Does Herzberg's motivation theory have staying power?

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper seeks to examine the issue of whether Herzberg's two-factor motivation theory still resonates nearly 50 years after it was first posited. The objective is to assess whether or not Herzberg's contentious seminal studies on motivation at work still hold true today.

Design/methodology/approach – The arena in which the theory is investigated is work-based suggestion schemes, and the question considered is "What motivates employees to contribute ideas?" The paper begins by revisiting the literatures that form the basis of motivation theory and, in particular, the furore surrounding the work of Fredrick Herzberg.

Findings – The results are derived from a survey providing over 3,200 responses. They suggest that money and recognition do not appear to be primary sources of motivation in stimulating employees to contribute ideas. In line with Herzberg's predictions, factors associated with intrinsic satisfaction play a more important part.

Originality/value – The paper demonstrates that, despite the criticism, Herzberg's two-factor theory still has utility nearly 50 years after it was first developed.

Keywords Psychology, Human resource management, Ideas generation

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Factors such as organisational downsizing and an espoused commitment to employee empowerment, and new discourses around organisational learning and knowledge management, prompted the question as to whether Herzberg *et al.*'s (1959) study, *The Motivation to Work*, still has validity. The paper looks at this question through the lens of research into the problem of what motivates people to contribute ideas within the context of work-based suggestion schemes.

Organisations and those who work in them have experienced cataclysmic changes over the past half-century. There is more intense competition than has pertained previously because of globablisation, demographic shifts, technological development and an acceleration in the rate of innovation and the diffusion of new ideas (Ilinitch *et al.*, 1996). There is pressure on organisations and workforces to deliver continuous improvement in products, systems and processes (Parolini, 1999).

On the plus side, financial rewards for the application of this knowledge can often be high for both the individual and the organisation, but, more negatively, employment continuity and opportunities for career progression available to the individual are generally considered to have deteriorated through a unilateral re-writing of the psychological contract by employers (Hiltrop, 1995). since Herzberg *et al.* (1959)

formulated their two-factor theory and their contentious proposition that, beyond a minimum threshold, money does not motivate.

Since Herzberg undertook his research, human asset and agency theory have emerged as major discourses that have influenced approaches to motivation, reward and performance management and have helped restore *homo economicus* to an organisational default position in many contexts similar to those which prevailed before the research was published.

The paper begins by reviewing the now-historical literatures on motivation that provide some basis for understanding contemporary approaches to reward and performance management. The next section examines the work of Herzberg and also that of some of his critics. The following section discusses the role of the organisational suggestion scheme. Next, the research design is described. The subsequent segment provides the findings, and the final section draws conclusions about whether or not Herzberg *et al.*'s model still has relevance in contemporary organisational life.

2. The literatures on motivation

When research into motivation was undertaken from the mid-twentieth century, two views of human nature underlay the research. The one, with its echoes of Taylorism, viewed people as basically lazy and work-shy, and held that motivating them is a matter of external stimulation. The other view, with its echoes of the Hawthorn findings, suggested that people are motivated to work well for its own sake, as well as for the social and monetary benefits they received, and that their motivation is internally stimulated.

The major researchers into motivation – whose work is still taught to business students – were Maslow (1954), Herzberg *et al.* (1959), Vroom (1964), Alderfer (1972), McClelland (1961) and Locke *et al.* (1981). Broadly speaking, the research can be divided into what has been labelled the content and the process theories of motivation. Content theory, expounded by Herzberg *et al.* (1959), assumed a more complex interaction between both internal and external factors, and explored the circumstances in which individuals respond to different types of internal and external stimuli. Process theory, the first exponent of which was Vroom (1964), considers how factors internal to the person result in different behaviours

In addition, and parallel with the work being undertaken into motivation, certain aspects of leadership theory were perceived to have implicit links to the external factors that influence motivation. These took the form of studies that assessed group responses to management styles, starting with McGregor (1960, 1987), moving to Fiedler (1978), House (1971), and Hersey and Blanchard (1993). Collectively, these outputs have combined with more recent rational economic theories such as Agency Theory (Fama and Jensen, 1983; Eisenhardt, 1989), Human Capital Theory (Gerhart, 1990; Barney, 1991), which frame the assumptions upon which contemporary reward and performance management systems are predicated.

