

MOTIVATION: BEYOND KEY CHAINS AND COFFEE MUGS

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A PAY FOR SKILL SYSTEM AT BLUE WATER FIBER LIMITED PARTNERSHIP IS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE INTERNAL MOTIVATION FOR EMPLOYEES AND BENEFIT THE COMPANY AT THE SAME TIME.

MOTIVATION IS ONE OF THE MOST BASIC COMPONENTS of human nature, yet the issue remains one of the most misunderstood behavioral topics. Young managers feel that to “motivate” their subordinates is of critical importance. This is due primarily to the fact that, unfortunately, many companies still penalize managers who fail to “motivate.”

As a result, motivation has become an industry in itself. For a fee, companies or even well-known personalities can be hired to “motivate” your work force. There are scores of companies which provide “motivational” incentives such as key chains, coffee mugs, hats, etc., complete with your company logo, and all of which are guaranteed to motivate. However, the question remains: if these approaches work, why then are the motivation effects so short-lived?

MOTIVATION THEORY

Motivation is really the internal creation of a behavior. Internal creation means that motivation occurs within a human being and cannot therefore be instigated by outside forces.¹ What role, if any, can managers play in “motivating” their work force, or are they wasting their time even trying?

Figure 1 provides a model of motivation that shows that a behavior occurs to accomplish some end goal.¹ While managers do not inherently control behavior, they do control the guiding process and certainly the goal objects. Managers today must capitalize on the existing needs of the work force (i.e., wages, sense of belonging, status, etc.) in order to be successful.

Figure 2 displays Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs model, overlaid with Herzberg’s Motivation Versus Hygiene model.² The author must assume that in today’s world, the simple hygiene needs of employees such as acceptable living wages, normal working hours, basic safe work-

ing conditions, etc., have already been taken care of. If these needs have not yet been met, there is no point in a manager trying to motivate the employee to do anything more than survive the work day. The ideas and concepts discussed later in this article will have minimal impact towards a high performance work structure unless most hygiene needs are met.

BLUE WATER FIBER PROGRAMS

Blue Water Fiber Limited Partnership operates a 220 a.d. tons/day deinked market pulp mill in Port Huron, MI. The operations group consists of four crews, including a crew leader who is a functional part of the crew. These crews are supported by resource leaders in the areas of technical, maintenance, purchasing, and human resources. The mill reached mechanical completion in September 1995 and has been producing high quality market pulp since January 1996.

Blue Water Fiber Limited Partnership is attempting to implement several systems designed to establish goals that would both satisfy a team member’s needs and provide benefits to the company. While these systems are still in the formative stages, some advantages and potential pitfalls have already been established. The systems include a Pay for Skill system, a Gain Sharing program, and the Blue Water Fiber Team Committee. This article focuses on the Pay for Skill system.

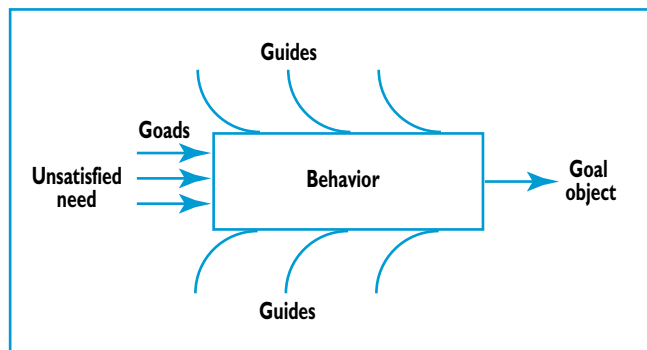
Pay for Skill system

The Blue Water Fiber Limited Partnership compensation system for the operations group is designed to support the team concept as well as provide effective goals. The system provides for the following:

