Employee Motivation: Views Of Successful Leaders

by

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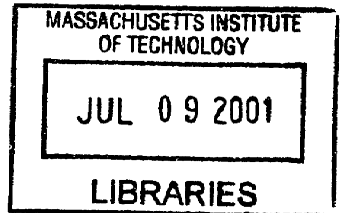IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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ABSTRACT

Businesses have an ever-increasing need to improve productivity and reduce costs, while maintaining or improving their quality and customer satisfaction. At the same time, employees have become more mobile and less likely to remain with a company for an extended period. Therefore, an understanding and focus on employee motivation factors is essential for leaders to successfully inspire their organizations.

This thesis is an investigation into the subject of employee motivation. Literature research was conducted to gain a broad overview of the published theories on this subject. The core of the thesis, though, is focused on interviews with senior successful leaders from a variety of industries. A number of techniques exist to inspire and motivate employees depending on the situation and the leader themselves. This thesis presents various situations and motivational aspects cited by these leaders.

Even though there is variation in motivational attributes across situations, an analysis of the interviews also reveals items that are consistently found to be critical success factors. These factors include top leadership involvement, full engagement of employees, frequent communication, consistency of actions and communications, and the opportunity to learn. All leaders interested in inspiring their employees to achieve successful results are encouraged to think about their performance in relation to these attributes.

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CHAPTER ONE
Introduction

In today's environment, businesses have an ever-increasing need to improve productivity and reduce costs. Simultaneously, though, the company must be concerned with maintaining or, more often, improving their quality and customer satisfaction levels. At the same time, employees have become more mobile and less likely to remain with a company for an extended period. Therefore, an understanding and focus on employee motivation factors is essential for leaders to successfully inspire their organizations.

This thesis hopes to offer insight into the subject of employee motivation from a practical perspective. By presenting situations that other leaders were faced with and a summary of the actions they took to inspire and motivate their staffs to achieve success, the reader can consider what aspects may work for them in their situations in the future. The leaders selected for interview are all senior executives and they represent a variety of industries. The criterion for selection is that the person needed to be recognized as an inspirational leader by others either inside or outside their organization.

Before exploring the views of senior leaders actively involved in challenging situations, it is valuable to gain a general understanding of the overall subject of motivation. Many renowned authors have written books and published articles related to this subject over the last four decades. An extensive review of this published literature is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, a good overview of generally recognized theories, as well as some more recent writings, will be presented.

CHAPTER TWO
Literature Overview

Numerous books and articles have been published on motivation since the late 1960's presenting a variety of theories on the subject. To obtain a broad understanding of this material, I read over two dozen of these. Information from these readings will be presented as follows: Renowned Motivation Theories, Extrinsic vs. Intrinsic Motivation, and Another Point of View.

Renowned Motivation Theories

Of the many theories of motivation, three long-standing philosophies were referred to quite often in the readings. These are Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, Frederick Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory, and Edwin Locke's Goal Setting Theory.

Abraham Maslow hypothesized that every person functioned within a hierarchy of five needs. These needs in priority order are physiological, safety and security, social belonging, esteem, and self-actualization, as shown in Figure 1. Physiological needs are the very basic needs and include food, water, and shelter. Safety and security deals with the notion that individuals need a sense of personal protection. Social and interpersonal activities are necessary for individuals to satisfy their need to belong. Self esteem deals with the need to accomplish personal achievements, to feel good about oneself, and to be respected by others. Finally, self-actualization is the need for an individual to reach their maximum potential at whatever it is that they are really good at. The placement of self-

actualization and esteem above social belonging in the priority order is possible evidence of Maslow's western perspective.
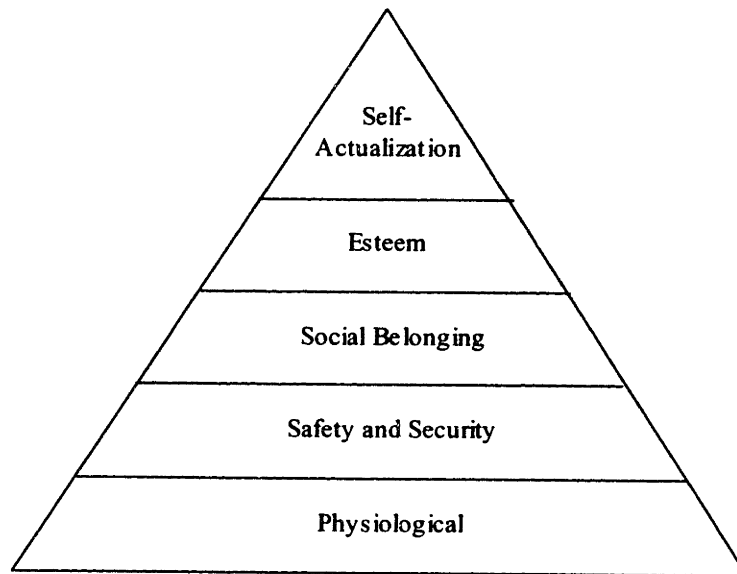
Figure 1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1954)

The common interpretation of Maslow's Hierarchy Theory is that each lower level need must be satisfied before the next higher level need can be considered. In other words, employees can only be motivated to excel at work if their lower level needs are satisfied. The value of this theory in understanding motivation has been debated widely since Maslow presented it. Edward Lawler supports Maslow's concept of self-actualization as relevant to motivation in organizations. He notes, "Most large organizations abound with training and development programs designed to help people develop their skills and abilities. Sometimes people do enter these programs in the hope of obtaining a raise or promotion, but on other occasions they do it only because it contributes to their self-development" (Lawler, 1994, p.32). Lawler also agrees with the

notion that physiological and security needs must be satisfied before higher-order needs can be considered. However, he is critical of the five level hierarchy. He believes that only a two-level hierarchy is supported, with the existence and security needs in the lower tier and all other needs in the higher tier. Michael Maccoby similarly questions the validity of the hierarchy. He states, "No evidence shows that satisfaction of lower needs triggers higher needs, or that any of these needs can indeed ever be satisfied" (Maccoby, 1995, p.17). For example, many famous artists who would be believed to have achieved the need for self-actualization were struggling with the basic need for food.