The bulk of the formative research on motivation was undertaken during the 1960s and 1970s. This was a time when organisations tended to be rigid, hierarchical and bureaucratic. We now recognise those decades as marking the end of the industrial age when there was a clear commitment to mass production. The dominance of the machine bureaucratic paradigm enabled organisations to offer employment stability and career progression. In the West, organisational commitment to piece rate systems ensured that

the production/innovation dilemma tended to be resolved in favour of the former. Organisations were able to survive without requiring high rates of creativity and innovation in order to remain competitive, because they were all constrained by a push-system of mass production. Responsibility for innovation tended to be focused in one area of the business – R&D. It was only after the introduction of Japanese management practices in the 1980s, and a move to pull-systems founded on – continuous improvement in systems and processes really began to take off, prompting many organisations to question the assumptions underpinning individualised reward systems.

The excellence literatures of the 1980s emphasised the importance of team working and empowerment – see Peters and Waterman (1982) and Clutterbuck and Goldsmith (1984). During the 1990s, interest in both the US and the UK moved to the rapid growth of the service sector made possible by improvements in technology. Many successful service systems were perceived to be founded on a recipe at the heart of which were Taylorised processes. Mindless repetitive processes resulted in the reassertion of theories that were predicated on ideological assumptions of rational economic man. They were theories that also resonated strongly with both the interests and impulses of the dominant coalition in senior management that culminated post-millennium in the Enron and other high profile corporate accountability scandals. Herzberg *et al.* (1959) argued that these impulses were a product of a failure to distinguish between motivation and movement, and produced behaviours that are dysfunctional at both boardroom and operational levels.

During the mid-1970s, behaviourism made a comeback when a new generation of theorists acknowledged that human behaviour was dynamic and could be stimulated as much by an individual's internal world as it could by exogenous factors. Behaviourists began to offer new perspectives on motivation. Bandura (1977) posited that employee needs are a function of personality. Behaviour emerges as a result of the operation of cognitive processes in interaction with the environment. The environment generates external social stimuli to which individuals respond. People are goal-seeking, and search for positive reinforcement. Thus, if the organisation provides such reinforcement through the crafting of appropriate rewards, a good match is achieved and high motivation results.

Rotter (1975), in his theory of social learning, developed the idea of behaviour potential. He argued that the behaviours we choose to display in a given situation are the result of the conscious selection of behavioural alternatives, and that the choice is grounded in our expectancy of the reward that will follow, its reinforcement value and the consequential freedom of movement that is experienced as a result. The expectancy is founded on the generalisation of similar (but not identical) past experience, whilst the reinforcement value reflects the degree of preference that the individual has for one form of reinforcement over another. An individual will experience high freedom of movement when the chosen behaviours result in high positive reinforcement. Low freedom of movement is encountered when an individual experiences negative reinforcement.

We are continuously reacting to our internal impulses, and also to the external environment. However, our impulses and the external environment also interact. As a result, we respond to what Rotter describes as psychological situations. Behaviour, therefore, can only be predicted on the basis of our knowledge of the psychological situation. He proposed the concept of locus of control as a form of generalised

expectancy, and suggested that those with a high internal locus of control would have a high expectancy that positive reinforcement is under their control, whilst those with an external locus, will perceive themselves to be controlled by fate, luck or other people with power.

Expectancy, equity, goal setting and reinforcement theory have resulted in the development of a simple model of motivational alignment. The model suggests that once employee needs are identified, and organisational objectives are defined, the next step is to determine rewards and link these to behaviours that both serve the organisational objectives and also satisfy employee needs. If these are well aligned, high motivation will result; if poorly aligned, then low motivation will be the outcome.

