Job Satisfaction and Work Performance

To make the best use of people as a valuable resource of the organisation attention must be given to the relationships between staff, and the nature and content of their job. The work organisation and the design of jobs can have a significant effect on staff and their levels of performance. Attention needs to be given to the quality of working life. The manager needs to understand how best to make work more satisfying for staff and to overcome obstacles to effective performance.

The learning objectives of this chapter are to:
- explain the meaning and nature of job satisfaction;
- detail dimensions of job satisfaction;
- examine the nature of stress at work;
- detail main approaches to improving job design and work organisation;
- explore broader organisational approaches to improved job design;
- assess main influences on job satisfaction;
- evaluate the relationship between job satisfaction and improved work performance.

Chapter 18 examines the nature of job satisfaction and links with motivation and improved work performance. The relationship between the organisation and its members is governed by what motivates them to work and the satisfaction they derive from it. This chapter looks at the dimensions of job satisfaction, job design and work organisation, including the influence of technology and stress at work. The chapter also examines broader approaches to improved job design including the quality of working life, and empowerment.

Motivation, job satisfaction and work performance

The nature of the work organisation and the design of jobs can have a significant effect on the job satisfaction of staff and on the level of organisational performance. However, attempting to understand the nature of job satisfaction and its effects on work performance is not easy.

Although the motivation to work well is usually related to job satisfaction, the nature of this relationship is not clear. The level of job satisfaction may well affect the strength of motivation but this is not always the case. The content theories of motivation (especially Herzberg’s two-factor theory) assume a direct relationship between motivation, job satisfaction and work performance. However, expectancy models (for example, that of Porter and Lawler) suggest a more complex view of motivation, and that job satisfaction does not necessarily lead to improved work performance.

Dimensions of job satisfaction

It is important to remember that job satisfaction is a complex and multifaceted concept and difficult to measure objectively. There is also some doubt as to whether there is a single overall factor of job satisfaction or whether it comprises a number of separate dimensions. The level of job satisfaction is affected by a wide range of individual, social, cultural, organisational and environmental factors. It seems that there is no one, general, comprehensive theory which explains job satisfaction. Major influences on job satisfaction are set out in Figure 18.1.
Stress at work
One of the major adverse influences on job satisfaction, work performance and productivity is the increasing incidence of stress at work. Stress is a source of tension and frustration. It is a complex and dynamic concept, and can arise through a number of interrelated influences on behaviour including work, home and organisational issues. For example, the restructuring of organisations and lower staffing levels have placed greater pressures on the remaining staff resulting in a growing number of related health problems and work stress. However, the causes of stress are complex. Stress is also a very personal experience as is the response of each individual. It would probably be helpful to draw attention to the increasing debate on the work/life balance.

Work organisation and job design
Earlier approaches to job design concentrated on the restructuring of individual jobs. Although some attention may still be given to individual job redesign, approaches to improving job design now take on a broader perspective. The focus of attention has spread from manipulating the tasks of individual jobs to a wider organisational context, improving the effectiveness of the organisation and the successful management of change.

It is important to note that the different methods of job design are not necessarily separate approaches and also that there are important contextual factors which affect job design. Increased interest in job design has been associated with the development of a broader social concern for the quality of working life, desirable task and job characteristics, management style and culture, and the management of change.

Employee involvement and empowerment
Recognition of the efficient use of human resources for business success together with advances in social democracy have highlighted the importance of employee involvement and empowerment. Increasing business competitiveness requires organisations to develop and harness the talents and commitment of their employees, and allow people a greater say in decisions that affect them at work. Empowerment is generally explained in terms of allowing employees greater freedom, autonomy and self-control over their work, and responsibility for decision-making. It is important to consider, however, that the concept of empowerment does give rise to a number of questions and doubts.

There is an opportunity to provide a link back to Chapter 16 and whether empowerment differs in any meaningful way from earlier forms of employee involvement and the extent to which it differs from delegation. Course members could also be encouraged to discuss critically whether participation really does work.

Work organisation and job satisfaction
Important developments in job redesign and work organisation, and efforts to improve job satisfaction include self-managed work groups, flexible working arrangements, and quality circles. Attention should also be given to the importance of contextual factors in job design. However, despite many theories and studies, there are still doubts as to how best to manage an organisation so that staff have both high productivity and job satisfaction.

Debate
‘The extent to which any organisation has happy, helpful and efficient members of staff is a direct result of the manner in which they are treated by top management.’

Some starting points
**For**
- The importance of how staff are treated by top management for the behaviour, motivation, satisfaction and performance of staff has long been recognised by major writers and practitioners.
- Top management have the ultimate responsibility for the quality of working life, views about people at work, and fostering a climate of goodwill and harmonious working relationships.

**Against**
- Except perhaps in the smaller organisations, top management are generally more concerned with community and external decisions than with the satisfaction or performance of staff. This is more the concern of other managers and supervisors.
- In addition to treatment by top management there are many a wide range of complex variables that determine the job satisfaction and performance of staff including individual, social, environmental and cultural factors.

**Assignment: Downsizing**

Here is a suggested answer provided by Dr W. Richardson, ICSA Chief Examiner.

‘Downsizing’ is a term which refers to a general phenomenon of modern organisational life which has been created by organisations of all sizes, and from public and private sectors, shedding jobs as the pressures to become increasingly cost-effective and competitive intensify. For example, in the UK the banks have ‘downsized’ thousands of jobs during the past five years, as have newly privatised organisations such as British Telecom and British Gas. The trend seems set to continue and intensify.

