

Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory

(Two Factor Theory)

To better understand employee attitudes and motivation, Frederick Herzberg performed studies to determine which factors in an employee's work environment caused satisfaction or dissatisfaction. He published his findings in the 1959 book *The Motivation to Work*.

The studies included interviews in which employees were asked what pleased and displeased them about their work. Herzberg found that the factors causing job satisfaction (and presumably motivation) were different from those causing job dissatisfaction. He developed the **motivation-hygiene** theory to explain these results. He called the satisfiers *motivators* and the dissatisfiers *hygiene factors*, using the term "hygiene" in the sense that they are considered maintenance factors that are necessary to avoid dissatisfaction but that by themselves do not provide satisfaction.

The following table presents the top six factors causing dissatisfaction and the top six factors causing satisfaction, listed in the order of higher to lower importance.

Factors Affecting Job Attitudes

Leading to Dissatisfaction	Leading to Satisfaction
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Company policy• Supervision• Relationship w/Boss• Work conditions• Salary• Relationship w/Peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Achievement• Recognition• Work itself• Responsibility• Advancement• Growth

Herzberg reasoned that because the factors causing satisfaction are different from those causing dissatisfaction, the two feelings cannot simply be treated as opposites of one another. The opposite of satisfaction is not dissatisfaction, but rather, *no* satisfaction. Similarly, the opposite of dissatisfaction is *no* dissatisfaction.

While at first glance this distinction between the two opposites may sound like a play on words, Herzberg argued that there are two distinct human needs portrayed. First, there are physiological needs that can be fulfilled by money, for example, to purchase food and shelter. Second, there is the psychological need to achieve and grow, and this need is fulfilled by activities that cause one to grow.

From the above table of results, one observes that the factors that determine whether there is dissatisfaction or no dissatisfaction are not part of the work itself, but rather, are external factors. Herzberg often referred to these hygiene factors as "KITA" factors, where KITA is an acronym for Kick In The A..., the process of providing incentives or a threat of punishment to cause someone to do something. Herzberg argues that these provide only short-run success because the motivator factors that determine whether there is satisfaction or no satisfaction are intrinsic to the job itself, and do not result from carrot and stick incentives.

Implications for Management

If the motivation-hygiene theory holds, management not only must provide hygiene factors to avoid employee dissatisfaction, but also must provide factors intrinsic to the work itself in order for employees to be satisfied with their jobs.

Herzberg argued that *job enrichment* is required for intrinsic motivation, and that it is a continuous management process. According to Herzberg:

- The job should have sufficient challenge to utilize the full ability of the employee.
- Employees who demonstrate increasing levels of ability should be given increasing levels of responsibility.
- If a job cannot be designed to use an employee's full abilities, then the firm should consider automating the task or replacing the employee with one who has a lower level of skill. If a person cannot be fully utilized, then there will be a motivation problem.

Critics of Herzberg's theory argue that the two-factor result is observed because it is natural for people to take credit for satisfaction and to blame dissatisfaction on external factors. Furthermore, job satisfaction does not necessarily imply a high level of motivation or productivity.

Herzberg's theory has been broadly read and despite its weaknesses its enduring value is that it recognizes that true motivation comes from within a person and not from KITA factors.