

Motivation and Hygiene as a Framework for eLearning Practice

Moderator & Summarizer:

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Discussion Schedule:

Discussion: March 29 - April 7, 2004

Summing-up: April 8-9, 2004

Pre-Discussion Paper

Introduction

In the mid 1960s management theorist Frederick Herzberg made a discovery that changed the way in which people understood motivation in the workplace. Some forty years later, Herzberg's (1966) motivation and hygiene principle finds an interesting application in eLearning practice. His work provides a different frame of reference for considering the advantages and potential for eLearning for education.

eLearning is frequently acclaimed as enabling education that is more accessible (available to students), effective (better for their learning) and efficient (cheaper for an institution to provide). Herzberg's framework provides eLearning practitioners with an opportunity to consider how these advantages might best be realized and how eLearning expenditure might be maximised.

Herzberg interviewed 200 engineers and accountants and asked them about one positive and one negative work experience they had encountered. He then probed their answers to find out what was behind each experience. Herzberg discovered a group of 'satisfiers' that were generally responsible for positive experiences, and a set of 'dissatisfiers' that were generally responsible for negative workplace experiences. He further noted that a lack of 'satisfiers' did not generally result in negative experiences and that a positive experience of the 'dissatisfiers' did not result in positive experiences. As Herzberg (2002, 76) stated "The opposite of job satisfaction is not job dissatisfaction but no job satisfaction; and similarly the opposite of job dissatisfaction is not job satisfaction."

Satisfaction leads to a positive workplace contribution. Dissatisfaction on the other hand leads to decreased productivity and less commitment to the workplace.

Motivation and hygiene

Identifying satisfiers and dissatisfiers led Herzberg to determine motivation and hygiene factors that employers could apply to improve employee satisfaction in the workplace. The motivating factors are those that describe the workers relationship to what he or she does, while the dissatisfiers relate to the context within which the work is performed. Motivation factors increase motivation if they are present; hygiene factors cause dissatisfaction if they are absent. By way of example, giving employees responsibility provides them with motivation as it is a motivation factor. If employees are *not* given responsibility, they are not motivated but neither are they dissatisfied. On the other hand, paying employees more (salary, a hygiene factor) will not cause them to be motivated but unless the salary is adequate employees will be dissatisfied.

Table One summarises Herzberg's findings.

Table 1: Motivation and hygiene factors in the workplace

Satisfiers (motivation factors)	Dissatisfiers (hygiene factors)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Achievement ➤ Recognition ➤ The nature of the work itself ➤ Responsibility ➤ Advancement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Company policy and administration ➤ Supervision ➤ Salary ➤ Interpersonal relations with supervisor ➤ Working conditions

Of these, the nature of the work itself, responsibility and advancement caused the most long-lasting motivation. Herzberg's theory has been confirmed by a number of parallel studies in different industries.

eLearning's motivation and hygiene factors

Herzberg's theory is of interest to eLearning because it provides important clues for practice. Exchanging employment for education and employees for students, the following motivation and hygiene factors are proposed.

Table 2: Proposed motivation and hygiene factors for education

Satisfiers (motivation factors)	Dissatisfiers (hygiene factors)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Enthusiasm and commitment of educators. ➤ Feedback and academic mentoring from tutors. ➤ Serendipity. ➤ A sense of community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Clear expectations. ➤ Prompt assignment return. ➤ Reliable LMS technology. ➤ Flexibility and control. ➤ Institutional policies and procedures.

In Herzberg's framework the motivation factors are those that increase satisfaction if they are present but generally do not lead to dissatisfaction if they are absent. Hygiene factors however cannot motivate but cause dissatisfaction if they are absent. If the proposed motivation and hygiene factors are accurate, the following generalizations can be made about eLearning.

- The online tutor and his or her activity is key to satisfaction in eLearning.
- The establishment of online community is a vital element of eLearning.
- The actual technology used in eLearning cannot satisfy however a poor choice can cause dissatisfaction.
- Providing students with flexible learning opportunities does not motivate them however its absence would cause dissatisfaction.

Implications for practice

As a general conclusion, the following comments can be made with regard to access, effectiveness and efficiency of eLearning. These have a general application to eLearning decision making.

- Access is a hygiene factor in that if it is present it does not necessarily increase satisfaction however it will result in dissatisfaction if it is absent. Increasing access opportunities will not result in improved learning.
- Effectiveness in eLearning relies on leveraging the motivation factors. Activity in the hygiene area will not increase eLearning effectiveness.
- Efficiency gains can only be made by ensuring that the hygiene factors are kept at a 'fitness for purpose' level of activity and the motivation factors should not be subject to cost cutting.

Discussion questions

1. Are the motivation and hygiene factors proposed for education accurate? What research might confirm them or suggest otherwise?
2. Is there a valid link between satisfaction and success in student learning?
3. Is it accurate to consider 'access' as a hygiene factor, 'effectiveness' as reliant on motivating factors, and efficiency gains best possible at the expense of hygiene factors?

References

Herzberg, F. (1966). *Work and the nature of man*, Cleveland and New York: The Word Publishing Company.

Post-discussion Summary

The IFETS discussion held between 29 March and 9 April centred around the applicability of Herzberg's principles to eLearning. Would it be possible to design and deliver courses in such a way that the satisfiers are maximised and the dissatisfiers minimised? If indeed Herzberg's theory applies to eLearning (which is highly likely) it has the potential to assist institutions to better target their eLearning investment. The discussion debated not only this question but also the validity of speculating what satisfiers and dissatisfiers might be.

