

The Role and Areas of Shaping Motivation in Leadership

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Abstract

The power of motivation is intrinsically linked to the action, the teaching-learning process. It concerns both the external as well as the internal sphere. It depends on the strategies adopted by the leader, but also on many other factors affecting the subordinate, which are indirectly influenced by the attitude of the leader. The motivation to act and develop is reflected in the way the subordinate sees the objectives set by the commander, as well as the tasks and the feelings experienced in relation to these tasks, which is reflected in the quality of the performance of the tasks assigned. The internal psychological forces by which we do what we do (motives) constitute certain subjective dispositions that drive people to behave in a certain way and are influenced by both internal and external factors, mainly shaped by the leader. Motivation refers to all the processes involved in experiencing a need or desire and in reducing the intensity of the need experienced, and thus occupies a very important place in the formation of effective leadership.

Keywords: motivation, leadership, communication, human resources, organisational culture, courage

INTRODUCTION

One of the basic tasks of a leader is to create an atmosphere and working environment that is conducive to the formation of strong and lasting incentives for subordinates to become active, as a basis for task performance and further self-learning and development of the whole team's resources. The course of the motivational process depends on the leader's ability to initiate and shape interpersonal relations in the team. The right contact with the subordinate is the essence of the leader's work. The development of positive leader-subordinate relationships creates a much greater possibility of transferring the fulfilment of tasks set before the team, the responsibility and readiness of subordinates for their own development, and builds a high

need for self-improvement. These qualities add up to a high level of motivation and allow tasks that seem impossible to be completed.

1. MOTIVATIONAL PROCESSES

Motivational processes include all the mechanisms responsible for initiating, directing, maintaining and terminating actions, thus they can be described as the force that drives everything and everyone to achieve the goals set and to overcome the difficulties that arise along the way. The power of motivation is intrinsically linked to the teaching-learning process, both in the external and internal sense. It also depends on the strategies adopted by the leader, but also on many other factors that influence the subordinate: the self-perception, the family and local environment, or the state of health, which are also indirectly influenced by the attitude of the leader. The motivation to act and develop is thus reflected in the subordinate's perception of goals, tasks and feelings in relation to the tasks. The importance of feeling secure and developing cognitively and emotionally follows. When we think about motivation in everyday life, we use terms such as drive, instinct, energy, intention, purpose, intensity, persistence, desire, want, or need. All these terms refer to the internal mental forces that make us do what we do. We can call these mental forces motives, that is, certain internal dispositions which drive us to behave in a certain way and which are influenced by both internal and external factors. Motivation, therefore, refers to all the processes involved in experiencing a need or desire and in reducing the intensity of the need experienced. According to Philip Zimbardo [24], motivation is a general term that refers to all the processes involved in initiating, directing and sustaining mental and physical actions. The term is derived from the Latin verb *movere* (Eng. 'to move') and describes the movement, activity, or drive. All living organisms move towards certain stimuli and actions and avoid others according to their preferences and aversions. Theories of motivation attempt to explain the 'movement' patterns of all animal and human species, as well as the personal preferences and achievements of individuals. The motivational process begins with the occurrence of a state of intrinsic deprivation that upsets the state of equilibrium. This state must be strong enough to release the energy needed to take action. Hence, in very broad terms, the most important thing in building a strong motivational state is to induce exactly such a state in the body. Psychologists try to describe motivational mechanisms by incorporating them into a variety of concepts, which we can group into five basic approaches. The first approach is to link biological mechanisms to behaviour. We are all biological organisms and we all