From Herzberg's perspective, the model fails to separate motivators from movers (discussed in more detail below), with the result that many organisations become over-reliant on extrinsic rewards that absolve managers of any responsibility to enrich work by creative and imaginative job design or recognition of individual growth needs.

Research into motivation has not stopped – for example, a brief search under 'motivation' yields, in chronological order, among many others, Locke and Henne (1986); Hyland (1988); George and Brief (1996); Kanfer (1990, 1992); Locke (1991); D'Andrade (1992); Bagozzi *et al.* (2003).

3. Herzberg's two-factor theory re-visited

Herzberg and his collaborators published *The Motivation to Work* in 1959, proposing two factors influencing motivation at work – hygiene factors that demotivate when they are inappropriate, and motivators that sustain effort. It catalysed one of the most strenuously contested areas of management theory, largely because of the assertion that there was a weak correlation between financial reward and job satisfaction. At the crudest level, Herzberg's results have been translated into the axiom that while inadequate financial reward can demotivate, nevertheless, beyond a limited threshold, money is a hygiene factor and does not motivate. The theory challenged the dominant theoretical assumptions prevailing at the time that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction could be presented on a continuum, at the midpoint of which, an individual would experience a neutral state being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. An improvement in one or more of a range of factors including pay, supervision, and prospects for promotion would result in a move towards increased satisfaction, whilst a deterioration would prompt a move in the opposite direction. Put another way, dissatisfaction was a result of an absence of factors giving rise to satisfaction.

Herzberg and his team explored the impact of fourteen factors on job satisfaction and dissatisfaction in terms of frequency and duration of impact. They used interviews involving critical incident analysis, which at the time was a relatively new method of data collection. When the factors were analysed, they were found to group into two clusters. The results were so pronounced that it was necessary to consider them separately, depending on whether job satisfaction or dissatisfaction was the focus of concern. Sources of satisfaction included, a sense of achievement, recognition, the work itself, the opportunity to take responsibility and prospects for advancement. Employees indicated strong dissatisfaction if they were unhappy with company policy and administration, technical and interpersonal supervision, financial reward and working conditions. What intrigued Herzberg and his team was that satisfaction with these variables did not correlate with increased levels of job satisfaction. The

emergent two-factor model therefore, directly challenged the dominant paradigm predicated on the uniscalar approach.

Herzberg's results triggered a plethora of replication studies. A pattern emerged. Those using the critical incident framework showed a remarkable consistency with the original results, whilst research using other methods, principally surveys, supported the uniscalar model of job satisfaction. Perhaps the most powerful critique was offered by Vroom (1964), who postulated that when a recall methodology was deployed, ego defences would be invoked when respondents were asked to attribute the sources of dissatisfaction in work, whilst attributing sources of satisfaction to personal achievement and capability. Hardin (1965) challenged the methodology on grounds of poor respondent recall. Opsahl and Dunnette (1966) found Herzberg's assertion that money was more likely to act as a dissatisfier (hygiene factor) mystifying. They concluded that there was no substantial support for a so-called differential role for money in leading to job satisfaction or job dissatisfaction. They reinterpreted Herzberg's data arguing that it was inconsistent with his interpretation. Other opponents concluded that Herzberg's results were "method bound" (Hulin and Smith, 1965). Unfortunately, for the critics, whilst they could point to alternative results using other methods, they had difficulty explaining why Herzberg's method produced the results it did with such consistency.

