to their physical, emotional and familial wellbeing (Leibman and Weinstein, 1990, p. 50). Often, job security is associated with job loss. However, the population of insecure employees is larger than that of those who lose their jobs. Insecurity is an intrarole transition engendered by changes in a person's assumptions about self, the organization and the environment. It is not an event having a clear temporal onset and ending. Job insecurity includes concerns over the loss of a job (employment insecurity) as well as concerns about changing job content (Hartley *et al.,* 1991).

In the early 1980s, organizational downsizing came into prominence. Between one-third to one-half of all medium-size to large firms in the USA and Western Europe downsized during the 1980s and 1990s. More than 70 per cent of senior managers in downsized companies said that morale, trust and productivity suffered after downsizing, and many other managers indicated that productivity deteriorated after downsizing (Cameron, *et al.*, 1993). Ultimately, downsizing highlights the extent to which job security and productivity are intimately interwoven. Organizational downsizing has had a negative effect on job security and productivity. Job security which affects the employees' economic and psychological wellbeing must be properly incorporated into the company's compensation programme. This can contribute positively to overall employee morale and productivity.

Clearly, employees need reassurances about job security, salary raises, promotions and the health and stability of their company. However, they place high value also on full appreciation for work done. Articles on "how to motivate" employees seem to substantiate this. Several articles indicate the importance of raising employees' personal and professional self-esteem by recognizing their contributions (Dawson and Dawson, 1990, p. 79; Levesque 1987, p. 37). One survey revealed that 27 percent of workers would quit their jobs to move to a company known for giving praise and recognition (WSJ, 1989). Blanchard and Johnson (1982) popularized a technique for giving feedback and praise through their best-selling book *The One-Minute Manager.* The need to feel appreciated is deeply ingrained in all employees. Being appreciated through praise helps employees develop a positive self-concept and it meets

their needs for esteem, self-actualization, growth and achievement (Lussier, 1997, p. 377). Therefore, employers should show appreciation and give employees credit for their work. Praise for a job well done is probably the most powerful, yet least costly and most underused, motivation tool.

In most organizations recognition is reserved on the positive side for only a very small minority of super-achievers and on the negative end, for the problem employees. But, the average workers are frequently overlooked. In fact, these workers' efforts – on which the daily operation of the entire business truly depends – often go unrecognized. Managers must realize that recognition or appreciation for work done can have positive motivational effects for all employees (Levesque, 1987, p. 36) and that all employees should be recognized for the work they do.

Appreciation for work done may be manifested in the company's growth and development opportunities. These opportunities can be supported by flexible scheduling, a promotion-from-within policy, and recognition and rewards for workers' improvements and contributions. Flexible work scheduling allows workers the freedom to pursue more training or an advanced degree. A commitment to filling positions from inside the organization provides opportunities for cross-training or promotions. Moreover, recognition and rewards for workers' contributions strengthen a company's reputation for caring about its employees' professional development (Dawson and Dawson, 1990, p. 80).

Conclusions
Motivation is the number one problem facing business today (Watson, 1994, p. 4). Over the past 40 years there have been numerous surveys on what motivates employees to do their best work. In order to attain to high levels of performance, employers depend on their employees to perform at levels that positively affect the bottom line. Thus, they must understand what motivates them. Such an understanding is essential to improving productivity and, ultimately, to ensuring the success of the company. For this reason, employee surveys may be used to gain insight to employees' job motivation preferences. Often the strongest potential motivators are the things employees value, but lack. If managers adequately and regularly administer such surveys, and appropriately consider their results, companies and employees would gain a great deal. Perhaps companies would gain a competitive advantage through motivated, productive employees and the employees would gain the work-related rewards they value.

The respondents to this survey ranked as the top five factors that motivate them in their jobs:

(1) good wages;

(2) full appreciation for work done;

(3) job security;

(4) promotion and growth in the organization; and

(5) interesting work.

These factors reflect the current state of affairs in terms of employee needs and imply that reward systems and job redesign strategies – to name a few – may be used to reinforce and to motivate employees to exhibit productive behaviours.