The activity of downsizing is associated with modern management activities, such as benchmarking and business process re-engineering. The question is posed here as to whether and why downsizing leads, or should lead, to higher levels of motivation in personnel in organisations. In order to answer the question effectively, certain related questions need to be answered. What is motivation? How is it enhanced? What do we mean by ‘job enlargement’, ‘job rotation’, and ‘job enrichment’?

**Motivation and commitment**

Theorists such as Abraham Maslow and Frederick Herzberg have differentiated between different types of needs or aspirations which people bring to their work organisations. For example, Maslow provides a ‘hierarchy of needs’ which range from lower level needs such as ‘physiological needs’, the basics of life, e.g. food and clean air, to security, e.g. organisational tenure; ‘social needs’, the need to belong to a work group, for example, and to develop relationships with colleagues at work; ‘status’ whereby being in work bestows status and people look to achieve positions in the organisational hierarchy; ‘perks’ which satisfy the need to be seen to have achieved status and recognition; and ‘self-actualisation’ – the need to learn, grow and develop personally through the activities a person becomes involved in at work.

Frederick Herzberg has differentiated between ‘motivation’ and ‘movement’. The latter involves people performing at work largely because of a carrot and stick relationship – they perform (move) when the carrot or stick is applied but often reduce or halt performance when they perceive the rewards and punishments to be inadequate. The former involves personal commitment from the employees they commit to the organisation and its work and look forward to doing a good job because of personal motivation and not simply because of the organisation’s impersonal control systems. Herzberg has also differentiated between ‘hygiene factors’ and ‘motivators’. ‘Hygiene factors’ are the basic need-satisfiers which people obtain from work, and which need to be in place if people are to achieve basic levels of ‘motivational fitness’ and aren’t to switch off through being dissatisfied with their work conditions. ‘Motivators’, on the other hand, are higher order needs-satisfiers such as job fulfilment from working on an interesting job and being given discretion over...
how it is to be performed, and recognition associated with making worthwhile contributions to the organisation. According to Herzberg, these aspects of organisation need to be in place if personnel are to attain high levels of ‘motivational fitness’ and commitment.

Other theorists have described motivation as a process and have emphasised the need to build into jobs and personnel development situations:

- factors which make performance worthwhile – attractive rewards, or alternatively meaningful punishments for failure to perform acceptably;
- clear communication that the rewards will flow given successful performance, or that punishments will definitely be incurred for poor performance; and
- support to help the employee perform to the required level and to help him/her perceive that his/her effort will actually result in the achievement of the desired performance. If any of these aspects of a particular situation are missing commitment and effective job performance will not ensue.

**Job rotation, job enlargement and job enrichment in the downsized situation**

In the light of the above we might conclude that job rotation – which is a system of moving people, systematically, between a number of jobs and duties – is likely to be the result of downsizing. This is because fewer people have the same number of jobs to do, but is likely to be helpful motivationally only to the extent that it improves the hygiene motivators of a person by making his or her work life less boring and repetitive by providing personal growth opportunities through multi-skills development programmes; it does not lead to feelings of insecurity because of a perceived inadequacy about ability to perform the changing range of jobs. Such insecurity might result, for example, because of a lack of training support or because there are simply too many jobs to do.

Job enlargement is also a likely consequence of the downsizing policy. Again, fewer people to do the same amount of work implies that permanent duties expand to take on more of the same sort of work – the middle manager is asked to manage more subordinates, for example. Once again, the extent to which job enlargement is motivational will depend on the extent to which the employee perceives the change to be one which enhances status, or simply means ‘the same old job only more of it’.

According to Herzberg, job enrichment is the only true route to motivation and commitment. This requires that people be given more control over their work and more discretion over how it gets done. It involves the depth of work rather than the breadth of it. So, once again, if downsizing leads to people being given more worthwhile jobs and discretionary power then it is likely to be motivational. This will often apply: fewer people in an organisation implies that more responsibility will be passed to those who remain. Against this, however, might be the fear in a constantly downsizing organisation that, despite improved performance, an employee might still expect to lose the job eventually. Also if employees perceive the rewards being offered to be inadequate compensation for their new duties then they will perceive the situation to be inequitable, which is another cause of demotivation at work according to ‘equity’ theorists such as Adams. Clearly, in such contexts, short-term motivational gains are likely to be offset by a longer-drawn realisation that job security is threatened. Ultimately, therefore, it seems likely that in a continuously downsizing situation, which seems to prevail generally in our modern-day competitive society, performance will increasingly depend upon ‘fear of the stick’ rather than upon expectation of high-order needs satisfaction.

Thus, we might conclude that the answer to the question set is that ‘it depends’. Motivation and commitment can flow from downsizing practices provided the people left in the organisation perceive the changes to have been favourable, the rewards for commitment to be high, and that organisational support is to be made available to make sure that they will be able to perform to the required standard. However, to the extent that downsizing leads only to ‘horizontal’ job changes and/or leaves people feeling very insecure about their status and tenure, then it is likely to be demotivational – people may well perform but only because of fear of the consequences of not doing so, and without any real commitment to the organisation’s cause.

(From Administrator, August 1995, pp. 39–40.)
Case study 1: The wide open spaces

Possible suggestions as a basis for discussion include:

(a) Review policy of short-term profit maximisation and consider diversification through increasing range of products.
(b) Consider using own staff for television advertising.
(c) More detailed examination of customer complaints to find out exactly what is going wrong.
(d) Make clear that disciplinary action/possible prosecution will be taken for pilfering.
(e) Offer workers a quantity of the product at a specially reduced price.
(f) Set production targets at every level linked to an incentive scheme. Also incentive scheme for good attendance/timekeeping.
(g) Staffing
   - Review recruitment procedures for both male and female workers.
   - Employ more part-time staff.
   - Provision of crèches for workers with young children.
   - Examine training for, responsibilities of, and promotion opportunities for supervisors.
(h) Work organisation and job design
   - Examine nature of tasks and job characteristics; scope for individual job restructuring, use of autonomous work groups and teamworking.
   - Consider shorter working hours, shift work, flexible working hours, pattern of lunch and tea breaks, music while they work.
(i) Discuss nature of the problems/possible solutions in consultation with line managers, line workers/union representatives, personnel department, sales and production departments. Consider implementation of quality circles. Suggestion schemes, properly monitored and with financial rewards/prizes.
(j) Exit interviews with staff leaving.