Stung by his critics, in 1968, Herzberg responded with, "One more time: How do you motivate employees?" The article sold more than 1.2 million reprints, the largest volume of offprint sales ever achieved by the *Harvard Business Review*. In this paper, Herzberg drew a critical distinction between motivation and movement. He argued that managers confuse the two. Movement stems from "humankind's animal nature" – the built-in drive to avoid pain from the environment, plus all the learned needs that become conditioned as a result of the need to serve basic biological needs. To illustrate the point, he suggested that if he wished his dog to move, he could kick it or reward it with a candy. The motivation for movement, however, is his, not the dog's, and what we observe is movement not motivation in the dog. Similarly, if employees are asked to do something in return for an incentive, managers tend to argue that employees are motivated, when in fact it is management that is motivated to promote employee movement. To reinforce the distinction, Herzberg suggested that motivation is like an internal self-charging battery. For an employee to become motivated, the energy or desire to move must come from within. For Herzberg, motivators are internally-generated drives, not externally-stimulated incentives, and it is upon this distinction that he restated the utility of his two-factor theory and the key steps required to institute genuine job enrichment as opposed to job enlargement.

On the basis of the perceived problems with methodology, cynics have continued to argue that money can motivate and that Herzberg's results could be attributed to a range of factors including personality (Evans and McKee, 1970), and social desirability bias (Wall, 1972), and that the presence of such variables compromised Herzberg's methodology.

In 1987, Herzberg's 1968 article was reprinted to mark the 65th birthday of the *Harvard Business Review* (Herzberg, 1987). At the end, he offered a retrospective commentary in which he once again dismissed his critics and reasserted the distinction between movement and motivation. Drawing upon research from Japan, India, South Africa, Zambia, Italy and Israel, Herzberg argued robustly that motivation is based on

growth needs and that because of this, individuals do not require incremental incentives to drive the internal engine.

Motivation is founded upon satisfaction born of a sense of achievement, recognition for achievement, responsibility and personal growth. Herzberg went on to suggest that recognition for achievement translated into direct feedback; responsibility into self-regulation, authority to communicate, exercise of control over resources and accountability; whilst advancement and growth translated into the central dynamic of new learning leading to new expertise.

This latter observation raised the following question – To what extent are people who contribute ideas prompted to do so as a result of motivation or by movement?

If it is because of movement, then traditional individualised incentives as a way of rewarding employees for their suggestions are clearly appropriate. However, if motivation applies, then traditional idea schemes may not be capable of delivering the results that organisations need in a context of hyper-competitiveness and globalisation.

The motivation/movement question led to a consideration of why many suggestion schemes are perceived to have failed, and why the concept of the suggestion scheme itself has been in decline.

4. The role of the suggestion scheme

A well-designed suggestion scheme saves managerial time. It also recognises that the majority of employees who offer suggestions do so in order to overcome a source of frustration. It follows that a swift response on the part of the immediate line manager initiates four other positive developments that are motivational – firstly, the employees experience the satisfaction of seeing their idea being implemented; secondly, this sense of satisfaction is not needlessly delayed; thirdly, adoption means that an appropriate business case has been made which means that either the manager believes the organisation will save money or that it will make money; and fourthly, the idea will be contributing to organisational success. If employees share in a sense of ownership, they are more likely to have a shared commitment to making it work.

Thus, whilst a suggestion scheme may not make Taylorised work more stimulating, it can catalyse social processes that are more enriching and, as a result, create a climate in which both managers and employees can be motivated to promote and support innovation and change by facilitating a sense of commitment to making it happen.

Success, however, is not simply a function of a well-designed scheme. It must be supported by well-aligned HR systems and processes that recognise that incremental innovation is a product of social interaction. This not only demands appropriate employee training to work in groups to define problems and formulate solutions, it also requires the empowerment of managers to act quickly and the existence of a process that records both effort and success in the corporate memory. Integration between the training system, the appraisal system and promotion and redundancy policies are, therefore, critical to success of suggestion schemes.

