

crf
CORPORATE RESEARCH FORUM

WORK PSYCHOLOGY SERIES

MOTIVATION AND WORK PERFORMANCE

Sponsored by:

aps



In today's dynamic business landscape, understanding and harnessing the power of motivational behaviour is no longer a luxury, but a critical driver of organisational success.

Using evidence-based principles of work psychology, as highlighted in this paper, HR professionals can diagnose the specific motivational challenges in their workforce. But simply identifying issues is not enough; HR must delve into the root causes, considering both internal factors like individual needs and values, and external factors such as organisational culture and job characteristics.

This whitepaper emphasises the importance of moving beyond generic 'best practices' and embracing a context-specific approach. We wholeheartedly concur. The HR function are well placed to make a thorough assessment of the current state, utilising a range of diagnostic tools and methodologies to gain a comprehensive understanding of employee motivation and performance drivers.

From there, programmes can be developed to target specific interventions, drawing upon the rich body of work psychology research discussed in these pages. These interventions are not merely theoretical constructs; they are practical, actionable steps designed to influence the initiation, direction, intensity, and persistence of employee behaviour. HR's influence on the development of leadership capabilities to support and enable this is paramount.

Motivation and performance are not static concepts. They evolve over time, influenced by a multitude of dynamic factors. Equally, business needs and strategies evolve, and in today's world, at an ever increasing pace. The HR function's ability to align the needs and aspirations of both can add tremendous value, helping leaders and teams add to their impact and drive overall business performance.

With the right tools and knowledge, HR professionals can monitor the effectiveness of interventions, adapt strategies as needed, and cultivate a culture of continuous improvement in motivation and performance. This whitepaper serves as a valuable foundation for this crucial work.

Rob Field, Learning and Development Director, Advanced People Strategies



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Except for purely transactional activities, the main purpose of HR is to shape the motivation, behaviour and performance of employees to drive sustained organisational performance. Given this purpose it is **essential that we have a good understanding of what motivation and work performance mean** and how one impacts the other.

Motivation and work performance are two broad topics of interest not only to HR but to many other members of the organisation, including senior leadership, line managers and employees.

There are many definitions of motivation but most emphasise that it is a dynamic process that unfolds over time. It consists of several stages (initiation of behaviour, direction, intensity and persistence) which can be influenced by multiple factors such as personality traits, job characteristics, social influences and organisational culture. And, importantly, **motivation is not the same as work performance.**

High motivation only contributes to work performance when the resulting work behaviours are relevant to the organisation's goals. This paper provides examples of practical questions HR functions and HR professionals could ask to define and measure motivation and choose actions to enhance motivation in their organisation.

There are a great many definitions of work performance but all emphasise that a **behaviour can only be described as work performance *if it contributes to organisational goals.*** There are several dimensions of work performance beyond task performance which affect organisational performance, including contextual performance (e.g., discretionary effort), adaptive performance (e.g., flexibility, innovation), and counterproductive work behaviours (e.g., tardiness). This paper includes examples of practical questions HR functions and HR professionals could ask to define, measure and determine how to positively influence work performance.

Given the broadness of the ideas of motivation and work performance it is not surprising that there is a wide range of work motivation theories that try to explain how motivational processes cause work performance. These **theories provide frameworks for understanding what drives employee behaviour** and how HR interventions can shape work outcomes.

In general, **motivation theories share four assumptions:**

1. Behaviour is goal-directed;
2. Goals are hierarchically arranged;
3. Humans are naturally driven to reduce discrepancies between their current and desired state;
4. Approach or avoidance underlies all motivational tendency.

We briefly describe 13 prominent work motivation theories before exploring three in more detail:

1. **Self-Determination Theory** (Deci & Ryan, 1985) states that employees are most motivated when they experience autonomy, competence and relatedness.
2. **Goal-Setting Theory** (Locke & Latham, 1979) holds that specific, challenging goals can lead to higher performance than easier goals.
3. **Job Characteristics Model** (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) states that five core characteristics of jobs (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback) influence motivation and job satisfaction.

These theories demonstrate that motivation is not a one-size-fits-all concept and that **practical application depends on the specific nature of the performance issue and the organisational context.** We provide examples of how HR functions and HR professionals could apply work motivation theories in practice.

Applying motivation theories to address performance issues requires taking an **Evidence-Based HR approach** which clearly defines the problem, collects and evaluates relevant evidence and develops targeted interventions that enhance employee motivation and drive better work performance. We consider specific interventions suggested by the three example theories. These include enhancing goal value so employees see meaning in their goals, linking goals to intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, strengthening goal-setting processes, improving job design and building employees' confidence through coaching and feedback.

For HR functions to improve work performance through intervening effectively in motivational processes, they need to do three things:

1. Develop a reasonable understanding of the **definitions of motivation and work performance,** their practical implications and relevance to their particular context;
2. Develop a reasonable understanding of **work motivation theories,** their practical implications and relevance to their particular context;
3. Take an **Evidence-Based HR approach** to identifying and intervening to resolve specific work performance issues.



INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

At CRF we believe HR's purpose is to help the organisation build both people capability and an enabling environment, helping define and deliver a strategy that creates sustainable stakeholder value. Therefore, a key goal of HR practices and HR strategy more broadly is to *shape employee behaviour* in ways that contribute to the performance of the organisation.

Psychologists have studied behaviour at work since around the early 1900s. Work psychology[1] as a scientific discipline therefore provides much of the foundational knowledge for HR practice.

The purpose of the **Work Psychology Series** is to provide an outline of work psychology theory and evidence relevant to various areas of HR activity and consider implications for HR practice.