Case study 2: Managing supervisors

This case study relates to the changing role of supervisors, their training, and the allocation of new duties and responsibilities following a productivity improvement programme.

Responses should indicate a clear diagnosis of problems, and a coherent strategy and set of advice to the organisation for dealing with the situation.

Main points to consider could include the following:

(a) The motivation and job satisfaction of supervisors.
(b) The requirements for skills training, and valid and meaningful information.
(c) Development of the supervisor’s role in communications.
(d) The transfer of learning from a course to practical work situations.
(e) Encouragement, support and feedback from their managers.
(f) Recognition of the personnel function as a shared responsibility (discussed in Chapter 19).

How much understanding do supervisors need of, for example, employment legislation, and how far does their training reflect this need?

(g) A supervisor is a typical example of a person ‘in the middle’ who faces role conflict because of opposing expectations from managers and from subordinates. (Role conflict was discussed in Chapter 13.)

Changing patterns of work organisation require a review of the scope, nature and content of the supervisor’s jobs. Management then need to give attention to development and enhancement of the job. This demands a better understanding of objectives and processes through which to develop the role and behaviour of supervisors in the organisation.
Attention might be given to such features as the meaningfulness of the supervisor’s jobs, job design, socio-technical approaches, task and job characteristics, management style, and quality circles. It is important, however, to focus attention on the wider organisational context, improving the effectiveness of the organisation, and helping in the development of skills and resources to manage successfully changes in the way the organisation functions. Recognition should be given to the importance of the role of supervisors. Their training should help them to move to ways of working that are more satisfying, and help them to become skilled and experienced in the joint management of change.

Additional seminar activities

Case study: A nasty shock for Eric Evans

ABC Ltd: A study in (lack of) job satisfaction

ABC Ltd is a private sector organisation which manufactures air-conditioning systems and sell them worldwide. Its head office is located in the north of England, although there are outposts of ABC in Spain, Norway, Australia and Japan.

ABC has always been run as if it were a small organisation even though its founder sold it to a big electronics concern some five years ago and it has grown from an original staff of twenty at the outset to employ 500 people at head office and something of the order of 3000 across all locations. It has never had a personnel department, therefore there are very few policies and procedures governing the organisation. Decisions regarding employees (for example, hiring and firing) are usually taken on an ad hoc basis by the relevant manager(s), with the particular circumstances of the case being taken into account. Furthermore management have always refused to recognise trade unions, believing that relations within the organisation are good enough for employees to be able to air grievances without the need for formal representation.

Indeed employee relations have never been seen to present a problem for ABC; the only area that management sees as cause for concern is the shop-floor, where the systems are actually manufactured. The unskilled and repetitive nature of the work in this department is recognised to make unrest more likely and indeed several attempts to unionise this staff group have been launched in the past. Other sections, by contrast, are considered not to be in any need of special monitoring – the service maintenance department, for example. The staff in service maintenance are highly skilled engineers who are employed to maintain and repair the systems that ABC sells. They are available between 6.00 a.m. and midnight should any of ABC’s customers require them. Everyone in this division has personal pagers and takes turns being ‘on call’ which, in the main, means attending to out-of-hours calls as the pager records them and telephoning the relevant client to give them advice. If the problem cannot be solved over the phone and it is urgent (for example, the air-conditioning system in a hospital has broken down), the engineer will have to go to the client. Because of the breadth of ABC’s market, the job also involves a good deal of overseas travel. The service maintenance department is considered to be one of ABC’s selling points, as the cover provided by the team enables the company to promise all their customers a five-year warranty. Recently it has also been necessary to provide cover for the overseas branches of ABC – there has been a secondment to the Norwegian office for the last six months and Japan have also requested that a UK engineer go out there to work until they can recruit to their several vacancies. There are twenty engineers in the service maintenance department, as well as the manager and his secretary. All but one are male.

It was only when Eric Evans (the service maintenance manager) realised that he had recruited no less than five engineers in the previous two years, three of whom had left after a very short time and whom he was still trying to replace, that he began to perceive that all was not necessarily well among his team. When he thought back to those who had left he realised that all of them had gone to jobs elsewhere in the local area. In other words, his staff were leaving because they
were dissatisfied with the company, not because they were moving away, or retiring, or any of the other reasons why people leave employment.

‘Well, it can’t be the money,’ he thought. ‘Those guys get a good whack out of this place plus a company car. Other places don’t pay so well or offer cars. It must be something else. I’ll have to have a chat with them, see what’s going on.’ At this point, Eric was interrupted in his reverie by his secretary reminding him of his 10 a.m. meeting with the company directors. He made a note to himself to look into the matter before gathering up his files and leaving the office.

In fact Eric didn’t need reminding of the problem he had been considering that morning. He returned from the meeting in the early afternoon to be told that a local customer had called, furious because they had had to wait three hours for an engineer to repair their system. The client’s offices had grown so hot in the meantime that they had had to let their staff go home and by the time the system was fixed it wasn’t worth calling everyone back in. So they had ended up losing a day’s work and were blaming it on ABC.

‘But I don’t understand!’ he protested to Carl Peters, who had the unfortunate task of breaking the news to him. ‘We’ve got enough people in, haven’t we? Why were they kept waiting?’