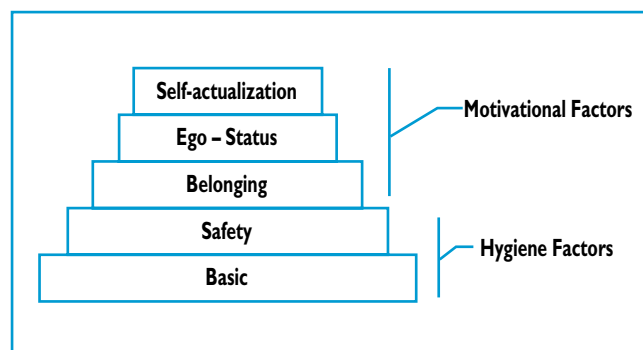
- Progressively increasing earnings to reflect the increased knowledge and skills each team member will acquire. The basis of the Pay for Skill system is to learn new skills continually and, more importantly, to make effective contributions to the

¹Hall, J., *Models for Management, The Structure of Competence*, Woodstead Press, 1988, p. 58.

²Hall, J., *Models for Management, The Structure of Competence*, Woodstead Press, 1988, p. 106.



1. Goal-oriented motivation model



2. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs model, overlaid with Herzberg's Motivation Versus Hygiene model

organization through the application of these skills.

- No separate parcels of work or "jobs." There are multiple skill "blocks" or areas in the mill with specific responsibilities in each area. Each team member, if desired, will eventually be trained and certified in these blocks. The goal is to have each team member be multifunctional, that is, capable of operating in any area of the Blue Water Fiber facility as needed by the team.
- A system where every team member teaches as well as learns.

The Blue Water Fiber Pay for Skill System has four classifications which correspond to four different levels of skill, from entry level to a Level 3 Technician. Therefore, a Level 1 Technician is certified in only one skill block, while a Level 3 Technician is certified in three different skill blocks.

Each skill block has a certification booklet which normally includes the following items:

- General Overview
- Standard Operating Procedures
- Written Examinations
- Position Description
- Demonstrated Job Tasks Forms
- Situational Problem Solving.

The General Overview of the certification program for a skill block covers issues such as training period duration, time on the job requirements, and ongoing time on the job requirements. For example, the training period for the Materials Certification program is six months, which is the amount of time provided to complete all written examinations, problem solving, and demonstrated job tasks. The time on the job requirement is 1125 work hours, which is the time required for training while actually doing the work required. The time on the job re-

quirement does not have to be completed within the six-month training period (which pertains just to the completion of the written materials). Finally, once an employee has been certified, an ongoing time on the job requirement of 25% of total work hours over a rolling 12-month period is required to maintain certification.

The Position Description is a complete outline of the position. This normally includes a purpose statement, specific work responsibilities of the position, reporting and budgeting responsibilities, and educational and training requirements.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are self-explanatory. Depending on the skill block, these procedures could include computer and equipment operating procedures, maintenance procedures, or just normal operating setpoints. With modern technology, SOPs can include scanned-in pictures, equipment drawings, color DCS screen printouts, and other aids.

Demonstrated Job Task Forms are written checklists which require the employee to demonstrate the correct way to accomplish particular tasks in front of a certified technician from a different crew. An example of a Demonstrated Job Task Form is provided in Fig. 3.

The Written Examinations and Situational Problem Solving parts of the certification program require 100% successful completion of several written tests. The questions normally require background knowledge that a technician must know in order to be certified. Unlike examinations that technicians have been exposed to in high school and college, the focus is on 100% successful completion. A technician can take the test as often as required, after waiting a 24 h period between tests.

Advantages

The Pay for Skill system offers many advantages, including the ability to specify goals and responsibilities. The system provides goals to technicians who want to learn and then contribute more to the success of Blue Water Fiber. These goals include not only increased

**BLUEWATER FIBER LIMITED PARTNERSHIP
LABORATORY CERTIFICATION #1 – PROCESS TESTING**

Skill Block: Laboratory Technician

Revision Date: April 6, 1997

Examination: #1 – Process Testing

Written By: Thom Karig

1. Where are the correct sample points to determine Primary flotation cell efficiency? Secondary flotation cell efficiency? What is the expected frequency of sampling?
2. What is the expected flotation cell efficiency for the Primary and Secondary cells? Why are the Secondary cells normally less efficient?
3. What is the optimum consistency for flotation cell efficiency? Name 2 other process conditions that could affect flotation efficiency?
4. What is the expected stickie contamination level at the Secondary flotation cells? Do flotation cells remove stickies and why?
5. Do flotation cells increase brightness and why?
6. Where are the correct sample points to check PMWW and effluent water quality? What is the expected sampling frequency?
7. What are the normal tests, with alarm limits, for PMWW and effluent water?