5. Research design
Sample
The aim of the study was to revisit the work of Herzberg *et al.* to consider its validity and efficacy when applied to the contemporary organisational situation. The means by

which this would be achieved was by examining what motivates people to contribute ideas within the context of work-based suggestion schemes. It was felt that by using a survey method rather than interviews, and by focusing on observable behaviour rather than emotions, it would be possible to overcome some of the major concerns of Herzberg's critics.

As a result, 32 large organisations, all members of the UK Association of Suggestion Schemes were selected. The sample was stratified to ensure that each of seven employment sectors were represented to include Government, utilities, services, retail and manufacturing, financial services and the police were represented.

Data collection

A survey questionnaire was designed that would explore whether or not an individual had ever contributed an idea, why he or she had contributed, the respondent's age, gender and length of service, the nature of the relationship with the line manager, and feelings towards senior management.

Suggestion scheme managers within each of the participating organisations were asked to distribute questionnaires to a sample of employees of which 50 per cent had contributed an idea and 50 per cent had not.

The managers were also asked to ensure that, as far as possible, equal proportions of contributors and non-contributors would be targeted in each employment category within the organisation. The questionnaires were returned anonymously to the same manager, who forwarded the responses to the researchers. Overall, 5,000 questionnaires were sent out to 32 suggestion scheme managers. A total of 3,209 responses were received.

Data analysis

Clearly, the sample was, strictly speaking, neither structured nor random. The objective, however, was to search for patterns in the responses, and to try to establish whether contributors were motivated or moved to offer ideas. With this end in mind, responses were divided into contributors and non-contributors, and analysed by sector against a number of variables, including perceptions of the line manager, senior management and the organisation and its policies, using Likert-type statements. Utilising SPSS, a range of frequencies was generated to elicit motivation and movement. Contributor responses were assigned a positive or negative value that reflected the strength of response. Scores were added up to provide an overall result, expressed in the findings in percentages.

6. Findings

The contributors of ideas are the primary focus of this study; non-contributors are obviously neither motivated nor moved, and had nothing to add to this investigation of Herzberg's theory of the sources of motivation. Of the 3,209 respondents, 1,924 (1,164 men and 760 women) contributed an idea. A breakdown of contributors by sector revealed that 525 respondents are in Government, 474 in finance, 311 work in manufacturing, 278 in services, 162 work in the police force, 109 in utilities, and 65 are in the retail sector.

Reasons for contributing

Respondents were offered a choice of responses to explain why they had contributed ideas. These were grouped into motivators that were rooted in intrinsic sources of satisfaction, and movers that were responses to external stimuli. The pattern of response for the motivators and the movers is set out in Table I.

In addition, there were three variables that Herzberg's work clearly suggested were motivators. However, for the reasons outlined below, it was felt that classifying these as either motivators or movers was problematic:

(1) *A desire for recognition from a line manager.* The need for recognition is complex. It can certainly be classified as a motivator in the terms that Herzberg used it, when referring to the "personal feel-good" factor that arises after being told that one has done a good job. However, it can also arise because it improves prospects for promotion that carries with it improved status and increased remuneration. These are factors that Herzberg would classify as movers, although he would obviously classify a desire for increased responsibility as a motivator because it provides an opportunity for personal growth.

(2) *The desire for recognition from colleagues* was similarly ambiguous. Here, the stimulus is likely to be the need for affiliation. The driver may be the satisfaction derived from being an established member of a group, in which case, it would be a motivator. However, satisfaction could be founded on the fact that acceptance makes life easier, and enhances the individual's ability to influence processes that deliver favourable instrumental outcomes.

(3) *Seeing other people's ideas implemented* can provide encouragement that one's own ideas might be adopted. This can result in a sense of personal satisfaction and achievement. It might, however, also encourage contribution for other reasons, such as financial reward. In this event, Herzberg would argue that the individual was being moved rather than motivated.

These complexities made it impossible to separate movement (arising from inducements) from motivation (arising from a sense of satisfaction or achievement). The responses are shown in Table II.