The Hierarchy of Needs would seem to say that every individual is constrained from a motivational perspective by his or her current level of need. However, perhaps a more useful analysis for today's manager is to consider this as a reminder that each employee does have different needs and therefore motivation must be thought about on an individual basis. Considering this, one might next be curious about whether particular aspects of the work environment have a more positive or more negative impact on employee motivation. This leads into the theory of Frederick Herzberg.

Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory states that there are two distinct sets of factors, one set that is involved with producing job satisfaction, and a separate set that leads to job dissatisfaction. He emphasized that the opposite of satisfaction is not dissatisfaction but rather no satisfaction, and the same is true of dissatisfaction. The hygiene factors are items that at best can create no dissatisfaction and their absence results in dissatisfaction. The items Herzberg included in this category are company policy and administration, supervision, interpersonal relationships, working conditions,

salary, status, and security. The factors deemed capable of creating satisfaction were called motivators and include: achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, advancement, and growth. Herzberg also noted that motivators tend to have a much longer-term effect on employee's attitudes than do the hygiene factors (Herzberg, 1968).

As in the case of Maslow's theory, the validity of Herzberg's theory has continued to be debated by authors. Lawler is just one of many who questions whether satisfaction and dissatisfaction are truly two separate dimensions (Lawler, 1994). It certainly seems reasonable that a single factor can cause both satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Craig Pinder cited a specific incidence to solidify this point. "Anyone who has ever worked at a dull or dirty job knows from experience that the nature of the work, by itself, can be a very powerful cause of job dissatisfaction" (Pinder, 1984, p.24). However, in the majority of the evaluations done by Herzberg, the work itself was found to be a potential motivator. Another question is whether we should assume that all employees, regardless of their position or involvement in the determination of their role, view the same factors as satisfying versus dissatisfying. This question leads to an examination of Edwin Locke's theory.

Edwin Locke's Goal Setting Theory identifies the goals of the individual as primary in determining motivation and not necessarily a rigid set of factors as Herzberg had defined. Locke stated, "We are simply motivated to achieve the goals that we decide to go after" (Locke, 1990). Therefore, unless the objective is important to the employee, they will not be motivated to achieve it. It follows then that incentives or other motivational attributes will only be effective if they cause a person to change their goals or to build commitment to goals they already have.

Dean Spitzer is one of a number of authors who supports Goal Theory. He emphasizes the benefit of involving employees in goal setting. This applies to individual employee goals, departmental goals, project goals, and even organizational goals. Locke and Spitzer both report evidence that employee involvement in goal setting increases their commitment. Additionally, it is believed that employees perform better and with more energy if the goals are challenging (Spitzer, 1995).

Is goal setting the panacea for leaders to motivate their employees? If it is, then why do less than 5% of the adults in the United States admit to having formal goals for their personal lives (Spitzer, 1995). The answer probably lies in the fact that no one theory alone can explain the best method of motivating people.

Extrinsic vs. Intrinsic Motivation

In addition to the renowned theories, another area of motivation that is debated heavily in the published literature is extrinsic versus intrinsic motivation. Let's start with a definition of these two types of motivation. Extrinsic motivation originates from outside the individual. There is some external reason or reward for completing a task. Intrinsic motivation, on the other hand, stems from the inner desire to accomplish a task. The task itself is the goal. In other words, the reason behind particular behaviors is the determining factor on the type of motivation that is important to that individual at that time. A listing of motivation factors that are typically viewed as external and those viewed as internal is shown in Figure 2.

Extrinsic Motivation Factors	Intrinsic Motivation Factors
Salary	Enjoyment of the work for its own sake
Promotion	Personal achievement
Recognition	Self pride
Status	Ability to contribute
Benefits	Opportunity to learn

Figure 2: Typical Motivation Factors

The controversy over extrinsic versus intrinsic motivation is multi-faceted. Most authors admit that intrinsic motivation factors are important to recognize, but there is dispute about extrinsic motivation. Some authors think extrinsic factors are irrevocably negative for the long-term performance of an individual, and therefore only intrinsic factors should be considered. Others point to the performance increases that have been documented from the receipt of external items like public recognition and, therefore, stress that extrinsic motivation is positive. Still others question whether motivation factors can truly be separated into these two categories. Maccoby notes that the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation often becomes blurred. For instance, pure intrinsic implies that a person would be motivated to work without being paid and pure extrinsic implies that a person would not be motivated to work unless they were paid. In reality, many people take a job based on the benefits and pay, while they are also intrinsically motivated by other work, such as volunteer activities (Maccoby, 1995). All this debate only leads me to believe that it is not valuable to focus on classifying any one motivational aspect but rather to consider the intensity with which certain factors motivate a particular employee at that point in time.

Another Point of View

Some of the writings of the late 1990's are now reflecting on motivation in a manner more in line with the changing work environment. One of these authors is Anthony Mendes. He recognized that employee's priorities have changed and therefore so has what motivates them. Much more than in the past, a company that wishes to be successful at motivating its employees is one that helps unite worker's personal goals with those of the organization. The key aspects of motivation now mentioned most often include: creating a clear vision with the specific involvement of employees, communication of the status of achieving the vision, demonstration of genuine appreciation, matching of employee skills and interests with tasks to be done, empowering employees, and timely reward and recognition of desired behaviors (Mendes, 1996).