have more or less complex internal mechanisms designed to regulate the functioning of the organism in such a way as to fulfil two basic biological laws: survival of the individual, survival of the species. These mechanisms drive us to act by triggering a state of deprivation and, consequently, an organismic response aimed at restoring the organism's equilibrium. The second approach is to explain the variability of behaviour. The feeling of being motivated to do something is a very subjective state, made up of individual differences in ability, skill, experience, or being in the right place at the right time, which make up an individual's motivational state. The third approach is to infer internal states from public actions. Behaviour, understood as the only external manifestation of internal processes, is the starting point for attempting to explain the intention of the subject of the behaviour. The fourth approach is to assign responsibility for an action to someone. Personal responsibility is one of the fundamental concepts in religion, ethics and law. It presupposes functioning mechanisms of intrinsic motivation and the ability to control one's own actions. People are judged by their responsibility for their actions. However, the reduction of individual rationality is enabled when the subject's intentions are assumed not to be directed towards the outcome of his or her activity, especially in the case of negative consequences, when there were external forces strong enough to induce a certain behaviour (the phenomenon of conformity, social facilitation, authority), or when the rationality of the behaviour undertaken by the subject was dulled by the effects of psychoactive drugs. At this level, the role of the accepted theory of motivation is to distinguish between potential motives for behaviour. The fifth basic approach to the issue of motivation is to attempt to explain the persistence of the individual in the action undertaken, despite the presence of objective adversity on the way to achieving the goal.

2. AREAS OF MOTIVATION DEVELOPMENT

The most common motivational tool is financial reward. For a well-performed or additional work, this can be a discretionary award, a bonus or a pay rise. However, while this form of reward is often expected by subordinates, it can be ineffective in the long run. A financial reward shifts the focus of motivation outwards, weakening the very important intrinsic motivation. Subordinates who receive financial rewards will expect similar rewards in the future. If their expectations are not met, they may become less motivated. Numerous studies show that there are more important motivating factors than material rewards and that the amount of the salary alone

is sufficient to attract an employee to the organisation. However, it is not enough to keep him as, or make him, a company populariser.

The most important tool a manager has for creating a motivating atmosphere is interpersonal communication. The words spoken to us by another person can have a “secret power”. Depending on what is said and how it is said, it can either make us fly or crush us into the proverbial “ground” [23]. Moreover, communication is irreversible. The flow of information cannot be reversed. We can deny, interpret, clarify, add, explain, amend, and give examples; but we can never go back. It is worth remembering this, because each of us has a different set of sensitivity thresholds and what is perfectly acceptable to one person may be completely unacceptable to another. The highest level of interpersonal communication is rhetorical communication. Rhetorical communication is an influence that motivates, inspires, encourages, engages and properly directs subordinates to work. It arouses their initiative and willingness to perform tasks. Motivational communication is also based on mutual respect, respecting the rights and differences of others, and not violating their psychological territory. Attentive managers who talk to their people – for example, during daily feedback sessions – may notice over time that their people differ not only in their needs, but also in the way they express – that is, communicate – them. They may also hear one employee express that he or she earnestly strives to reach the set target in a month, meet the sales targets and get a bonus because “s/he wants to pay off the loan faster”, while another employee will say that he or she is doing it because “s/he does not want to be unemployed again”. This is the starting point for developing an individual motivation strategy. This is also the area where motivation and manipulation need to be clearly separated. In management, it is very easy to confuse the two, but the difference between the them is very clear. Manipulation is when one person persuades another to do what is best for them. Motivation, in turn, is when the person inspiring the activity sets mutually beneficial goals and then combines his or her efforts in a highly effective and highly moral partnership to achieve the goals set. It is essential that the right level of interpersonal communication is used. By using motivational communication, one can improve the quality of one’s service and increase the commitment and motivation of subordinates. Internal communication tools should be designed to meet the needs of subordinates. These tools should emphasise the importance as well as the significant role of the subordinates’ contribution to the institution. In this way, the subordinates realise their need for recognition.

The communicated messages should emphasise the needs of subordinates and give them the opportunity to decide for themselves, at least as far as the proper