	Responses	% of total
Motivator		
A desire to overcome frustration at work	1,195	62
A desire to save the organisation money	883	45
A desire to improve the success of the organisation	880	45
Personal satisfaction derived from seeing the idea implemented	553	29
Mover		
A desire to win money or gifts	564	29
Seeing a colleague receiving an award	63	3
Trust that the organisation will evaluate an idea fairly	220	11

Table I.
Employee responses to motivators and movers

Leadership issues
The leadership literatures including the Ohio studies of 1945, Fiedler (1978), Blake and Mouton (1985), and Hersey and Blanchard (1993) all attest to the common sense proposition that motivation is influenced by the nature of the relationship between leader and led. While it was assumed that the research would confirm this link, the main interest was in measuring the extent to which a positive relationship with the line manager would influence willingness to contribute ideas. To test this proposition, respondents were presented with eight statements. These were:

(1) My manager is approachable and easy to get on with.
(2) My manager has the technical know-how to do his/her job.
(3) My manager treats people with dignity and respect.
(4) My manager supports and helps me to do the best job I can.
(5) My manager makes sufficient effort to act on the opinions and suggestions of people who work in my department.
(6) I have confidence in the judgement and ability of my department's management.
(7) My manager does a good job of explaining decisions that effect me and my department.
(8) My manager monitors my performance and discusses it with me.

A total of 12 statements were posed with the aim of exploring the extent to which employee behaviours are influenced by the perceptions and the esteem in which senior management is held. They were:

(1) Management here encourages people to make their own decisions as far as possible.
(2) People here are treated as adults.
(3) On the whole, I am satisfied with the management of this organisation.
(4) I would recommend the organisation as a good place to work.
(5) Management seldom pushes us to achieve output at the expense of quality.
(6) The organisation is effective in putting its values about management into practice.
(7) Managers here have leadership qualities.
(8) The organisation has a good future.
(9) Management here is generally effective in making decisions.
(10) Management here seems genuinely to care about the welfare of its employees.

Either motivator or mover	Responses	% of total
A desire for recognition from the line manager	205	11
A desire for recognition from colleagues	74	4
Saw a colleague receiving an award	63	3

Table II.
Unclassified

(11) This organisation trusts its employees.

(12) Management has earned the loyalty of employees.

Movers versus motivators

The movers identified in Table II are associated with the desire to win money or gifts, and seeing others winning recognition and reward shown are plainly less important. The motivators all relate in some way to a sense of achievement. The desire to improve organisational success and save the employer money also suggests a strong personal identification with the needs of the organisation. These results support Herzberg's assertion that motivation derives from within. What cannot be shown, however, is the duration of the effect. If the need for recognition from both managers and colleagues shown in Table II are classified as motivators, then the responses shown are lower than expected, given Herzberg's original results. If managerial recognition is perceived to be a mover and, therefore, a hygiene factor, then the result is more in line with what the two-factor theory might suggest.

This prompted consideration of the idea that, in a world where employees may be more empowered and organisational structures have become shallower pyramids resulting in a decline in opportunities for advancement, managerial recognition affords both less satisfaction and utility?

The managerial relationship

The importance of the managerial relationship in the contemporary context is revealed in the fact that, overall, 80 per cent of those who had contributed an idea had a positive attitude towards their line manager. Of those who had contributed, 88 per cent indicated that they felt their manager was approachable. In addition, 85 per cent considered their manager possessed the necessary technical knowledge, whilst 77 per cent and 73 per cent respectively reported that they were treated with respect and were supported in doing the best job that they could.

However, positive responses dropped to 53 per cent when individuals felt that they were being closely monitored. In summary, 363 (19 per cent) of respondents with a negative attitude to their line manager contributed an idea as opposed to 1,458 (76 per cent) who had a positive orientation. The remaining responses were balanced.