From all the literature available, it is evident that an unending number of views from researchers and theorists exist on the subject of motivation. It is not clear to me whether practical knowledge has been truly considered as required validation of the long-standing theories. Therefore, rather than rely on just published information that in some cases has been debated for decades, it seems appropriate to turn to the people who are dealing with difficult motivational challenges every day: business leaders.

CHAPTER THREE
Methodology

Motivation is a subject that has been written about now for over forty years. Much of the literature published on this subject, especially the earlier writings, assumes that situations, culture, or even the variations in people themselves do not matter. The authors generalize the topic into a "one-size fits all" mentality. One author says extrinsic motivation is bad for all, while another states the opposite. This generally "black and white" mentality did not fit well with my own business experience and I became very curious as to how others in business viewed this subject.

To determine what others in business thought about the subject of motivation, I decided to conduct interviews rather than to solicit input via a survey. Surveys can often lead a person to think about a topic and to respond in pre-determined ways. I hoped to avoid this by using a generally unstructured interview process. A process where I would primarily be a passive listener and note-taker, but would occasionally interject a question or comment so as to capture similar dimensions across interviews.

Of course, there are hundreds of thousands of people in the business world who could be potential interview subjects. However, I thought it would be most interesting to focus on the views of senior successful leaders from large organizations. In theory, these leaders should have had the greatest opportunity to gain experience in motivating a work force. My personal experience has found, though, that across the spectrum of successful leaders, there are those that others find to be truly inspirational and those who are not. Due to the limited time available for thesis interviews, it was important to reach

those in the first category. Specifically, the leaders who were included as interview subjects for this thesis are all people who are recognized by others, either inside or outside of their company, as being inspirational.

In seeking out interview candidates, it was important to me to obtain diversity in the sample. The desire was for the selected executives to represent a variety of industry and country affiliations. It was also desirable to include the views of female executives in addition to the views of male executives. Therefore, I spoke to many people in my network of contacts seeking input on inspirational leaders that they were aware of. The second step was to contact these senior executives and request permission to interview them. In the end, fifteen of these leaders agreed to share their views for this thesis.

The composition of the leaders did satisfy my diversity goals. The industry representation includes: aerospace, automotive, electronics, energy, financial services, pharmaceuticals, and telecommunications. The country affiliations include Canada, England, Germany, India, and the United States. Female executives represent 26% of the sample. Finally, the position titles held by the leaders include Chief Engineer, Chief Legal Counsel, Company Secretary, Vice President, President, and Chief Executive Officer.

The interviews themselves were primarily unstructured. I prepared an interview guide with eight general questions (see Attachment A). The intent of the interview guide was simply to help me capture common dimensions across the interviews. I did not necessarily ask every question. In most cases, I let the interviewee take the discussion in a direction they were comfortable with and I listened for the answers to my questions along the way.

To start the interview proceeding in a direction that would reveal the desired information, I asked each leader to describe a situation where they felt they had led their organization to successfully complete a task or objective. This situation then became the basis for further exploration into the topic of interest, employee motivation. The length of the interviews ranged from twenty to sixty minutes. Neither audio nor video recording was used. During the interview, I took notes on key aspects of the situation and the motivational views of the leader. After each interview, I transcribed the notes into a more complete record of what I heard the leader say.

The transcribed interview records became the primary data that I used for the analysis phase. The analysis consisted of several steps. First, the situations described by each leader were listed and then categorized. Second, I made a list of the motivational attributes described by the leaders within each category. Creation of this list required interpretation of the factors within the leader's story. Finally, I compared the motivational attribute listings for each category to identify common themes.

So, what topics were on the minds of these senior successful leaders? How do they believe they inspired and motivated their staff members to achieve success? The next chapter will present the situations and the related views on motivation.

CHAPTER FOUR

Situations and Views of Senior Successful Leaders

The leaders who were interviewed, described a variety of extremely challenging and interesting situations that they had been faced with. In an effort to achieve a successful result in each of these situations, they felt that certain actions and philosophies were essential to them, their employees, and their organizations as a whole. Their views on motivation within the context of their specific situation will be presented here. The reader is encouraged to think of these as a series of stories that may prove beneficial in determining possible courses of action in other situations.

The series of situations described by the leaders have been consolidated into four primary categories. These include Change Management; Turn-Around; Consolidation, Relocation, and Severance; and finally Product Development and Miscellaneous Views.

Change Management

The category of Change Management includes three situations where senior leaders described a major shift and change from an old familiar way of doing things to a new way of doing things. In general, these changes are at a corporate level.

One senior leader described a change management initiative that involved development of new corporate processes and a revision to the existing organization structure. It was critical to have commitment from all functional areas to ensure the result would be successful into the future. In this regard, the senior board, made up of the President and the senior executives from all functional areas, had to own the decision

and understand what truly needed to be done. Each member of the board was assigned to lead a sub-team to evaluate potential options and potential obstacles. Ultimately, when the change plan was defined, the board members had a stake in the outcome and also a willingness to see it implemented.

This corporate change was significant to this company and the senior leader felt that key aspects to the success were that those affected by the change were engaged in the decision process, that the overall change initiative was lead from the top of the company, not delegated, and that communication was extensive and consistent. However, these things don't always just happen. It takes conscious effort on the part of the leader.

Engaging a team of cross-functional members can itself be difficult. This leader summarized the challenge by stating, "Leadership is an individual sport...the team's success depends on the ability to make each individual feel they have a part in it." In this case, the individual group members were encouraged to participate to their fullest in order to ensure the views of their functional area were heard in the decision making process. In other words, the corporation was going to change its way of doing things and they each had an opportunity to affect the future state.