functioning of the institution allows for it. The simplest instrument of appreciation is praise, which, as a message delivered to the right audience, becomes a reinforcing message. Since praise contains important content for the recipient, its form is also of considerable importance. Praise is the simplest and most common form of positive feedback. Numerous opportunities to praise a subordinate are provided by feedback from people outside the organisation with whom the subordinate shares a task, or from more senior managers. Providing such feedback – be it through congratulatory letters, multimedia or social media – has a great capacity to build the competence of both the recipient and the institution. Depending on the possibilities available to the institution, such feedback can, for example, take the form of a description of the good practices of the staff member being praised, presented or written in a visible and frequented place, or also in digital form as a message on the web or in the staff mail. An equally good way of acknowledgement is to give a deserving subordinate additional benefits such as a parking space or an Employee of the Year plaque. A related way of building satisfaction is to express gratitude, but only if it is sincere. Of great importance for building employee motivation are such communication tools that include the belief in the importance of the employee's work, for which such gamification mechanisms can be used that involve subordinates in competing and motivating each other [13]. The awareness of the importance of the function performed in the organisation is also a very powerful tool for building employee motivation. In this way, the daily activities performed in the workplace are given meaning, resulting in increased task performance.

Motivation is not just about interactions between individuals. The vast majority of people are much more influenced by the social group in which they function. There is a special chemistry that creates an environment of high mobility or destructive tension. The role of a good leader is to defuse such influences before negative emotions explode in the group.

Frequently, once an employee has taken his or her place in the group hierarchy and become a manager, boss, or a leader, there can be a rapid process of changing the perception of subordinates to regard the said employee as a kind of a 'policeman'. With knowledge and experience, the employee may come to an erroneous conclusion that people should be looked down upon by treating them a priori as slackers, crooks and thieves. If the manager takes on the role of the supervisor by emphasising on looking out for faults in his or her subordinates or manually controlling the team, a hostile relationship is created and the working atmosphere of cooperation and motivation is reduced. A good manager does not waste time belabouring the failures of the subordinates, looking for flaws, mistakes and thus

dividing the team. A good manager expects the best from the team when giving credit to the subordinates. It should be stressed at this point that the attitude of the manager towards his or her subordinates, more than anything else, determines the success or failure of the team. Here, we can observe the phenomenon of the „self-fulfilling prophecy”, whereby a person who has expectations of another person consciously or unconsciously behaves towards that person, sending both verbal and non-verbal information. This, in turn, influences the behaviour of the person receiving the signal sent, which amounts to acting in accordance with the initial expectations of the interlocutor. For example, people who expect good things from each other will orient themselves towards fulfilling those expectations. Conversely, expecting the worst from people surprisingly leads to bad outcomes [16]. Emphasising people’s qualities in an emotional way leads the recipient of such messages to act accordingly. The principle raised here has a very early origin: by adopting a negative attitude and telling people all about their weaknesses, one makes it easier for them to come into contact with their own mistakes, and thereby worsen their behaviour. In contrast, when one adopts a positive attitude and focus on the strengths of others’ personality, one emphasises the good qualities and aims the behavioural changes toward improvement. This is the ‚Pygmalion effect’ [17], first identified by Robert Merton. A positive attitude towards another person can, therefore, lead to the discovery of hidden talents and thus increase motivational potential. According to the psychologist Elbert Hubbard, what is far more important in human resource management or education than possessing skills is the sole ability to recognise the skills in the first place. The patience and consistency that a good teacher or manager should have can pay off by revealing abilities that the subject did not expect to possess. Given the right conditions, even the average person is capable of extraordinary things. As the American philosopher and psychologist William James stated, ‘[e]veryone knows on any given day that there are energies slumbering in him which the incitements of that day do not call forth[.] Compared with what we ought to be, we are only half awake. Our fires are damp, our drafts are checked. We are making use of only a small part of our possible mental and physical resources. Stating the thing broadly, the human individual thus lives usually far within his limits; he possesses powers of various sorts which he habitually fails to use. (...) It is evident that our organism has stored-up reserves of energy that are ordinarily not called upon, but that may be called upon: deeper and deeper strata of combustible or explosible material, discontinuously arranged, but ready for use by anyone who probes so deep” [11]. The implication is that the human being is capable of extracting far more than it normally gives. There are huge reserves of invention and energy „waiting” to be released. A good inspirer, an effective leader, by stimulating this dynamism, by putting faith in another person, is able to mobilise