‘Well, we’ve got four people sick, Eric, and there’s about five others abroad. We need five people to stay here and cover the phones, so that only leaves three to go out to calls. And it’s been manic these last couple of days ’cos the weather’s so hot. Martin had to drive from here to Glasgow and then on to Manchester yesterday to answer urgent calls. The call from Barnes Brothers just got shoved to the back of the queue. It’s not our . . .’

Eric broke into Carl’s explanation: ‘Four people sick! Have they called in? I haven’t been told about this, otherwise I would have tried to arrange cover.’

‘I dunno if they called in or not, Eric, but I know we’ve been down on staff constantly recently. There’s always someone off, and it’s usually two or three.’

‘Right, OK, Carl, I’ll ring the customer and eat humble pie. But I want a meeting with the lads tomorrow, 9 a.m. sharp, and we’re going to get to the bottom of this. Can you let them know for me?’

At 9 a.m. the following morning, the service maintenance staff began to gather in Eric’s office. Eric opened the meeting by telling them that he was concerned about morale in the department and would appreciate any comments they had regarding their own job satisfaction. At first they were reluctant to say anything but Paul Feather, one of the longest-serving members of staff, eventually got the ball rolling: ‘Well, what I hate is never knowing what we’re up to, Eric. I’m getting sick of being called out to places, then having to work really late ’cos the client’s left it till the last minute to call. The times I’ve driven back from London at 2.00 in the morning – and I’ve got a sick wife, as you well know.’

‘Yeah, and we never know how far ahead we can plan our social lives and stuff,’ broke in Carl. ‘The only way to ensure not being called away is to book holiday time. I remember when I was due to go and see my parents and you wanted me to fly off somewhere – I’d had the trip arranged for months and suddenly find out the day before that I’m supposed to be going to Switzerland. Then when I wouldn’t go, you got really mad with me.’

‘Speaking of being called out, I got a page the other night at 3.30 a.m. I didn’t turn my pager off ’cos I was on again at 6.00 and one of the customers thought he’d chance his arm. So I got woken up in the middle of the night. It’s not on – they know when they can get hold of us, and to leave a message if it’s an emergency. This wasn’t even urgent – he was just working late and got a bit warm. It could have easily waited till the morning,’ added Paul.

‘Plus the salespeople always make rash promises to the customer – they say they can get the system installed in such and such a time. They never consult us – they just come back and dump the order sheet on us.’ This came from George Browne, who went on: ‘And what’s more, the job’s actually quite dull, you know. I know it’s good money and everything, and we get a car, but we always go to the same companies, here and abroad. Also there’s very little opportunity to train on any system that you don’t already know. So you end up doing the same work, the same installa-
tions and the same repairs, week in, week out. The only training that seems to go on here is for people who come in from outside! Another thing – if we were trained in other systems we could fill in for people more easily.'

At this point Robert Fields was heard to mutter, ‘Yeah and the car thing . . . that director who bought the flash new company car for herself, fifty grand or whatever it was, when we just got told we had ten grand to spend on our cars, take it or leave it. She doesn’t have to do thirty thousand miles a year for the company, it’s just for posing.’ Everyone murmured in agreement.

‘I’m with George on the stuff about the training – I’ve not been here long and I’m bored of the same round of places. There’s something else too,’ said Sarah Jones. ‘It’s true about the money being all right but if you look at other departments, they’re getting more money than we are, even if you take the car into account. Look at pre-sales – they’re all on at least five grand more than we are. The only way to get a rise around here is to threaten to leave, like Carl did that time.’

‘Now that’s not fair,’ Eric burst out. ‘What about appraisals? You get an automatic increment after your appraisal, if it’s been OK.’

‘I can’t remember the last appraisal I had – and anyway, when I did have it you’d forgotten to fill out the form, so it wasn’t much of a discussion. You just sat there and told me I was doing OK and not to worry, you’d do the form soon. Anyway, those increments are only in line with inflation, so we’d kind of expect them anyway – they’re not really because you’re working hard or whatever. We haven’t had a proper performance-related rise in three years,’ Sarah replied.

‘I never even got my increment after my last appraisal – you sent me a letter saying I hadn’t been awarded one, but you never said why! You said at my appraisal that my work was good and you were pleased with me, so I was expecting one,’ chipped in Colin Sanderson, who hadn’t spoken up until then.

‘And you said that I had to improve, and then I got an increment anyway – which I thought was kind of daft. Then you sent me to America to do that really big job, booked me away for a week and totally ignored me when I said I’d never get it done in that time. You had to send John Carter out to help me,’ Carl commented.

There was a brief silence as Eric took all this information in, and the group wondered if they’d gone too far. When he didn’t say anything for some minutes, George leapt in to fill the gap: ‘Can I just say something else? It’s too bloody hot in here most days in the summer ’cos of the great big glass windows – they let all the heat in and then when you open them, papers go everywhere. For an air-conditioning company, we’ve got rubbish ventilation up here. I had to go home early last week because it was so warm – you just can’t concentrate.’

Finally Eric spoke: ‘OK, OK, I get the gist. There’s quite a lot here needs dealing with, it seems. Can we just summarise what the grievances are and I’ll make a point of trying to deal with them as soon as I can.’ Eric was starting to feel somewhat beleaguered. He had had no idea that things had got this bad. He made a resolve to act as fast as he could – it seemed that he would have no staff left at all if he did not.

**Activity brief**

1. There are some obvious indicators of lack of job satisfaction in the text. What are they? What other factors should managers look for which may demonstrate that morale is low?
2. At the meeting the staff are encouraged to air their grievances. Summarise the points they raise.
3. Looking at the summary from the previous question, how do Mumford’s five contractual areas help to explain current problems?
4. How could ABC use job design to help them reduce the causes and effects of stress?
5. What actions would you recommend Eric to take to improve employee commitment at ABC?