These results suggest that positive perceptions of the line manager play a critical role in determining whether or not individuals contribute ideas. Issues associated with approachability, knowledge, supportiveness and respect for staff, along with effective communication increase the likelihood that individuals will contribute an idea. In contrast, tight supervision correlated with a reluctance to contribute. The need for discretion and some control over the job and the way it is done, therefore, appears to act as a source of motivation.

In the context of ideas generation and the two-factor model, the conclusion is that the relationship with the line manager in the contemporary context has ceased to be a motivator. Most contributors appear not to need line manager's recognition when it comes to motivating them to contribute ideas. However, a poor perception of the line manager has a strong negative impact on employee willingness to contribute ideas. This prompted the thought that managerial recognition determines the climate within which work is undertaken, and has become a major hygiene factor in the contemporary employment context.

Senior management
Employee perceptions of senior management as a source of reinforcement were also found to have a significant impact on willingness to contribute, although the value of a paired test comparison was appreciably lower for senior managers as compared with line managers. In all, 58 per cent of those who contributed an idea had a positive orientation towards their senior management as compared with 42 per cent who perceived senior management negatively. Delegation and empowerment were again found to be important. Of those who had contributed an idea, 81 per cent agreed with the statement that management encouraged employees to make decisions, 76 per cent that employees were treated as adults, and 82 per cent that the organisation was a good place to work. A correlation was also found between willingness to contribute an idea and concern for quality, effective leadership and a clear set of organisational values to which employees can subscribe. It would appear, therefore, that in the same way as customers develop an impression of an organisation through the attitudes displayed by those who serve them, so employee perceptions of their organisation are most strongly influenced by the relationship that they have with their line manager.

Why ideas schemes fail
Historically, suggestion schemes have relied upon financial inducements to move employees to participate. The decline in their use attests to the fact that suggestion schemes are being seen either to have failed or to be too costly in terms of time or money to operate. These results suggest that the causes of this failure are poorly understood. The problem does not lie with the concept of the ideas scheme itself, but rather in the underlying managerial assumptions concerning motivation on the one hand, and management perceptions of employee creativity and attitudes to innovation on the other.

Expectancy theory and equity theory have combined to reinforce the view that financial inducement is the critical motivator (Mabey *et al.*, 1998). As a result, bureaucratic systems have been designed to ensure that rewards are consistent and reflect the value of the contribution. Typically, this has resulted in significant delays between the submission of ideas, and feedback on whether they will be adopted. Such systems have also served to disempower immediate line managers. A further problem has arisen because of the managerial time required to evaluate inadequately formulated proposals. From an employee's perspective, long delays can reinforce the view that neither they nor their ideas are valued, thus defeating the objective of the suggestion scheme.

Managerial assumptions about employee creativity and innovation constitute the second barrier to the creation of ideas schemes that enrich work and motivate employees to share tacit knowledge. Only since the emergence of theories of organisational learning (Pedler *et al.*, 1991) and Knowledge Management (Schamer *et al.*, 2000) has creativity been seen as a social process, despite the fact that for decades, the change management literatures have emphasised that product and process innovations that are introduced without a sense of employee ownership and support, experience a difficult passage to maturity. Many fail unnecessarily, because of an absence of managerial creativity in developing processes that encourage employees to want to contribute ideas, and buy into the process of making them work.

A key priority within the domain of the knowledge management literatures has centred on the conversion of tacit knowledge embedded in the employee into explicit knowledge embedded in the systems and processes of the organisation.