The role of the senior leader in this case was also to "keep raising the bar" on the expected performance. In the words of the leader, "We are in a competitive business and we must always work to raise the standard." People are usually capable of much more than they believe and, therefore, it is beneficial to challenge them to stretch their zone of comfort. However, one must be careful not to "push an individual over the edge" into a de-motivated state. This senior executive also shared that a goal of a leader should

always be to help improve the individuals within the organization so that the whole group performance is higher. This also includes addressing problem situations. For instance, if a person is really holding a team back and no action is taken, then others on the team may become de-motivated because of the thought that personal contributions to the company must not be important.

Finally, this leader emphasized that the process and structural changes in the company could not have been implemented successfully without consistent and frequent communication. Thousands of employees were impacted by these changes and they each needed to understand how they fit in. Therefore, a conscious and visible effort was placed on ensuring an integrated communication plan was in place. What this means is that the objectives of an individual employee's job should be related to the department objectives, which should be related to the division objectives, which should be related to the region objectives, which should be related to the company objectives. So, in this case, the need and benefit of the corporate level process and structural changes were communicated by the president and the senior board members. Each subsequent level then needed to communicate what it meant to them. However, consistent communication was not only deemed important across the levels of the company but it was also deemed critical to be consistent across time. The leader stressed that repetition is an essential component in achieving an understanding of the message by all employees throughout the company.

Another senior leader described a change management situation involved with shifting the company to be primarily service oriented from a history that was predominantly hardware oriented. In going through this transformation the company

would eventually change over 15% of its workforce and establish a completely new organization structure. In this situation, the leader felt it was best to first focus on the new culture that would be necessary to be a successful service company and then focus on the strategy and final structure by which the re-born company would operate.

A service oriented company needs to have people with a different mindset than for a hardware oriented company. The employees needed to be able to successfully "sell themselves" as the provider of a service to customers rather than selling the customer on a piece of hardware. The senior leader started the culture shift by hiring managers from professional service companies and by constructing outside deals to acquire knowledge. The next key transition was to create an environment that supported and encouraged open communication amongst the managers, both new and old. The focus was on allowing managers to talk about what they knew how to do and what they did not. From these discussions, training opportunities were defined. In some cases, managers learned from their fellow employees and in other cases formal trainers were hired.

Another aspect of the new culture that was desired by the senior leader was an entrepreneurial spirit. After going through the service orientation training, managers in the company were given a chance to show their capabilities or to share their new ideas by preparing a business plan. The rationale shared by the senior leader is that an employee will likely be more motivated to function in the new organization if they have had a chance to experience the change and not just learn about it. The new organization structure that was ultimately determined involved a revision to a majority of the management positions in the company. The business plan proposals were used in determining the placement of the managers within the new structure. The company also

developed an internal venture capital fund that managers could apply for to execute business plans beyond their assignment responsibility.

The senior leader emphasized that top involvement is key in a change of this magnitude in order to build trust with the organization. Consistency of action, frequent communication, and engagement of the managers were also cited as essential elements in motivating the staff to proceed through the change initiative. The senior leader summarized by saying, "It is important to give people a process to go through the change and not just the content of what you want to do."

The third change management situation described by a senior leader was within a functional area of a company. The leader was faced with the need to transition from multiple autonomous groups operating in a variety of countries to a single global infrastructure operating in support of the entire enterprise. This senior leader was given the challenge right after being promoted to the position and was given only six weeks to define the transition. Leaders within the functional area from around the globe were brought together face to face to discuss the future needs of the company, as well as what had been working in the autonomous state. While only together for a few days, this action broke down regional barriers and allowed for the necessary interaction to complete the definition of the new operating plan.

Being new to the position, this leader felt it was necessary to first focus on building credibility with the staff members. Without this, there would be little hope of them being motivated to actively participate in the change process. The strategy started with acting fast by calling the face-to-face meeting of the global leaders. The next key aspects were listening, building a sense of urgency, and establishing the business

rationale for the change. The group face-to-face meeting was only the beginning. The leader immediately followed this with personal travel to the staff members countries.

The leader felt that personal interaction was necessary to ensure success of the change initiative. By visiting staff members in their home environment it was possible to truly create a shared vision, including specifics on "what's in it for them" and "what their new role would be" in that part of the world. The actions of the leader showed commitment to the change and demonstrated that every person in every location was critical to the success. Continuity of purpose and extensive communication were also deemed essential.

The leader noted that in any major change there will be a range of adoption periods. Some employees will accept and become supporters for the change immediately, others will take a longer period of time, and finally some will never accept the new state (and must be dealt with separately). Throughout this transition period and into the new operating state, it is key that each employee continually hears the same messages about where the organization is headed and why. Therefore, what may seem as "over" communication from the leader's perspective is a good thing to help all employees understand how their actions and contributions make a difference for the organization as a whole.

In addition to communication and commitment, this leader felt that empowerment was also key to motivation. However, the same level of empowerment was not afforded to all. It is important to identify an employee's potential strengths and then to assign them responsibilities that play to their strong points or that correspond with their personal development plan. The leader's method and frequency of interaction

would also be individualized to the particular employee. Some would appreciate or require more contact and direct involvement in their area, while others performed better with minimal contact. In both cases, the leader felt that removing obstacles for employees was a top priority. Especially, if a staff member asked for assistance then action should be taken quickly. These opportunities continue to foster trust and confidence in the employee relationship.

Across the change management leadership stories, a few motivational aspects were repeated. All the leaders emphasized top leadership involvement as a primary element in helping the organization through the change successfully. However, their actions alone were not sufficient. They also stressed the importance of engaging key staff members in the process as quickly as possible. Additionally, to achieve successful implementation of the change across the organization, two other key elements were highlighted. These were consistency and communication. The actions and messages conveyed by all leaders need to align across the organization and the messages must be repeated frequently.

Turn-Around

The category of Turn-Around could in one sense be considered an extension of Change Management since the two leaders here did change some things within their organizations. However, it is considered separate because it is less about making a major change in operation and more about refocusing the operation to return it to a successful state.