Case study provided by Joanna Brewis.
Question 1
There are some obvious indicators of lack of job satisfaction in the text. What are they? What other factors should managers look for which may demonstrate that morale is low?

The indicators in the text are, first, the high labour turnover (some 25 per cent over the last two years) and, secondly, service maintenance's inability to recruit and retain staff for any length of time. Since this is not a job in which turnover should be an issue (as compared to low-skilled, low-waged occupations such as bar-tending or shop work), this serves as evidence that all is not well. The other important indicator is the absence level – four of the seventeen staff are absent at the current time. Excessive use of sick leave can be a way for workers to escape a disliked job.

Other indicators management can look for include higher than average levels of error, indicating a lack of concentration on, and commitment to, the task at hand. In a service industry this would perhaps manifest itself in numbers of complaints. Another useful indicator of discontent is a failure to meet targets set, e.g. production levels. There is also the issue of interpersonal difficulties – if there is a high level of conflict in the organisation/department this can often imply that dissatisfied employees are taking their frustrations out on each other. Managers should also be alert for disciplinary or grievance levels – if either is high then this again may point to lack of satisfaction. More dramatic evidence of workplace resistance comes in the form of either industrial action (unlikely in a non-union environment such as ABC), which is a collective form of protest, or more individual action: sabotage of equipment or buildings.

Question 2
Summarise the points of grievance.

In the order that they are raised, these are:
- the unpredictability of the job itself, never knowing what will be expected of you;
- failure by clients to abide by the terms of the guarantee, which relates to the above issue;
- another connected issue is that of the sales force making rash promises to customers so Service Maintenance are faced with unrealistic time frames which they cannot plan in advance;
- the job itself becoming boring as there is too much specialisation;
- a feeling that there may not be very much equivalence across the company in terms of remunerations, the director’s car and the wages elsewhere in ABC being two sources of this;
- the lack of communication between management and employees, manifest here in the rather disorganised appraisal system, and in Carl’s later point about his trip to the US;
- the lack of any connection between performance and pay;
- the sometimes oppressive physical conditions.

Question 3
Looking at the summary from the previous question, how do Mumford’s five contractual areas help to explain current problems?

Mumford has identified five contractual areas relating to job satisfaction: the knowledge contract; the psychological contract; the efficiency/reward contract; the ethical contract; and the task structure contract. Students should look at the information given in Table 18.1 on p. 648 of the main book to see how it relates to the points of grievance summarised in the answer to Question 2.

Question 4
How could ABC use job design to help them reduce the causes and effects of stress?

The students should draw on information in the text and practical experiences to examine the situation at ABC.
Question 5
What actions would you recommend Eric to take to improve employee commitment at ABC?

Students should look at the discussion of employee involvement and empowerment. This gives examples of the different forms successful employee involvement can take, including effective communication, the sharing of information and consultation, involving staff in problem solving, and training and developing the individual, all of which are relevant to the situation at ABC. The discussion also considers the benefits (or otherwise) of empowerment.

Exercise 1

1. Most of us belong to a number of organisations (college, firm, church, etc.) and a number of groups (family, hockey team, drama society, etc.). Make a list of yours and alongside it try to sum up in a short phrase or sentence why each one is important to you. Do this part of the exercise before reading on.

2. One of the difficulties in theorising about attitudes is their close connection with values and interests. Going through your list now, which of the three are you stressing each time?

3. Considering next the factors that affect your level of satisfaction at work in particular, which of the following do you want from it?
   - autonomy
   - authority
   - variety
   - status
   - money
   - stimulus
   - challenge
   - to be creative
   - excitement
   - to be useful
   - social interaction

   Do your answers change if you ask the question of any unpaid or voluntary work you have or intend to do? Do they change again if you think in terms of a temporary post only?

Exercise 2: Motivation and stress exercise

Part 1

1. Write down as many things that cause you stress as you can in 10 minutes on the lines below:

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2  Put your list in priority order by writing the 1, 2 and 3 against the top three stressors.

Part 2
3  Choose a partner, according to the tutor's guidelines.
4  Swap your Motivation scores (from Assignment 2 in Chapter 12) with your partner, but not your list of stressors. Keep that for now.
5  Look at your partner's Motivation scores and note down what you think would be their top three causes of stress. They will do the same for you.
6  Discuss your findings with each other. How close did you get?

This exercise provides a link back to Chapter 12 and provides a basis for a critical discussion on both causes of stress and relationships with motivation. The exercise should also help course members in their understanding that topics studied in organisational behaviour should not be regarded as free-standing.

Assignment

The successful executive

This is the story of Lynette Thompson, who runs a very successful business. She started out as a self-employed European Community legislation consultant. For the first three years, Lynette balanced the tasks of designing and running consultancy programmes for a select group of clients.

As time progressed, Lynette’s workload became increasingly difficult to cope with. She travelled extensively in the UK and Europe providing consultancy programmes for her client companies. At the same time, she was her own bookkeeper, administrative assistant and researcher.

Gradually, Lynette’s workload increased to such an extent that she found herself working seven days a week. She felt she could cope as her office was in her home. However, Lynette’s constant fear was that she would become ill, and not be able to work. She also had a home, a husband, a teenager and two dogs to think about and make time for.

Lynette did not feel her earnings justified the hire of a secretarial assistant or a researcher, so she continued to work an increasing number of hours; she also increased her travelling. She felt compelled to take on more challenging consultancy programmes in order to make a name for herself, and to grow and develop professionally.

