

Answers for Case Studies

Unit 6 – Leadership Skills

1. Putting Theory Into Practice

Maslow lists five types of needs: physical, security, social, status, and self-actualization. Herzberg emphasizes the importance of two types of needs—the need to feel good (called motivators) and the need to avoid discomfort (hygiene factors). McClelland argues for three factors—achievement, power, and affiliation. Expectancy theory argues that people feel more comfortable when they are in a situation that they understand and in which they feel they can operate successfully. It is the manager's job to create positive expectations and to avoid negative ones. Further, the level of comfort affects an employee's performance level directly: more comfort equals better performance and less comfort equals weaker performance. Reinforcement theory focuses on the pain or pleasure that employees feel when they interact with the manager. Positive reinforcement rewards and make a person feel good, and encourages repeat behavior of the same type; negative reinforcement is a penalty, gives pain, and discourages repeat behavior of the same type.

These last two theories don't cover precisely the same areas of concern for a manager. Expectancy theory deals with developing and maintaining an environment for the employee. A manager would use reinforcement theory to get the employee to continue positive behavior or stop negative behavior. These cover different areas. Expectancy theory deals with the employee's awareness of what will happen to him/her on the job. Reinforcement theory deals with the way in which the manager rewards or punishes the employee.

Herzberg's theory connects easily to the expectancy theory because it is based on the idea of pleasure and pain. Expectancy theory deals with the employee's anticipation of pleasure and pain; Herzberg deals with the underlying factors and situations that may create comfort or discomfort in the employee. His focus rests on motivators and hygiene factors. Herzberg's work doesn't directly tie in to reinforcement theory because it deals with underlying factors, not personal interactions.

Maslow and McClelland deal with higher or more complex motivations. Although Maslow identifies a hierarchy of needs, McClelland essentially leaves lower needs alone. He focuses on what is often called *job enrichment*. His needs are the most difficult ones for a new manager. To work with McClelland's schema, the manager must identify people by personality categories—the power seeker (the controller or organizer), the achiever (creator), and the lover of friendly affection from other colleagues.

Maslow's theory is the broadest and therefore the least specific. Many times the needs that may be creating a problem are out of the manager's control but he or she must face the problem of representing the company to the employees. Pain from inadequate salary or limited benefits may be partly lessened if the manager finds good things to say about the employee both to the employee and in that person's performance appraisal. Thus, the manager can use positive reinforcement with positive appraisal to improve the employee's expectations. If there are any special programs or rewards available, the manager can tune those to his employees or create an energetic and creative workforce.

Overall, these techniques and methods of analysis are often difficult for lower level managers to apply. What these theories can do, however, is to provide the manager with a way of seeing his world and understands his employees' responses.

2. Management by Leaders or by Teams

The two techniques (leader verses group) appear to conflict although one must have clear lines of responsibility for a group and within a team. Self-respect grows when one is treated as an equal and of value; one's value is not determined totally by the size of one's salary or perks, but in part by the interaction with others based on one's contribution to the team. This approach can enhance one's ability to feel at ease with others and to feel as good as anyone else.

3. What's "Free" Isn't Always...

Sears could have been more explicit about what it would and would not provide for retirees. Sears also needs to determine if this conflict is a people-situation or a profit-handling, public relations-situation. Sears has treated the problem as a public relations issue. Perhaps if it had treated it as a people-situation, the Sears might not be having the same kind of negative publicity. Finally, this kind of choice is an indicator of what some corporate culture is like, and how well the company will relate to it employees over time.