Employee ideas exist in the tacit domain. They represent a source of unrealised power both for the organisation and the individual. How can and should an organisation facilitate the transfer of such knowledge? The extent to which it relies upon incentives to induce movement or clearly defined policies and pathways that catalyse motivation through growth and achievement become important considerations. Inducements promote a need for regular supplementary injections. This is sustainable in a context of market growth, but becomes more difficult in a climate of retrenchment when new ideas and perspectives may be most needed. Moreover, these results suggest that, statistically, the number of employees who are responsive to being moved represent a comparatively small proportion of the population of contributors. In contrast, the skill and emotional intelligence of individual line managers in recognising and sustaining opportunities for growth plays a more important role. The extent to which they can deploy these skills, however, will be determined to a large degree by HR policy and practice associated with recognition, reward, performance management, development, redeployment and redundancy within which they are obliged to operate. High integration of HR with business strategy combined with high devolvement of operational HR, as Brewster and Larson (1992) suggest, becomes pivotal. Managerial development is a key priority in organisations seeking to promote a culture of contribution.

7. Drawing conclusions

The paper began by asking whether Herzberg's two-factor theory has utility when it comes to motivating people to contribute ideas. The stimulus to do this was the recognition that there have been significant changes in both organisational structures and the diffusion of Taylorised work practices in many sectors since Herzberg undertook his research. Whilst repetition produces frustration and alienation, it can also induce insight and understanding. If there are no mechanisms for accessing this understanding, however, then there are no means of capitalising upon it, or ameliorating the debilitating effects of repetitive work and its consequences for staff turnover, morale, skill dilution and employee voice.

The review of the literatures indicated how motivation theory appears to swing like a pendulum from a rational economic, socio-psychological perspective to a human relations view and back again. However, there appears to be a predisposition in the West, especially in the Anglo-American context, for the managerial elite to favour the former, not least because it accords with their own worldview. Unfortunately, it is not a view that tends to be shared by those at the bottom of the organisational hierarchy.

There are a number of methodological limitations to the study, associated with the inability to control the representativeness of our sample and with considerations associated with social desirability. Nevertheless, a real effort has been made to develop an approach that is less vulnerable to post-hoc rationalisation and ego defence bias. This formed the basis of much of the more potent criticism levelled against Herzberg's original research method. The research also sought to diminish the degree of dependency on respondent recall, by reducing the number of critical incidents to one. Rather than focusing on the attribution of emotion to various past events, the focus

was placed on sources of satisfaction in respect of one type of event – the contribution of an idea that, in some cases, will have been repeated a number of times. In many respects, the survey design has closer affinities with the approach adopted by Herzberg's critics whose results supported the uniscalar approach, yet these findings have strong affinities with the two-factor thesis.

Herzberg and his associates created a furore when they challenged the dominant Anglo-American 'economic man' paradigm. In the contemporary context, the paper argues that Human Capital and Agency Theory have helped restore economic man as an organisational default position in many industries. Both approaches are predicated on an assumption that the majority of employees will be moved to contribute ideas by instrumental incentivisation founded upon money or gifts. Like Herzberg, this research found these presumptions to be largely, although not entirely, erroneous. Their ascendancy can be attributed to a managerial preoccupation with expectancy and equity theory. Viewed from the perspective of ideas management, however, the approach is more conducive to failure than success.

The findings demonstrate that motivators associated with intrinsic drivers outweigh movers linked to financial inducement, and observing others benefiting from recognition and extrinsic rewards. For Herzberg, managerial recognition was an important motivator. These results suggest that the importance of recognition has declined. This can be attributed, at least in part, to the fact that organisations with shallower pyramids, offer fewer prospects for promotion. However, what has been established is that a poor supervisory relationship plays a vital role in discouraging employee willingness to contribute ideas.

This prompted the question as to whether employee need for recognition has become a hygiene factor in the contemporary employment context? Like Herzberg, this study concludes that, whilst inducements can move some employees to contribute ideas, the numbers involved are significantly less than those who are motivated through a desire to overcome frustration, and contribute to organisational success. So long as the Taylorist paradigm persists, the organisational aspiration to create a high commitment culture is likely to prove elusive. In such a contexts, one of the value-adding contributions that an organization can make, is to develop systems and processes that enable employees to work together to define problems and overcome needless frustrations, and encourage managers to promulgate good practice in the common interest of both.

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