this person to do almost anything to prove his or her worth. The next factor to be used in the repertoire of building the motivational atmosphere is the area of discovering the desires and reasons for such and no other type of subordinates' behaviour. By getting to know other people, one learns about their desires, their goals, where they have been and where they are going, which, in turn, enables one to tailor the motivational strategy precisely to the needs of the subordinates. Sigmund Freud pointed out that every human behaviour has a cause and, therefore, every person can be inspired to behave in a certain way. Since people are driven by needs, motivational failures can be avoided by carefully observing, questioning and talking to subordinates to find out how to appeal most effectively to their interests, emotions and needs. Discovering people's needs is a very powerful driving force in creating a motivational climate in the team, because meeting these needs strengthens people's identification with the institution, emphasises their individual importance to the institution, makes them feel cared for by the institution, and this, in turn, increases their sense of security, which is the starting point for creating a motivational climate. It also triggers a very powerful mechanism of the need for reciprocity, the energy of which activates the resources aimed at reciprocity and stimulates the motivation to act. This is also in line with Adair's three-circle model, where the orientation towards the individual is one of the three basic areas in which the leader creates motivation in the group [1]. Being employee-centred does not mean always being a nice boss to everyone, being pushed around by aggressive subordinates, and letting others do whatever they want. In other words, focusing on a positive perception of people, their qualities, needs and desires does not mean that one has to be a 'wimp'; quite the opposite. Leaders who can inspire tend to be people who are tenacious about maintaining high levels of quality. They are individuals who stick to a set of ethical values, and the groups they try to create are made up of like-minded people.

However, leadership is not about pounding one's chest and shouting 'come follow me, I am strong and I know more than you'. Leadership is precisely the attitude of 'tell me about yourself'. This kind of attitude, if the leader has enough patience, guarantees that subordinates explain themselves in a way that motivates them.

Well-managed companies are characterised by a strong culture that is ruthlessly enforced by directors. Tomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman Jr. limit the role of the director to managing the company's values. In their book *In Search of Excellence*, they explain that: "In good companies, there is a strong cultural structure, so strong that people either adapt to the demands placed on them or they fall out. There is no in-between" [19]. Clear rules that are part of an organisation's culture, based on a shared and accepted work ethic, give individuals a sense of security and motivate

them to act. Creating and maintaining an organisational culture that is accepted by all participants creates an environment of safety. This requires a leader with the qualities of firmness, who adheres to a certain inviolable credo and expects everyone to adhere to it. The principles of the organisation's culture must be adhered to equally by all members. There must be no group of participants who can get around these rules. If this is the case, there is a risk of a breach, which could sooner or later lead to the break-up of the organisation. Adherence to the rules of organisational culture should therefore be restrictive and uniform for all. Leniency, as well as the granting of privilege to a selected sub-group within a group, undermines motivational processes and reduces the sense of personal security. Paradoxically, people like to be pushed. They like to be challenged, and when this is done in the right way – in a way that forces effort but is not beyond the reach of the individual – it leads to an increase in the energy of motivation to act. This was aptly expressed by Robert S. Hugnes, Chairman of the Board of the Robert S. Hugnes Company: “The older I get, the more I find that people need to be managed more than we once thought” [16]. “Leadership requires courage. (...) Courage creates respect for the leader and is essential for enforcing high standards in the organisation. It is related to the ability to admonish members of the institution who do not adhere to accepted norms” [7]. Kenneth Blanchard and Spencer Johnson emphasise that one of the characteristics of a bad leader is the fear of pointing out mistakes to others when they make them. According to these authors, one shall never be able to motivate and manage people if he or she is afraid to reprimand them.

The determination and firmness to aim high in the adopted organisational culture is another important motivational factor, as is creating an environment of personal safety [6]. This is linked to showing, preferably by example, how to deal with setbacks. The leader is closely watched by his or her subordinates (his or her group), and the belief that the prerogative of a good leader is an unbroken streak of success is one of the fundamental mistakes of management. A leader who has lost several battles, who has not shied away from defeat and who continues to strive to achieve his or her goals, is more inspiring than anything else. We know a person's strength not by one's infallibility, but by the way one picks oneself up after setbacks. As Richard Needham puts it: “Strong people make as many mistakes as weak people. Difference is that strong people admit their mistakes, laugh at them, learn from them. That is how they become strong” [18].

