9.5: Work Components of Motivation

Learning Outcomes

• Discuss the work components of motivation

Job Design

Richard Hackman and Gary Oldham published the Hackman-Oldham Job Design Model as part of a 1980 study, and it suggested that managers should tailor the job to meet the employee’s individual needs. Where job design is concerned, Hackman and Oldham suggested that a job’s motivating potential can be influenced by skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback.
• **Skill variety** refers to the number of skills used to do a job. A traditional assembly line job would have a low skill variety, whereas a nurse would have higher skill variety.

• **Task identity** refers to the level at which employees feel like they “owns” the outcome when completing the task. Going back to our first example, workers on an assembly line would have low task identity. Which parts from their lines ended up in which machines? They’re not likely to know, so they would have a low task identity. A nurse, however, can identify with how well a patient recovers, or see immediately that a choice he or she made saved the life of a patient. Thus, a nurse would have high task identity.

• **Task significance** indicates the importance of that task to the organization. The job of receptionist, for example, has lower task significance. A temporary employee can be brought in to answer phones and sort mail. But doctors would have high task significance—not anyone can do their job, and they have knowledge of their patients and their situations that others would not have.

• **Autonomy** is the degree to which an employee can make independent decisions and not have to check in with a supervisor. Again, clerical work would have low autonomy because the job is repetitious and workers make few decisions on their own. Doctors would have high autonomy, making decisions to medicate a patient a certain way or handle an emergency procedure on the operating table.

• **Feedback** is information about an employee’s performance. Most employees who perform a task want to know if they are doing it right, doing it well, and so on.

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**Practice Question**

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**Training and Working Conditions**

Managers can increase motivation by providing adequate and ongoing training for their employees, letting employees learn new things about their current job and learn new skills that will help them move on to the next level of their careers. Knowledgeable employees feel good about themselves, and their co-workers feel good about working with them. Tasks get done quickly and the team is more productive.

• Amanda has newly been hired, and she can’t ramp up because her managers didn’t spend time bringing her up to speed on tasks. She feels inadequate and doesn’t understand her work. Her co-workers are frustrated because they continue to take on part of Amanda’s workload.

• Joaquim puts in long hours and a lot of effort but doesn’t get as much done as his co-workers because no one has brought him up to speed on new systems and processes. He’s reinventing the wheel, wasting a lot of his time and
everyone else’s time. Co-workers, again, are frustrated because their team member isn’t pulling his weight.

- Taylor, a long-time team member, enjoyed their job when they started and mastered all the skills they needed to complete their tasks years ago. Now they’re bored and just going through the motions, and they are becoming less engaged because their employer doesn’t provide them with new opportunities to learn and move ahead via ongoing training.

Teacher Success

- Aislinn is given a class of 35 students. Each of the students has a desk, pens, papers, and text books.
- Zane has a class of only 15 students. He is given a teacher’s assistant. Each student has a desk, pens, papers, and text books, and each of them has also been provided with a desktop computer.

Goal Setting

**Management by objective** (MBO) focuses on setting goals, monitoring progress, and giving feedback and correction. MBO assumes that employees must have clear, challenging, measurable and specific goals to be motivated to perform well.