Lynette believed in networking as a way to increase business. She joined two successful international business organisations. Soon, she found herself on a subcommittee, with more responsibilities. She agreed to run a monthly advisory programme without a fee. This was a good networking strategy, but it increased the pressures on her already overloaded life.

Adding further pressure, in the third year of running her own business Lynette began to publish a monthly newsletter for her clients. This provided a useful complement to her consultancy activities, and kept her clients abreast of new developments in the labyrinth of European legislation.

In year four, Lynette began to feel the physical repercussions of her activities. More fatigued than usual, one day she found herself almost unable to get out of bed. This frightened her, particularly as she prided herself on eating well, staying healthy and keeping fit.

She adhered to a daily routine of fitness. Even so, Lynette often rose at 4.30 a.m. to fly to a European destination, and worked with her clients until late each evening. She did try to make an hour for herself every evening prior to dinner, and kept up a regular routine of personal and professional reading.

What had gone wrong? Lynette began a round of visits to her doctor and to the local hospital for tests. The tests showed that she was extremely fit – great blood pressure, no cholesterol problems, good heart, and so forth. Yet she was beginning to feel more and more ill. She began to have regular headaches, lose her naturally clear complexion, suffer weight loss, and find her energy level severely depleted.

Despite these signals, Lynette felt she had no choice but to persevere with her strenuous programme. One day, she found she could not go on. Her system collapsed. Out of sheer desperation, Lynette went
to an acupuncturist and a naturopathic doctor. This doctor discovered the problem. He diagnosed an infection of the liver and the malfunction of her adrenal glands – the accelerator pedal of the body. This came as a great shock to Lynette, who couldn’t understand how this could have happened to her. She had no choice but to cancel most of her consultancy engagements for the next two-month period, and began a strict dietary regime, taking recommended minerals, vitamins and medicines to eliminate the liver and adrenal problems.

Gradually, over a period of six months, Lynette began to recover her mental and physical well-being. However, her illness caused her to look seriously at her working life. She realised that some radical changes were necessary. But where to begin?

1. What could Lynette have done differently to deal with her pressures, and cope with the immense stress she was under?

2. What would you recommend she do, once she reached the point of having to submit to her illness and cancel some of her work?

3. What role do you think gender played in the case of Lynette? Could that have been one of the issues which drove her on?

Contributed by Sunny Stout, Sun Training

Managing stress is an important factor in a person’s approach to problems at work and at home and, ultimately, their ability to resolve them.

Stress is unavoidable. There will always be demands placed on us. People have existed on earth for nearly 1,000,000 years (or so say the palaeontologists) and we have developed mechanisms that help, or hinder, us in recognising symptoms of pressure and stress.

The ‘fight or flight’ mechanism prepares the body to cope with any threat or danger by certain physiological responses. For example, if you are about to speak to an audience of 250 people, your physiological response may be perspiring hands, butterflies in the stomach, slightly shaky hands and legs, and an overwhelming feeling of anxiety. You may even fear that your mind will go blank on your walk up to the podium.

Individuals are a product of their environment. However, because we have been dealing with executive stress for only a few generations (out of the approximate 50,000 generations that people have existed on earth) we have yet to build up new and relevant responses. Our in-built response is one of survival, i.e. when standing up in front of an audience of 250 people, the physiological response is that the body thinks it’s about to die! Quite clearly, it is unlikely you will die giving a speech to a large audience and our ‘Fight or Flight’ response, therefore, does not particularly help us to deal adequately with symptoms of executive pressure or stress.

So what are these stress symptoms, and how can we recognise them early enough to preserve our mental and physical well-being? Pressure is when we react to a situation with which we feel we can cope successfully. The result of pressure may be that we accept a new challenge, or we are spurred on to achieve results. Under pressure, we can still maintain a balance of health.

Stress is when we react to a situation we feel is not easy to cope with. The result of stress is unwanted physical, mental and emotional deterioration. Stress symptoms are failing work performance, mental and physical depletion, and finally exhaustion or illness.

In society today, one of the classic illnesses recognised as stress-related is M.E. (myalgic encephalomyelitis), popularly known as ‘post-viral’ or ‘chronic fatigue syndrome’. The symptoms of M.E. are mental and physical fatigue, often culminating in the inability to work for weeks, months or years.

We need to learn to recognise the three types of responses to pressure and stress: emotional, behavioural, and physical. Below are examples of each type.
Emotional response
In the short term, an emotional response to pressure could be increased confidence. But a response to stress could be to make someone more anxious or tense. A long-term emotional response to stress could be an aggressive attitude or over-emotional reaction.

Behavioural response
In the short term, a behavioural response to pressure could be clear and decisive thinking. A behavioural response to stress would be confused thinking, poor concentration and an inability to complete tasks. In the long term, a behavioural response to stress may be poor timekeeping, taking stimulants to stay awake, or insomnia.

Physical response
In the short term a physical response to pressure would be a greater awareness of health and energy. The physical response to stress may create a syndrome of tiredness, lack of energy, or quick, shallow breathing. In the long term, the physical effects of stress could be headaches, ulcers, blood pressure problems, and general physical deterioration.

As we said at the beginning of this study, stress is unavoidable, and people will always have demands placed on them. Stress management refers to any programme that reduces stress.

The general rule is to take a good look at how we are living our lives. If we become ill, it is because, for whatever reason, our body needs to be ill. The best prescription is rest, a balanced diet, regular exercise and, as much as possible, relief from the offending stresses.

In Lynette's case, the alternative therapists regarded her symptoms as signs that her body was doing its job to fight off stress and illness. Within an organisation there are many things that can be done to reduce the symptoms of stress.

First, the behavioural response to stress must be acknowledged. Second, we need to determine the causes and, third, we can begin to develop a strategy to reduce stress.