3. MOTIVATION AS A FUNCTION OF PEOPLE MANAGEMENT. MOTIVATION AND LEADERSHIP

The leadership theories related to organisational and management sciences distinguish three points of view on motivation, to which one can attribute different concepts, namely:

- content theory,
- process theory,
- reinforcement theory.

Among the theories of content, one can include the psychological theories of cognition. As highlighted above, motivation consists of three main factors. Direction, which is what a person is trying to do. Effort, which shows how hard the person is trying, and persistence, which shows how long one has been trying. Among these aspects, the last one is extremely important due to the specificity of resource acquisition. In this regard, persistence is one of the determining factors of personal development. The need to achieve is closely linked to the motivation of the individual and with the quality of perseverance. As emphasised above, motivation depends neither solely on the object of action, nor solely on the external situation. It seems to be cemented by a social or individual measure of value through which the individuals acquiring competence can determine the requirements they need to fulfil in order to achieve a goal and satisfaction, and this is strongly linked to the subjective intensity of the characteristic of perseverance. Motivation can be stimulated by an external factor. It creates a state of deprivation (deficit) in the subjects to be influenced and thus a willingness to act in the direction set by the leader. In effect, motivation aims to influence others to move in the direction one wants them to move, creating a subjective sense of need. Self-motivation, in turn, is about independently setting a direction and then taking appropriate action to achieve a satisfying achievement of the set goal.

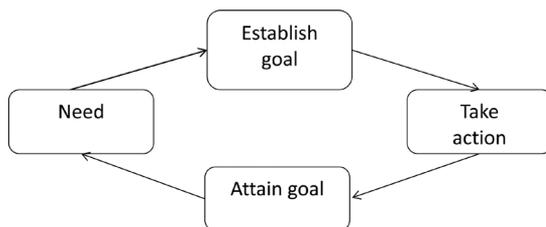


Fig. 1 Motivation process according to Michael Armstrong

Source: M. Armstrong, Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi, Oficyna Ekonomiczna, Dom Wydawniczy ABC, Kraków 2001, p. 107.

The model of the motivational process presented here suggests that the motivational process begins with the conscious or unconscious recognition of unsatisfied needs, that is, a state of deprivation. These needs, in turn, are triggered by the desire to achieve and acquire. As a result, goals are formed, the fulfilment of which leads to the satisfaction of the emerging needs and desires, but also to the choice of a behavioural path leading to the achievement of the set goals. The goal is achieved - the need is satisfied, the subject has returned to a state of equilibrium after the deprivation. The andrological model presents a basic differentiation of motivational factors. Emotionally mature subjects have the ability to trigger higher motivation when existential solutions are within reach, as well as the subjective benefits of acquiring new resources. According to M. S. Knowles, adult motivation depends on four factors:

- success - adults want to be successful in self-development,
- will - adults want to have a sense of control over their actions,
- values - adults want to be convinced that they are doing something worthwhile,
- pleasure - activity should bring pleasure and enjoyment [15].

This means that adults are more motivated to take up new activities and challenges if they believe that they can achieve the goal(s) set, that it helps them to solve real problems and, therefore, has a meaning, and that they understand the need for action. This approach corresponds to Aaron Antonovsky's theory of coherence [3]. Aaron Antonovsky showed that when people are in situations beyond their capabilities or resources, they are forced to use their maximum potential, including the full power of their motivational resources. This approach is consistent with other researchers on this topic. According to Moos and Billings [5], resources, which are a complex system of dispositional, cognitive and personality factors, form the psychological reference of coping.

The relationship between coherence and resources is viewed differently by other authors. For example, Sheridan and Radmacher [20] developed an integrative model of stress in which they included a sense of coherence only among general resilience resources. And if the sense of coherence is part of an individual's resources, it means that it determines the choice of specific coping styles and thus builds the subjective level of readiness to act. This is also evident in the research of McSherry and Holm [22], who showed that a low level of coherence corresponded with avoidance and withdrawal from stressful situations, whereas a high level of coherence corresponded with an attitude of facing difficulties. Thus, this sense of coherence is an individual's resource because it drives the use of certain coping styles. And high motivation depends on the overall sense of coherence. Individuals with

a strong sense of coherence manifest a significant intensity of these components [22] and a stronger motivation to act.