The opening shots were fired by Charles Adamson, who reasoned that the best way of assessing Herzberg's potential contribution to eLearning was to replicate his research: "What is needed is for someone to reproduce the Herzberg experiment with eLearners in courses that present information and additionally in courses that teach skills." His point was endorsed by Clark Quinn, who added that there would be value in "exploring [the topic] conceptually" in the meantime. David Jones suggested a paper by Chyung, S.Y. (2002). Analyze motivation-hygiene actors to improve satisfaction levels of your online training programme. 18th Annual Conference on Distance Teaching and Learning, Madison, Wisconsin. The paper is available from http://www.uwex.edu/disted/conference/proceedings/DL2002_13.pdf. Chyung (2002) concludes his investigation by saying that his three-year evaluation seems to "support Herzberg's research findings that there are two distinct sets of factors, one of which affects learner satisfaction and the other one of which affects learner dissatisfaction" and further notes that "it is important to put initial effort on improving the condition of hygiene factors before implementing motivational strategies." Frances Bell pointed out that "what is a discontinuity for one person can be a continuity for another". This is echoed in part by Herzberg's own findings; the factors Herzberg describes as satisfiers and dissatisfiers did overlap however not the extent of challenging the overall integrity of his theory. Frances' caution seems to be shared by Mag Hans Horwath, who notes the differences between student's circumstances.

Charles Adamson suggested that Herzberg's satisfiers and dissatisfiers likely transferred directly across into education. Charles' original list forms the basis of the satisfiers and dissatisfiers of eLearning as at the end of the discussion as follows; further comments have been added by additional IFETS contributors.

Satisfiers (motivation factors)

ACHIEVEMENT

"Grades improving over time" (Charles Adamson); "successfully executing problems or practice opportunities" (Clark Quinn); "the ability to act spontaneously or at least the feeling that one is capable of doing so" (Peter Isackson).

RECOGNITION

Positive feedback and comments from tutors (Charles Adamson); Peter Isackson noted that peer recognition may be more important than tutor feedback because "a learner never knows if the [tutor] feedback isn't meant simply to encourage further effort". Further, Peter suggested that recognition could be linked to "a notion of potential leadership" in that a student's ideas are expressed and may be accepted by others.

THE NATURE OF THE WORK ITSELF

The nature of the work itself (Charles Adamson); ensuring that student learning is an "authentic application of the knowledge" that "learners care about" (Clark Quinn); learning what is of interest to the student (Mag Hans Horwath); "the ability to 'identify with' what is being taught" (Peter Isackson), which might involve "risking something of... personality and self-esteem" as learning takes place.

RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility for own learning (Charles Adamson); Clark Quinn pointed out that responsibility may not be a motivator unless students are ready for it (and scaffolding is available for it); Peter Isackson suggested that responsibility related to the relationship of the employee to the company which may have no educational counterpart at present.

ADVANCEMENT

Advancement through a series of class levels (Charles Adamson); Peter Isackson commented that “we would need a new paradigm to apply this to learning” that involves criteria based on “function rather than status”.

ADDITIONAL FACTORS (based on Chyung, 2002):

The learning itself (satisfaction from the gaining of new knowledge and perspectives); gaining confidence with the subject matter; the effectiveness of instructional materials (clarity, structure, use of multimedia); social interaction with other participants; prompt instructional feedback from the instructor; flexibility and convenience. Peter Isackson comments that social interaction seems to be a hygiene factor of Herzberg’s but notes that “learning, unlike work, is rightfully seen as a fundamentally social experience and therefore social interaction SHOULD probably be reclassified a satisfier.”

Dissatisfiers (hygiene factors)

COMPANY POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION

School policy and administration (Charles Adamson); “pedagogical orientation” (Peter Isackson), which would help to differentiate between those institutions who focus on “delivering the curriculum” and those that aim for “stimulating learning”.

SUPERVISION

Tutoring (Charles Adamson); mentoring and coaching (Peter Isackson).

SALARY

Cost of course (Charles Adamson); Peter Isackson suggested that salary not be considered relevant as a hygiene factor for education.

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS WITH SUPERVISOR

Interpersonal relations with tutor (Charles Adamson); Peter Isackson considered this factor to include relationships between groups of learners.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Study conditions (Charles Adamson); Peter Isackson saw this as consisting of “the physical environment, the utility and availability of resources” to the student.

ADDITIONAL FACTORS (based on Chyung, 2002):

Time spent on completing tasks (long downloads specifically mentioned); technical problems; overly complex online environment; instructional sequence.

The potential importance of Herzberg’s theory to eLearning is that it can help target investment and optimise the learning experience. By identifying satisfiers and dissatisfiers institutions can channel their resources into those activities that manage dissatisfiers (hygiene factors) to an acceptable level and maximise satisfiers (motivation factors). A reliable set of satisfiers and dissatisfiers for eLearning would be of benefit to all eLearning practitioners and decision makers.

Until someone actually does give this topic some serious attention as a PhD or significant research project (Geoff Guttman described this area as “very ripe for research”), we may remain with a substantial gap in our knowledge of how we might better retain and inspire students. Charles Adamson suggested that such research might be performed “at a minimal cost”; it is the hope of the author that someone will make the required investment to see this done.

References

Herzberg, F. (1966). *Work and the nature of man*, Cleveland and New York: The Word Publishing Company.