While controversy persists, pay or good wages is generally valued by all employees, regardless of gender, occupation, age, income or employment status. Since the 1946 study, good wages continues to be ranked among the top five factors that motivate people in their jobs. Its value may best be understood in terms of the different needs employees have. With respect to the *Hierarchy of Needs Theory,* pay is an important reward because it may satisfy several of the needs in the hierarchy. It provides employees with the means to purchase items which satisfy their physiological needs, and it enables them to meet their esteem needs, since it is one measure of relative worth (Thornburg, 1992, p. 58-61).

Recognition of a job well done or full appreciation for work done is often among the top motivators of employee performance (Koch, 1990, p. 72-3; Stuart, 1992, p. 102), and involves feedback. Positive feedback follows the principles advocated in *Reinforcement Theory,* which states that behaviour is contingent on reinforcement. Examples of positive reinforcement in this context may include workplace visits by top executives to high-performance employees, personal handwritten notes of thanks accompanying paychecks, and telephone calls by top executives to employees at home (Knippen and Green, 1990, p. 4; Steele, 1992, p. 96-9).

As a result of workforce reductions becoming commonplace in this country, job security is of increasing importance to employees. Employees' reactions to the lack of job security varies. Individuals may experience severe psychological reactions to job loss and/or the threat of job loss. Low self-esteem, low self-confidence, social isolation, anxiety and powerlessness are examples of possible psychological reactions. These reactions extend beyond actual job losers to their partners and other family members. They also affect the organization. For example, not only is work commitment weakened by job insecurity, but, organizational effectiveness can deteriorate as well. Thus, outcomes of job insecurity are usually negative. To counteract such outcomes, companies often use reward strategies. Compensation strategies (i.e. severance packages and early retirement incentives), career development schemes, and outplacement techniques may accompany workforce reduction efforts. These are intended to arouse positive psychological states that encourage and sustain productive, rather than destructive, behaviour.

Promotion and growth in the organization and interesting work are longstanding factors that motivate people to do their best work. According to Herzberg's *Motivator-Hygiene Theory,* the most successful method of motivating is to build challenge and opportunity for achievement into the job itself. Moreover, McClelland's *Socially Acquired Needs* theory suggests that people with high achievement needs are motivated by challenging tasks with clearly attainable objectives, timely feedback and more responsibility for innovative assignments. Thus, both factors (promotion and growth in the organization and interesting work) often are addressed through job redesign. The aim of job redesign is to enrich a job so that the employee is more motivated to do the work. Job redesign tenets may be found in contemporary management

strategies, including employee involvement and empowerment. Workers who are more involved in their jobs display more work commitment and experience lower turnover (Jauch and Sekaran, 1978).

Workers who are more involved in job-related decisions and communications, receive reinforcement that they are competent in their jobs, and they respond by showing greater involvement and motivation (Sekaran, 1989, p. 349). With regard to empowerment, several factors must be present before employees can feel empowered. They must believe that their work is being performed competently and that their work is having a positive impact on the company. Also, it is important for employees to feel that they control their own actions (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990, p. 672-3).

Finally, this article investigated employees' attitudes concerning their preferences among ten "job reward" factors. The results here are supported by numerous other research studies indicating that monetary compensation, recognition, job security, upward mobility potential, individual growth and a sense of accomplishment are all important and enduring factors in a worker's analysis of the motivational facets of a job (Dubinsky *et al.*, 1993, pp. 29-31; Efraty and Wolfe, 1988, p. 105). In addition, the employees' responses to this present survey correspond to content theories such as Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs Theory* and the *Reinforcement Theory.* According to the content theories, managers must consider employees' needs to provide the appropriate motivation strategies. According to *Reinforcement Theory,* managers must understand the relationship between behaviours and their consequences in order to arrange contingencies that reinforce or discourage desirable or undesirable behaviours, respectively.

The results reveal also that the job-related factors that motivate employees change over time and may vary significantly across subgroups. Over more than 40 years since the first survey, employees' responses to the same ten factors have changed. Moreover, the motivational value placed on each factor may vary according to employment status, gender, income and occupation.

Additional research should be done to gain a continuous view of what motivates people to do their best work. The ability to motivate subordinates is critical to every manager's job. Demographic changes in the workplace, as well as technological advances and globalization, only accentuate the need to continue to determine what motivates people to perform well. A motivated workforce can make powerful contributions to the profits of a firm. Thus, managers would do well to review this and other articles that examine employees' job-related motivation preferences.

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