The sense of coherence embodied in the salutogenetic theory corresponds to Mihály Csíkszentmihályi's flow theory and its essence – the state of 'flow'. The author created its characteristics based on nine dimensions:

- The task before you is tailored to your abilities. It is challenging, but you have everything you need to do it.
- The actions you take are 'automatic' - you don't have to think about what to do. You just know it.
- Your goals are clear - you know exactly why you are doing the activity and what you are trying to achieve.
- You have no problems interpreting the feedback you receive. You do not have to think about what it means; you know immediately how to respond and what, if anything, you need to improve.
- You are completely focused on what you are doing. Nothing distracts you, all that matters is the action.
- You have a total sense of control over the situation - it is up to you to decide how events continue to unfold, you are in control.
- You do not worry about anything, you do not get caught up in what can go wrong or what the consequences will be.
- It seems to you that time has stopped. You are so absorbed in activity that you do not pay attention to it.
- The most important thing is the satisfaction you get from the activity you are doing. It is not important what the result is, the activity itself is the main source of happiness.

Everyone longs for a state of positive stimulation, a state of creative elation, full involvement, concentration and complete satisfaction with the activity. The process of doing – of creating – is sometimes more satisfying than the end result itself. The word 'process' is the key word here. The rapture that occurs here, when our perception is focused solely on a narrow perception of our current activity, is precisely a state of 'flow' or flux or absorption. The state of flow tells us that the subject is maximally focused on a particular activity. The subject's activity and attention are focused on the activity being performed, which is so important to the subject that it completely absorbs his or her activity and perception. The state of 'flow' gives the subject a feeling of very deep satisfaction, joy and energy. A person in this state is focused on the creative process itself and not on the end result. What follows is the automation of action, the lack of a sense of

time passing, which ceases to exist for a person immersed in action. A person in flow functions as if in another reality, in another dimension of time. We can reach the state of “flow” by fulfilling several rules that create it. The level of demands must correspond to the level of our competence. The activity undertaken must meet the subjective condition of being sufficiently difficult to require more effort than usual and to qualify one’s skills as high. A person in this state has a full sense of control over his or her action and full concentration on its execution. The goals set are very specific and clearly formulated. In this situation, the challenge one faces spurs him or her on to action. One uses the resources (skills) at his or her disposal and commits him- or herself fully to the action, deriving full satisfaction from it alone. That is, in the state of ‘flow’, the activity takes on an autotelic value. The opposite of this level of action is to act in a situation that requires far more resources than one possesses. In this case, a sense of anxiety develops, which limits perception and acts as a demotivator. A similar situation occurs when performing tasks that require much less skill than the subject has in his or her resources. In this case, a state of frustration occurs, which also leads to a narrowing of perception and a significant reduction in motivation.

SUMMARY

The ability to motivate is one of the most desirable leadership qualities. We have all heard the phrase, “If I were as willing as I am lazy”. We often lack the energy and motivation to carry out our daily tasks. We put things off until tomorrow, give up on our dreams and fail to achieve our goals simply because we are unwilling to commit to it. Every day we take part in social processes that significantly influence our behaviour and motivation. Some of us are more aware of these processes than others. One thing is certain – there are a number of areas of mechanisms that, once known, can significantly improve one’s effectiveness in dealing with others. This is extremely valuable knowledge that can prove useful in many professional situations, especially those related to leadership. Working in a team is usually an ongoing group process. Utilising the aforementioned areas should significantly improve team performance. It is important for a leader to understand his or her role in this process and the areas requiring focus in order to build a cohesive and motivated team. This shall aid the leader in building and supporting the team in an appropriate way: creating a purpose and mission with the team and seeing what roles the team members play, so that they can be motivated and stimulated in the right way.

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