The first situation to be described in this category is one involving business unit financials. When this senior leader was given responsibility for the organization, they had been in a negative financial situation for over two decades. The corporation could not afford for this arm of the company to continue in this manner and a plan for operating in the black was urgently required. The senior leader quickly analyzed the situation and determined that a business unit approach to operating the organization was needed. The organization was located in a different country from the corporate headquarters and had previously viewed itself as local functional arms of the corporation. The leader thought that a mental shift from sales within the country to profit production within the country was necessary. Ultimately, even including detrimental shifts in exchange rates, the organization pulled out of the red and started operating in the black within three years of the arrival of the senior leader.

The first step in this turn-around was to engage all functional leaders within the country and to refocus their attention onto the organization as a complete business unit. Their individual expertise was necessary to complete an overall plan to return the business to profitability. It took the better part of a year to get an approved plan completed. Along the way, every part of the business was looked at and tough decisions had to be made. Additionally, each leader was required to learn and understand the developed business fundamentals because once the plan was approved they would be held accountable.

The senior leader practiced the belief that accountability worked as a motivator only if the responsibilities were jointly developed and agreed upon. Therefore, monthly meetings were held first to agree on the goals and then to discuss performance to the

goals. To truly encourage understanding and to promote action on the goals, the leaders were also required to teach these business fundamentals to others in the organization. The leadership meetings were constructed to be two-way discussions and over time, people became comfortable with the concepts and challenged each other to improve performance to the goals.

Beyond being a teaching leader to the functional leaders across the country, this senior leader stressed the importance of being a teaching leader to the entire organization. Accomplishing this required a number of things: communication, consistency of action, and accessibility. In the words of this leader, "Visibility is key. All members of the organization must feel you are accessible to them and that they know you." Achieving this requires that you travel to every location and spend time talking to the employees. Each of these interactions should also be thought of as a teaching opportunity about the business fundamentals of the organization. The key is to encourage learning by asking questions about the business performance metrics and the employee's role in helping the organization succeed. The goal was to build knowledge and pride through open and honest, two-way, communications.

With the advent of the intranet, an alternative method of "talking" between the senior leader and the employees was established. Each week the leader's site would be updated with five to seven minutes worth of reading material on the status of the business. Employees were encouraged to share their views on the material or on any other topic on their mind. A response was provided to every employee who provided input. The online site was a valuable tool for fostering communications, as well as, for gauging what was working in the organization and what was not.

Another senior leader described a situation involved with refocusing the organization on cost and quality performance. The organization had slowed its continuous improvement efforts without realizing that a potential crisis was just around the corner. The crisis, a significant reduction in the sales of their product, hit shortly after the leader moved into the senior position. It was critical to get the attention of this very proud organization and to help them understand the future possibilities, as well as the need for immediate actions. The leader's strategy was to be frank with the employees and to seek their involvement in developing a recovery action plan. Once the plan was determined, the team then met weekly to discuss the progress toward the goals and great progress was made in just over a year. This process continues today and the goals keep getting moved forward to keep continuous improvement part of the environment.

This senior leader likens business to a game. The leader is the coach who is hired to win the game. The coach must motivate people to win the game and not just play the game. Having the right balance of players is essential to having a team that functions at its peak. Each person needs to know their position: they need to feel needed and they need to know what is needed of them. The coach and the players develop new playing capabilities and determine which plays work in what situations. A playing field is needed where the progress can be seen both from an individual perspective and a team perspective. This leader uses a wall as the field. The wall displays the key metrics, the status of each item, and the name of the assigned champion. Weekly meetings are held at the wall with all leaders to discuss issues and progress. An advantage of the wall is that all employees can view the status at any time.

The senior leader operates with a focus on five aspects of motivation: discipline, accountability, alignment to results, engagement of all, and continual learning. It is important to challenge the intellect of every person and to reinforce desired behaviors by complimenting achievements and involvement in critical activities. The leader stated, "Success counts on winning the hearts and minds of employees and this must be done one person at a time." Each person must fully understand the goals of the organization. Repetition and consistency are essential. Therefore, a good leader needs a clear and concise message that can be repeated by individuals without the need for presentation slides.

Evident in both turn-around situations is a focus on engaging the entire workforce. Both leaders described the need to clearly and consistently communicate the fundamental objectives facing the organization and to provide a mechanism for monitoring progress. Additionally, all members of the organization are encouraged to learn more about the business on a continual basis and to share their knowledge for the betterment of the whole team.

Consolidation, Relocation, and Severance

The next major category of situations that three senior leaders described dealt with what may be the most significant of motivational challenges. These are situations where the ultimate result is a reduction in the workforce either by consolidation, relocation, or even severance of a business unit. In these situations, it is important to consider motivation both for employees who will remain with the company after the reduction and for those who will not.

One senior leader recalled a difficult time where an entire business unit was to be nationalized by the government of the country it was located in. This was a situation that no one within the corporation wanted to occur, but it was recognized that there was no choice from the government. The team was given a very short time to negotiate an agreement and extended hours over a holiday was necessary. The senior leader focused the inspiration around the opportunity to do the best possible effort to secure a future for the people. Secondary was the attempt to mitigate the effects on the corporation and the industry. The top leader of the business unit was initially skeptical about the senior leader, who was of a different nationality and age, but later noted that the exhibited attributes of the senior leader were essential to the team's successful agreement terms with the government. These attributes included exhibiting tremendous energy, acting in a straight forward and trusting manner, and the ability to help people see how even the small tasks fit into the big picture.