Some suggested ‘stress reducing’ activities are as follows:

- Counselling and coaching schemes set up within the organisation.
- Setting up a ‘Mentoring’ programme to enable employees to develop supportive relationships with a guide or teacher inside or outside the organisation. The self-employed, such as Lynette, may choose to join a related organisation to develop a mentor.
- Developing team building activities such as on job or external training courses.
- Providing counselling training for managers.
- Training managers and supervisors to recognise the causes and symptoms of stress in their staff.
- Setting realistic goals and objectives with in-built appraisal and counselling systems. The self-employed, like Lynette, should regularly review personal, career and business goals.
- Continuing Professional Development (or Career Development) schemes.
- Routinely reviewing workloads and deadlines.
- Encouraging health and fitness programmes.
- Developing an outside counselling service for drug, alcohol, or financial problems.
- Setting up a Stress Management Programme.

One of the ways an organisation can help employees to cope with stress is to provide stress management training. This may include programmes in diet, exercise, time management, assertiveness, support groups, relaxation and meditation.

Assignment guide provided by Sunny Stout, Sun Training.
Applications and discussion

Application 1

A salary can't buy happiness

The American researcher Fred Herzberg was the first to propose that employees’ salaries were a major cause of dissatisfaction but not necessarily a cause of satisfaction. Writing in the 1950s he introduced the concept that what makes people happy about their work and what makes them unhappy are in fact different things.

What makes them happy or satisfied, he proposed, were characteristics of the job that met what he called their motivator needs, such as a desire for achievement, recognition, interesting work, power of self and/or others and promotion.

What makes them unhappy arises from what he called hygiene needs related to the context in which the work was done.

These ‘dissatisfiers’ are company administration, the boss, salaries, peers and the physical working conditions.

This theory became part of the management training package for millions of managers around the world. It had all the appeal of any good theory: it was practical, simple, memorable and consistent with the gut feel of many managers. Unfortunately, over the next 40 years no other researcher was able to replicate Herzberg’s findings with such clarity.

Today most researchers would agree that what excites people and what irritates them about their jobs are often different factors, but these may reflect personality differences as much as they reflect either the job or the job context.

However, it is on salary, particularly, that Herzberg’s neatness lets us down. Salary is not just a contextual factor. It also establishes our place in the scheme of things. It affects our sense of equity, impinges on our sense of personal worth, our self-esteem. Salary crosses the barrier from hygiene to motivator need and casts serious doubt on the theory.

No one would argue today that salary is not a motivator. There are people for whom money is an important motivator. They are attracted to jobs which pay a fee every time the person performs and are found in the professions, commission-based sales jobs and in personal services.

But for the majority of reasonably paid employees salary is not a prime motivator on a day-to-day basis. Few people get up each morning and say ‘I am off to get my money today’. For most of us other factors – challenging work, variety, control over our work, recognition, power, autonomy – are the prime motivators day to day. (This does not exclude the power of money in large lumps. Everyone has a price and, given enough money, you can motivate your employees for short terms with large lumps.)

Financial rewards are one of the most complex areas of managing. It is well nigh impossible to get it right. We preach equity and fairness, yet most reward systems are blatantly unfair. We preach transparency and openness, yet there are anomalies which persist.

Our reaction to these anomalies is a periodic shuffle in our basis of assessment. On each occasion we tend to think that this time we will get it right but the very nature of incentives to work are so idiosyncratic that, whatever your system, it will bug some people a lot of the time.

Over the last 40 years there have been at least four management movements which have attempted to fix the anomalies. Two of these – management by objectives in the 1970s and 1980s, and performance related pay from the 1990s – became universal cults.

Bureaucratic information-based reward systems are now a booming business. Yet their underlying assumption is false. They are based on a belief that organisations can be administered scientifically – that inequities and emotions can be squeezed out to provide a rational scheme.

But organisations are about people who have emotions: love, hate, pleasure, pain, satisfaction and dissatisfaction are essential ingredients of life at work. And if we are successful in producing a totally rational reward system then we would be in danger of squeezing out the creativity and innovation that companies need to survive.
So what might you do with your reward system? A middle path between an obsessive belief in a rational scheme and the idiosyncratic effects of labour market forces would be sensible. If your people are unhappy, you should concede that salary systems are imperfect – that they are rarely fair and that transparency is not guaranteed to improve them.

Resist the temptation to buy a bureaucratic, information-based system that will eliminate some of the very behaviour your company needs to survive. Do establish performance criteria because measured performance does outstrip unmeasured performance. But remain flexible.

Do not concentrate on salary as a major reward. Most of your people come to work to satisfy other motives. Use other rewards such as recognition, having fun, interesting work, and new challenges to excite your people. Finally, from time to time make such adjustments to your salary scales as market intelligence and common sense would dictate. After 40 years of trying, we should admit there is no better strategy.

(Source: Professor John W. Hunt, Financial Times, 11 March 1998.)

Application 2

His master's voice

The UK workplace is widely believed to have changed beyond recognition over the past 10 years as a result of technological innovation and the need to compete in the global economy.

This is said to have transformed relations in the workplace by giving employees more control over their work and increasing their participation in company decision-making. As a result, we are supposed to have seen an end to the more traditional and allegedly oppressive methods based on scientific management and the production assembly line.

The trouble with much of this familiar picture is that it is based more on anecdote than on empirical evidence. A massive study of the UK employment relationship challenges this comforting view with an impressive analysis of what is actually happening in the workplace. It suggests that behind the much acclaimed modernisation of employment relationships lies a much more familiar pattern of workplace behaviour shaped by the attempted reassertion of managerial power.

