Chapter 05 - Motivation and job satisfaction

Answers to end of chapter questions

1. What are the differences between content and process theories of motivation?

Motivational theories can be divided into two categories, termed content and process. Content theories assume that all individuals possess the same set of needs. Process theories, on the other hand, stress the differences in people’s needs, focusing on the cognitive processes creating these differences. They have their roots in learning theory and social psychology and they stress the impact of cognitive processes, the way we take in and process information about ourselves and the world, on our motivation.

2. Does Maslow’s theory of motivation tell us more about American society in the 1950s than the fundamental nature of human motivation?

The motivational needs of individuals are consistent across time periods.

3. What are the motivating characteristics of work?

It was viewed by management writers as a theory that offered a number of predictions about what motivates people in societies offering relatively full employment. When jobs are scarce, employees are motivated solely by deficiency needs. When jobs are readily available, pay is adequate and there is a degree of job security, deficiency needs are easily satisfied. And so social needs become important motivators in the workplace.

4. Is pay a motivator or a hygiene factor?

It can be considered to be both. It is essential for hygiene however it is also a big motivator which can carry on once basic hygiene has been secured e.g. in the case of pay rises to pay for material goods.

5. What is job satisfaction?

If people claim to be satisfied with their jobs, they are usually expressing something more like a feeling about their job rather than their thoughts about it. Seeing job satisfaction as essentially an affective rather than cognitive response means the concept can be placed more squarely in the broader context of well being.

The ten best established characteristics, i.e. those consistently correlating with employees’ affective states, have been assembled by Warr (2002):
1. Autonomy—absence of close supervision, discretion.
2. Opportunity for skill use—skill utilization.
3. Externally generated goals—job and task demands, workload, role demands, role conflicts.
4. Variety—skill variety, task variety.
5. Environmental clarity—feedback, role clarity, information about the future, absence of job insecurity.
6. Availability of money—income level, financial resources.
7. Physical security—noise and temperature level, good working conditions, safety.
8. Supportive supervision—effective leadership.
10. Valued social position—wider social evaluations of job status.

6. Are some people more likely to be satisfied with their work?

There have been attempts to establish whether specific variables such as gender, age, personality, or occupational status are predictive of job satisfaction. There is also considerable interest in the nature of the relationship between our level of job satisfaction and satisfaction with other aspects of our lives.

7. Are some jobs more likely to produce job satisfaction?

Job characteristics have a strong impact on job satisfaction. The categories outlined above provide the key concepts in current job satisfaction research. Interestingly there is a good deal of resonance between what has emerged from the job satisfaction research and studies which have attempted to discover what, in general, causes enjoyment more generally in their lives.

8. Why are measures of job satisfaction not very predictive of outcomes in the workplace?

It is difficult to demonstrate a straightforward link between job satisfaction and productivity. Many studies claiming a strong link have to be treated with a degree of caution. Estimates of the job satisfaction–performance relationship vary according to the occupational group being studied. For managerial and professional groups, studies average the correlation at 0.31; for white-collar workers the figure is more modest at 0.24; and with other groups lower still at 0.15 (e.g. Podsakoff et al., 1996). The choice of performance criteria also affects the size of the relationship. For example, George (1991) found the relationship between job satisfaction and a ‘soft’ measure of performance—supervisory rating—was 0.26. Against the ‘harder’ criteria—sales performance—the relationship was only 0.1.