Another senior leader reflected on the challenge of closing a manufacturing facility due to the need to consolidate and gain operating efficiency within the company. The leader felt that the method and timing of announcing the shut down, as well as, the execution of the closing itself, required careful consideration and top leadership involvement. The senior leader knew that the announcement needed to come from the very top of the company and that it needed to occur as soon as possible after the decision. However, the leader also wanted to have individualized plans available for every employee at the time of announcement so that their anxiety level could be minimized as much as possible with specific transition plan data just for them. The content of the announcement itself was important to the leader, too. The rationale for the

closure needed to be clear and understandable and it needed to be presented with sincere concern for the well being of the employees. Financial assistance and career alternatives were prepared for each employee and discussed with them following the announcement. The transition period was long enough for employees to decide on the best course of action for them. The plant closed four years after the announcement with the first layoff occurring roughly two and a half years into this period.

Throughout the consolidation and closure process, the senior leader felt strongly about continued business communication with all employees. Every individual was essential to the continued success of the company and their contributions were recognized on a regular basis. Each employee, as long as they were working, was instilled with the importance of their actions to the customers of the company. The senior leader stayed personally involved in the process and ensured other leaders were trained to consistently act and communicate in a similar fashion. In the end, people left with good feelings and even commented to reporters how they appreciated the efforts and attention given to them by management. The leader summarized, "A basically negative situation can go well if handled correctly; honesty, planning and communication are key."

A third senior leader discussed a major relocation situation. The company was moving from one part of the country to another and many hundreds of people would be affected. The employees had in most cases spent their entire life in the current location and now they were being asked to move. The company knew that not everyone would move and that not everyone needed to move. The senior leader set a goal of fifty percent and then developed a plan to achieve this. It was critical that the employees continue to

be enthusiastic about their work and the company as a whole throughout the transition process. A great deal of personal effort was expended and ultimately, the move was successful. The fifty percent move target was achieved and the operations are functioning more efficiently in their new location.

The starting point for completing this move situation successfully was the creation of a vision of the future state of the company. This vision was talked about continually. The leader emphasized that the organization would still be together but in a new city. Additionally, included in the vision was a sense of why the move would be good for the individual employee and their family, in addition to why it was good for the company. The senior leader made a conscious effort to personally be energetic and positive about the success of the mission. The leader talked to every person individually during his or her familiarization trip to the new location. The discussions focused on the exciting future of the company, the opportunity for the employee to be part of creating that future, and the family advantages such as better schools in the new location. Throughout the process the leader described the action towards the employees as three pronged, "celebrate those who were moving, respect those who were not, and encourage those who were uncertain".

In addition to creating a vision, the senior leader stressed the importance of having a disciplined move process that was supported enthusiastically by the executive staff. People, processes, and programs had to be moved and success would not occur if all leaders were not aligned toward the same objectives. The employees would not be motivated to strive for the future vision if the leadership was not communicating and acting in a manner consistent with the senior leader. In this regard, weekly leadership

meetings were held to review the progress to the plan and to resolve any tough issues that the employee sub-teams had hit roadblocks on. Additionally, a relocation exception committee was established to allow employees to bring their individual concerns with the standard move package forward for quick resolution.

Across this category of consolidation, relocation, and severance, the senior leaders again seemed to highlight particular aspects most important for success. Personal involvement from top leadership appeared to be number one. Following close behind that were communication and consistency. Finally, planning and showing progress to the plan were noted as important to keep employees inspired to proceed toward the future state.

Product Development and Miscellaneous

The final category of situations described by senior leaders covers a broad spectrum. New product development is a specific topic that is unique and quite different from the other situation categories. However, the other views included here are more general in nature. They are comments provided by senior leaders in which they chose not to attach them to a particular situation.

One senior leader described the challenge of uniting a large cross-functional team with the objective of developing a completely new product platform for the company. Each team member brought expertise from their own functional area and the first objective was to develop a shared vision. The vision included the larger task at hand and how the individual's expertise would fit into this larger goal. The senior leader also focused on creating an environment in which any member of the team could raise any

issue at any time and the issue would be given personal attention and timely follow-up. In the end the new product platform was launched successfully and each member of the team felt that they had made a significant contribution to this success.

The senior leader described an operating philosophy that focused on five key attributes of motivating the employees on this product development team. The first attribute is communication. A goal of effective communication is to broaden people's perspective and understanding beyond their particular area. The leader stated, "Not just the what's but the why's must be shared." Successes, failures, and concerns should be discussed openly without individual finger pointing. The leader views all meetings and regular interactions with the staff as communication opportunities and therefore feels that "diagonal slice" meetings are unnecessary. [A diagonal slice meeting is a scheduled event where a cross section of employees representing various levels and functions are selected to talk with the senior leader.] A few minutes can be spent at the start of a meeting to share updates on what is going on and to answer any questions. Open and honest, two-way, communication is essential. It is also important for a leader not to abuse information shared privately with them or open communications will cease abruptly.

The next two attributes discussed by this leader are caring and predictability. A good leader must really care, not just pretend to care. The members of the staff will recognize the difference. "You can't really be successful, in your eyes or those of others, if you don't care." It is also important to be consistent or predictable in your actions and comments. Employees will be reluctant to approach and support a leader who is "hot and cold" with them. The fact that the leader just had a difficult meeting

with someone else should not be carried forward to the interaction with the staff member currently before him or her. Additionally, the staff must know that they can count on you to defend them, especially to those outside the group. Then, if criticism is warranted it should be shared by the senior leader in an appropriate setting.

The fourth attribute is to mentor and educate your staff. It is important to make time for employees and to be approachable. Quality improvement in the work force is essential, but often is not recognized as a leadership responsibility or as an employee motivator. A goal of a good leader should be to seek quality decisions from the lowest point in the organization. To truly allow this to happen, leaders should teach employees how to make good decisions upfront to avoid discouraging the employee later in the process.

Finally, the fifth attribute espoused by this leader is to have some fun. Employees are much more likely to be productive on a continuous basis if they enjoy coming to work. Of course, there are always times that require serious actions, but even on these days it is possible to have a chuckle and lighten the air for those around you.