The co-authors, led by Duncan Gallie at Nuffield College, Oxford, produce some startling findings about UK employees. They point to what they see as an impressive improvement in workplace skill levels. As many as 63 per cent of all employees surveyed said the skills required in their particular job had increased over a five-year period while only 9 per cent said they had suffered from deskilling.

As many as 65 per cent of employees reported an increase in their responsibility at work, mainly as a result of those improved skills. The authors point to the ‘spectacular’ spread of new technologies so the proportion of employees using automated or computerised equipment rose from 39 per cent to 56 per cent.

They conclude that the second half of the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s ‘saw a marked decentralisation of decision-making within organisations’ with a resulting loss of middle-level management. There was also evidence that ‘work has grown intrinsically more satisfying and less degrading’. But the survey also found upskilling had brought ‘ambivalent’ consequences for the quality of working life because of intensified work pressures.

Moreover, the greater ‘task discretion’ required from employees has not brought a greater willingness by employers to trust their employees more and give them more autonomy and participation. It seems there has been no significant shift in power from managers to employees.

On the contrary, the authors claim that the UK has seen the intensification by management of ‘extensive and expanding control systems’, helped by the spread of advanced technologies. ‘Almost everyone is supervised and four in ten supervise others to some degree,’ they argue. While managers and professional staff enjoy increased personal discretion at work, ‘more manual work-
ers are experiencing tighter supervision than before’, with 30 per cent having their pay linked to work-pacing and target-setting and with appraisal and merit pay covering 40 per cent of them.

This conclusion is strengthened by the study’s other findings on the limited degree of employee participation and representation. Only 32 per cent of employees said they had ‘any significant degree of say over changes in work organisation’ with half saying they could exercise no influence at all. The study claims ‘the capacity of employees to affect their employment conditions appears to have diminished since the mid-1980s, although they may have become better informed about organisational activities’.

The lack of an employee voice in the UK workplace is stark. Only 22 per cent of workers said they had a consultative works council or similar structure in their establishment and a majority believed such a body enjoyed little or no influence. The study found consultation committees were strongest where trade unions were recognised. As in Japan and the US, so in the UK a correlation exists between high worker participation levels and innovative workplaces.

But Mr Gallie and his colleagues suggest that in a period of rapid technological change and competitive pressure, ‘UK employers have very widely failed to carry through the institutional reforms in their organisations that would have enhanced co-operation in employment relationships and led to a higher level of social integration of their employees’.

The lack of a worker voice may help to explain the alarmingly low levels of commitment among workers to the company that employs them. The study found only 8 per cent said their own values and those of their organisation were ‘very similar’, while a mere 14 per cent said they were ‘proud’ of their organisation and only 30 per cent felt any loyalty towards it. This contrasts with 28 per cent saying they ‘felt sufficiently attached to their organisation to say they would turn down another job if it offered higher pay’.

The study provides evidence of the increase in employment insecurity, especially for young male manual workers, which has grown markedly since the 1970s. But gender differences are less obvious when it comes to the experience of being without work. The authors point out once a man or a woman becomes unemployed it tends to lead to further spells of unemployment as his or her job prospects become more problematic.

But on the other hand, there is no evidence the work ethic is dying out. Going to work in a society dominated by fragile family values provides an increasing number of people with ‘a basis for personal autonomy’, says the study. Workers work not merely to earn money. They are more concerned with employment security, job interest and the quality of their personal relations with management.

The main conclusion, however, is rather bleak. The quality of employment may have improved for those in higher and intermediate skilled employment, but the brunt of change has hit the non-skilled manual worker hard. ‘The UK employment structure still remains fundamentally divided by class’, argues the report. It warns that this could lead to a resurgence of workplace conflict. Apparently there are few signs that a new model of the employment relationship is becoming more widespread in the UK.

(Source: © Financial Times, 1 July 1998.)

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Multiple-choice questions

1 (Chapter 18, p. 646) Which of the following statements about job satisfaction is/are true?
   (a) satisfaction is the same as motivation
   (b) job satisfaction will always result in a high level of motivation and performance
   (c) there is a strong link between satisfaction and productivity
   (d)* none of the above

2 (Chapter 18, pp. 646–7) Which of the following variables will affect a person's level of job satisfaction?
   (a) the nature, size and structure of the organisation
   (b) the informal organisation
   (c) a person's intelligence and abilities
   (d)* all of the above

3 (Chapter 18, p. 658) What is/are the main reason(s) for attention to job design?
   (a) to enhance personal satisfaction that people derive from their work
   (b) to make the best use of people as a valuable resource of the organisation
   (c)* both (a) and (b)
   (d) neither (a) nor (b)

4 (Chapter 18, p. 661) In general, there appears little doubt that restructuring the nature of work itself and providing job enrichment does increase ________.
   (a)* job satisfaction
   (b) performance
   (c) productivity
   (d) motivation

5 (Chapter 18, p. 666) To ensure that employee involvement and empowerment is successful and beneficial to both the organisation and employees, there must be:
   (a)* mutual trust between management and employees
   (b) sufficient financial rewards for employees
   (c) a rigid policy on working methods and practices throughout the organisation
   (d) minimal communication between management and employees

6 (Chapter 18, p. 673) Three possible approaches aimed at overcoming forces for stability in both job attitudes and performance are the individually, group- and organisation-oriented systems. Which of the following best describes the individual-oriented system?
   (a) Working conditions are organised so that individuals can gain satisfaction from their contribution to the welfare of the organisation as a whole.
   (b) Work is organised around intact groups with high levels of autonomy. Satisfaction and performance are derived from group participation.
   (c)* Intrinsic and extrinsic rewards are linked to individual performance and so high performance contributes to job satisfaction.
   (d) none of the above.