DEMONSTRATED JOB SKILLS

- | | Check off |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Sample points for flotation testing were correctly located and taken. Sample location was properly cleaned. | n |
| 2. Handsheet procedure was properly followed. Demonstrated ability to correctly operate Optest, including calibration procedure. Information properly recorded in AS400. | n |
| 3. Demonstrated ability to perform efficiency calculations. | n |
| 4. Demonstrated ability to correctly operate Pulmac on S2 Accepts. Correctly perform stickies evaluation, Separating hot melts, plastics, stickies, etc. | n |
| 5. Sample points for water checks were correctly located and taken. | n |
| 6. Proper tests for water were conducted. Demonstrated ability to follow calibration procedures on appropriate equipment. | n |
| 7. All laboratory equipment (handsheet mold, Pulmac, glassware) was cleaned after use. | n |

Technician in Training: _____

Certified By: _____

3. Demonstrated Job Task form used in certification program for laboratory technicians

wages, which can have only a fleeting motivational effect, but more importantly, a definition of progressive technician levels which acknowledges achievement and provides increased responsibilities. As a result, Blue Water Fiber technicians are choosing to learn more about their current position as well as other positions in the facility. This reduces process upsets, downtime, and overtime while improving overall process stability and resultant pulp quality.

Secondly, the system requires Blue Water Fiber personnel, both management and technicians, to agree upon, define, and then record such information as training re-

quirements and position descriptions, complete with specific task responsibilities. This promotes communication skills, reduces misunderstandings, and provides an ongoing system to handle changes in the workplace.

Pitfalls

As with any system, there are potential pitfalls, and therefore a system must be flexible enough to change yet stable enough to provide the advantages described above. Some of the pitfalls observed at Blue Water Fiber include:

The system must provide goals that require different lengths of training. If all training requirements are rela-

tively short, they will be too easily completed. On the other hand, if the training requirements are relatively long, a technician may decide the goal is not within reach and is not motivated to achieve it. A program should include three categories of goals: short-term, those that require less than one year to complete, and long-term apprenticeship-type goals that could take several years or more. As stated earlier, the Blue Water Fiber Pay for Skill system is still in the formative stages, and most goals are still relatively short term.

Increased wages cannot be the only goal. While much research has been done on the subject, the author believes that money is, at best, only a short-term motivator and, at worst, a de-motivator. In modern times, however, money is becoming more of a status symbol, (i.e., professional athletes who want to be the top-paid player rather than just a highly paid player), which only increases the difficulty of managing increased wages as a goal. The Blue Water Fiber Pay for Skill system attempts to utilize additional goals for the attainment of progressive levels such as training and customer trips for different skill blocks or

business cards for certified laboratory technicians. While Blue Water Fiber has enjoyed some success here, this is an area requiring constant improvement.

Finally, whoever stated "There is no I in team" was mistaken. An individual must decide to be a part of the team. On a baseball team, every person cannot be the shortstop or the pitcher. In fact, not every person on the team can play at one time, yet all team members are equally important. Some individuals never recognize this and therefore cannot or will not be part of the team. The work environment must support those individuals who can both participate in a pay for skill system and yet still recognize that they are part of a team. There are no easy answers to this societal issue. The team members of Blue Water Fiber continually work to improve team relations so that the Blue Water Fiber Pay for Skill system can work.

CONCLUSION

Motivation is difficult to understand and yet is an integral part of human nature. Blue Water Fiber Limited Partnership is supporting several programs that provide goals intended to:

1. Encourage members of Blue Water Fiber to internally motivate themselves.
2. Produce tangible benefits to the company.

The Pay for Skill system is currently providing the benefits of increased learning, better communication, reduced costs, and better finished product quality to the owners, personnel, and customers of Blue Water Fiber. Nevertheless, this system is still evolving. The successful application of this and other programs will help provide the high performance work environment required in these changing times. **TJ**

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