A variety of other leaders shared views related to motivation that were not tied to a particular situational experience, but nevertheless are valuable for the reader to consider. A view expressed by several leaders is the basic assumption that people fundamentally want to do a good job and if they are not then they must not have the right information or tools. Therefore, it is key for leaders to communicate information and to provide the right environment. Another view repeated by several leaders revolved around results orientation. If people are challenged and held accountable to achieve high standards, then these will be met. Similarly, as the employee sees the company succeed

and become revered in its industry, they will be further motivated by the opportunity to be part of a winning organization. Finally, leaders talked about creating opportunities for employees as a method of motivating them. These opportunities could take on many forms depending on the needs of the employee and the business. For instance, the opportunity to move to a different position may be possible and beneficial in one situation and not effective or feasible in another. The opportunity to teach other employees can be rewarding for one employee and absolutely frightening for another. However, most all leaders agreed that the opportunity to learn new things is a motivator for everyone regardless of position.

The goal of this chapter was to share a variety of experiences encountered by senior leaders and their views on how they lead their organizations to successfully achieve the desired outcome. Each of these experiences should be seen as a story from which potential motivational learning can be grasped. One can think of whether a particular action mentioned here can be of value in a different situation and environment in the future. It is also interesting to look for themes and to compare the motivational aspects of the various situations described by the leaders. This will be the basis for the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE
Themes and Comparisons

The previous chapter documented the views of senior leaders on what they felt helped them achieve success within a variety of challenging situations. The intent was to share their information as summarized stories with some highlighting of the key aspects mentioned within each category. The intention of this chapter is to consolidate the motivational themes within and across categories. The notes taken during each interview were analyzed with an intense focus on identifying motivational aspects within the leader's situational description. These were then listed and compared to see if any aspects appeared in virtually every leader's situation. A few do stand out regardless of situation and these will be highlighted. However, first the aspects within each category will be presented in consolidated form.

Change Management

Recall that the category of Change Management includes situations where senior leaders described a major shift and change from an old familiar way of doing things to a new way of doing things. Analysis of these leaders views reveals the following motivational aspects:

- Involvement and commitment of top leadership in the change definition and implementation processes.

- Extensive and consistent communication on both the need for change and definition of what will change.

- Every individual in the organization must be engaged in the change process.

- Identify and address the potential need to shift the culture of the organization.

- Ensure an environment that supports open and honest communication at all levels, including active listening, is created and maintained.

- Ensure actions of leaders at all levels are consistent with the change initiative.

- Challenge individuals to stretch beyond their comfort zone.

- Address problem situations quickly to avoid derailment of the change effort.

- Recognize individual and team accomplishments as the change process progresses.

- Provide learning opportunities for employees. This may include formal training events, as well as, informal knowledge sharing.

- Help people understand how they fit in and contribute in the changed organization.

- Empower people in a manner commensurate with their skills. This includes providing support and removing roadblocks when necessary so that they can do what they were empowered to do.

Turn-Around

The Turn-Around category emphasizes situations involved with refocusing an organization to return it to a successful state. Analysis of these leaders views reveals the following motivational aspects:

- Involvement and commitment of top leadership in the turn-around.

- Engage employees at all levels in defining and implementing the turn-around plan.

- Create learning, and teaching, opportunities for employees.

- Jointly develop performance objectives and then hold people accountable.

- Frequently communicate the goals of the organization and the status of achieving those goals.

- Create an environment that encourages open and honest, two-way, communication.

- Be consistent in your actions and require the same from all leaders in regards to the turn-around priorities.

- Be visible and accessible to all members of the organization.

- Ensure employees understand their role in helping the organization succeed.

- Build and maintain pride in the organization by recognizing accomplishments.

- Periodically raise the goals of the organization as progress is made.

- Make organizational objectives and the current status visible to all.

Consolidation, Relocation, and Severance

Included in this category are situations described by senior leaders where the ultimate result is a reduction in the workforce either by consolidation, relocation, or even severance of a business unit. Analysis of these situations reveals the following motivational aspects:

- Timely and extensive communication from senior leaders including specific details on the rationale and the affects on the organization.

- Extensive personal involvement of senior leaders.

- Ensure all leaders are trained to act and communicate in a manner consistent with the vision established by the senior leader.

- Help people to see future opportunities, either inside or outside the company.

- Consistently act in a straight forward, honest, and trusting manner.

- Ensure all employees understand that they play an important role in the organization, regardless of position.

- Interact with people on an individualized basis, not just in generalities.

- Express sincere concern for the well being of the employees.

- Be energetic and positive about the future possibilities.

- Continue to communicate business performance information to all employees.

- Recognize contributions of groups and individuals on a regular basis.

- Establish a disciplined transition process and regularly track progress to the plan.

Product Development and Miscellaneous

The final category covered a broad spectrum of views by senior leaders, including new product development and other more general situations. Analysis of these comments reveals the following motivational aspects:

- Create and communicate a vision for the organization.

- Ensure each employee understands how their expertise and position fits with the larger organizational goals.

- Create an environment that supports open and honest, two-way communication.

- Personal attention and timely follow-up from senior leaders.

- Consider every interaction an opportunity to communicate with the staff.

- Openly discuss the successes, failures, and concerns of the organization, without finger pointing.

- Celebrate the wins and have some fun every day.

- Do not abuse information shared with you.

- Be consistent and predictable in your actions.

- Be sincere in expressing care for the organization's success and the success of individuals.

- Mentor and educate the members of the organization.

- Challenge individuals and hold them accountable for jointly agreed upon objectives.

- Ensure that people have the right information and tools to succeed in their job.

- Create appropriate opportunities for individual growth.

Common Themes

By comparing the motivational aspects identified in each category, one can see that there is variation in the mentioned attributes depending on the particular situation. However, careful analysis also reveals that there are motivational attributes that are

mentioned regardless of the situational category. It seems appropriate to assert that all successful leaders consider these important attributes:

- Top leadership involvement

- Full engagement of employees

- Frequent communication

- Consistency of actions and communications

- Opportunity to learn

These five motivational attributes are based on an analysis of the views shared by the senior leaders interviewed for this thesis. It is worth repeating that these leaders were all selected because they were recognized either inside or outside their organization as being inspirational and successful. By nature of their positions in their companies, they are all experienced in leading challenging business situations. Therefore, the listing of common motivational themes can be viewed as a practical, experience based, reference. The linkage of these interview findings with the previously published literature will be explored as part of the final summary and conclusions.

CHAPTER SIX
Summary and Conclusions

In today's environment, businesses have an ever-increasing need to increase productivity and reduce costs. Simultaneously, though, the company must be concerned with maintaining or, more often, improving their quality and customer satisfaction levels. At the same time, employees have become more mobile and less likely to remain with a company for an extended period. Therefore, an understanding and focus on employee motivation factors is essential for leaders to successfully inspire their organizations.

To gain a useful understanding of motivation, I conducted both literature research and personal interviews. The interviewees were all senior leaders who are recognized by others as being inspirational. These leaders shared their views on motivation in the context of achieving success in a challenging situation. The situations and the motivational views were presented in four categories: Change Management; Turn-Around; Consolidation, Relocation, and Severance; and finally Product Development and Miscellaneous. Next, I interpreted the information shared by the interviewees within each category and presented a comprehensive list of motivational attributes that had worked for these successful leaders. An analysis of these categorical lists then revealed a subset of motivational themes that were common across all the situations the leaders described. Included in these common themes are: top leadership involvement; full engagement of employees; frequent communication; consistency of actions and communications; and the opportunity to learn.

These common themes can be viewed as a practical, experience based, reference. It is interesting to also look for any potential linkages to the previously published literature, which would add even more emphasis. First, it does not appear that Maslow's five level hierarchy of needs is supported directly by the attributes that were most valuable to the business leaders. The common themes could be classified as spanning the higher order tiers of social belonging, esteem, and self-actualization but it would be difficult to attribute them to specific levels. Second, Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory does not seem well supported by the common themes. Some of the themes, such as top leadership involvement, would fall into the hygiene classification by Herzberg, but clearly the interviewed leaders viewed this as a motivational attribute. The third theory presented from the literature research is the first one that does have direct relevance to the common interview themes. This is Locke's Goal Setting Theory. He emphasized that the only way to motivate people is to have them accept the goals as their own. This seems to align with the theme on full engagement of employees. However, it would appear that Locke's theory alone does not cover all the referenced motivational aspects.

The next area covered in the literature section was the controversy between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. The summarized listing of common themes from the interviews does generally align itself with the intrinsic type of motivation. However, the more complete listing of motivational aspects provided for each situational category does include factors that are typically considered to be extrinsic. Therefore, based on the views of the senior leaders, it would appear that both extrinsic and intrinsic motivational attributes are important to inspiring staff members to succeed.

A true alignment of published literature with the common interview themes starts to become evident in the writings from the latter part of the 1990's. In particular, the writing of Anthony Mendes in 1996 is very closely correlated with the views of senior leaders. The key aspects of motivation mentioned by him include: creating a clear vision with the specific involvement of employees, communication of the status of achieving the vision, demonstration of genuine appreciation, matching of employee skills and interests with tasks to be done, empowering employees, and timely reward and recognition of desired behaviors.

Well, what does all this mean for leaders in today's work environment? First, it would appear that recently published information can be considered a valuable supplement to the espoused views of senior successful leaders. Therefore, leaders are encouraged to continue to expand their knowledge of motivational options by reading other articles and books. Second, and in my view most importantly, all leaders must recognize the value in learning about motivational attributes that worked in particular situations for other successful leaders. It is important to seek out leaders whom you personally view as inspirational and those that others view as inspirational. Observing their actions and methods of motivating individuals can be an immensely valuable learning technique. It may also be possible to speak with them directly on their views, if you just ask. Along with the recommendation to learn from other leaders, it is important to be willing to share your experiences. The opportunity to learn is a key motivator for all employees and therefore successful leaders should also be teachers, in addition to learners.

An over-riding conclusion from this thesis research is that no one motivational attribute or theory will ensure success. Leaders are well advised to build a portfolio of attributes that they are comfortable with using to motivate employees. The selection of which attributes are most valuable at that time will be dependent on the situation and the individual. The listings of motivational attributes presented by the senior leaders interviewed for this thesis should be considered as possible options that might be of use in the future. Additionally, the five common themes that emerged should be given significant attention by all leaders. These themes cannot be mentioned enough and they are: top leadership involvement, full engagement of employees, frequent communication, consistency of actions and communications, and the opportunity to learn.

Finally, after reviewing all the information shared by the senior leaders, I asked myself if there were any underlying beliefs that may have helped these leaders know how to inspire their employees to achieve success. In my judgment, they all share two essential traits: they acknowledge the importance of other people and they actively strive to improve the working climate within their organization. I believe these fundamentals may have helped the leaders to identify and implement the appropriate motivational actions for their particular situation. Therefore, I assert that other leaders who truly take these fundamentals to heart will also be able to learn which motivational attributes will work best for their particular situation.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Guide

CONFIDENTIAL AND ANONYMOUS

1. Describe a situation where you led your organization to successfully complete an objective.

2. What made the result a success?

3. How did you encourage or inspire staff members in that situation?

4. Is this typical of other situations or are there additional methods you use to inspire individuals?

5. Are there specific techniques that you would describe as "core" to your method of leadership?

6. Are there specific opportunities that you try to create for members of your organization?

7. Are there specific things that you find take away from success and individual satisfaction?

8. What motivates you in your current position and is this any different from when you were in less senior positions?

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