These reports contribute directly to the effectiveness of the HR function and HR professionals by providing a more detailed, elaborate and nuanced understanding of both the nature of the workplace behavioural phenomena HR is trying to shape and which practices or approaches are most likely to help do this.

As discussed in several of our previous reports – including ***Evidence-Based HR: A New Paradigm*** and ***Driving Organisational Performance: HR's Critical Role*** – the HR function's effectiveness depends on being able as accurately as possible to identify HR-relevant business issues and actions that will help resolve those issues.

The insights provided by work psychology research help us do both these things, taking us beyond the usually unhelpful notion of 'best practice' and instead to practices relevant to our business context and the specific issues our business faces.

[1] Work psychology is also known as organisational psychology, occupational psychology, industrial psychology and is more-or-less the same as organisational behaviour.

INTRODUCTION TO: MOTIVATION AND WORK PERFORMANCE

Motivation and work performance is a very broad topic. Or, more accurately, it is a set of several rather different topics. It is also a topic that is of great interest to almost everyone in the business: Senior leadership teams, line managers, the HR function and employees.

Leaders want to feel they're getting the best from their employees. Line managers want to ensure that they are providing the direction and support team members need to perform well. Through their policies and practices the HR function aims to create a work environment in which employees are motivated and can perform effectively. Employees themselves want to be in jobs and organisations where they are motivated, energised and feel they are performing well.

There are many questions we can ask about motivation and work performance but, before we can formulate these questions and examine the answers work psychology has to offer and their implications for HR practice, it is essential we explore the definitions and meanings of these terms.

Like many other frequently used terms in HR, they sound quite straightforward but they actually have multiple meanings which are different in *practically-important* ways. It's also notable that what different people and different organisations mean by motivation and work performance can vary widely.

DEFINING AND DESCRIBING 'MOTIVATION'

What exactly is 'motivation'? What does it entail? How has the term and concept been used? What does doing something to 'motivate' employees mean?

Without answers to these questions, particularly given the broadness of the topic, it is not possible to have any focused or meaningful discussion of work motivation. It is also not possible for HR functions to make well-informed decisions about policies and practices aimed at improving motivation.

This table of definitions shows a range of well-known and relatively recent definitions of **motivation**.

Four key aspects of most of these definitions are that:

1 Motivation is a *process*

Something that occurs episodically and over time. Not a simple stimulus-response or cause-effect phenomenon. It is something that is on-going and unfolds over time in the minute-to-minute and hour-to-hour actions of employees. By implication it, and the work performance it impacts, are therefore dynamic and change over time.

2 There are *several stages* in this process.

In terms of a potentially very large set of factors or inputs that are both internal and external to the employee that shape the:

1. Initiation of an action *(when the behaviour starts).*
2. Direction of the action *(which action is selected for which goal).*
3. Intensity of the behaviour *(how vigorously or effortfully the action is undertaken).*
4. Persistence *(for how long the action is performed).*

3 *Many different factors* influence motivational processes.

The drivers of motivational processes are many and varied. There is no single influence on motivation. Nor is there any particular type of influence which is necessarily more important. Different theories of motivation (which we will discuss later) focus on just some of these factors and explain how they affect different parts of the motivational process. No single theory can explain how every possible influence affects every part of the motivation process.

4 'Motivation' is not the same as 'work performance'.

An individual may be highly motivated towards achieving a particular goal but for a whole range of reasons (e.g., ability or lack of resources) they may not be able to do so. Even if a goal is completed it can only be considered to be relevant to work performance if it contributes to organisational objectives.

SOME DEFINITIONS OF **MOTIVATION**

A set of energetic forces that originate both within as well as beyond an individual's being, to initiate work-related behaviour and to determine its form, direction, intensity, and duration.	PINDER, 1988
The concept of motivation refers to internal factors that impel action and external factors that can act as inducements to action. The three aspects of action that motivation can affect are direction (choice), intensity (effort), and duration (persistence).	LOCKE & LATHAM, 2004
Intrinsic motivation involves people doing an activity because they find it interesting and derive spontaneous satisfaction from the activity itself. Extrinsic motivation, in contrast, requires an instrumentality between the activity and some separable consequences such as tangible or verbal rewards, so satisfaction comes not from the activity itself but rather from the extrinsic consequences to which the activity leads.	GAGNÉ & DECI, 2005
Motivation reflects processes involved in the allocation of limited resources across the nearly infinite range of possibilities.	SCHMIDT, BECK & GILLESPIE, 2013
An unobservable force that directs, energises, and sustains behaviour over time and across changing circumstances... motivation can be seen in the choices individuals make among goals to pursue (i.e., direction), the amount of effort they put forth toward goal attainment (i.e., the vigour, intensity, or amplitude of action), and the amount of time they invest in goal pursuit (i.e., duration or persistence of action).	DIEFENDORFF & CHANDLER, 2011
A dynamic, goal-directed, resource allocation process that unfolds over the related variables of time, experience, and place.	KANFER, FRESE & JOHNSON, 2017
Motivation is frequently used as an umbrella term meant to capture the dense network of concepts and their interrelations that underlie observable changes in the initiation, direction, intensity, and persistence of voluntary action. As in other complex areas of human functioning, researchers have pursued different aspects of the phenomena in ways that have sometimes led to confusion in understanding, studying, and managing work motivation.	KANFER, FRESE & JOHNSON, 2017

Before we discuss the definitions and descriptions of work performance in the next section it is useful to consider the number and range of factors that are considered to play a role in motivation.

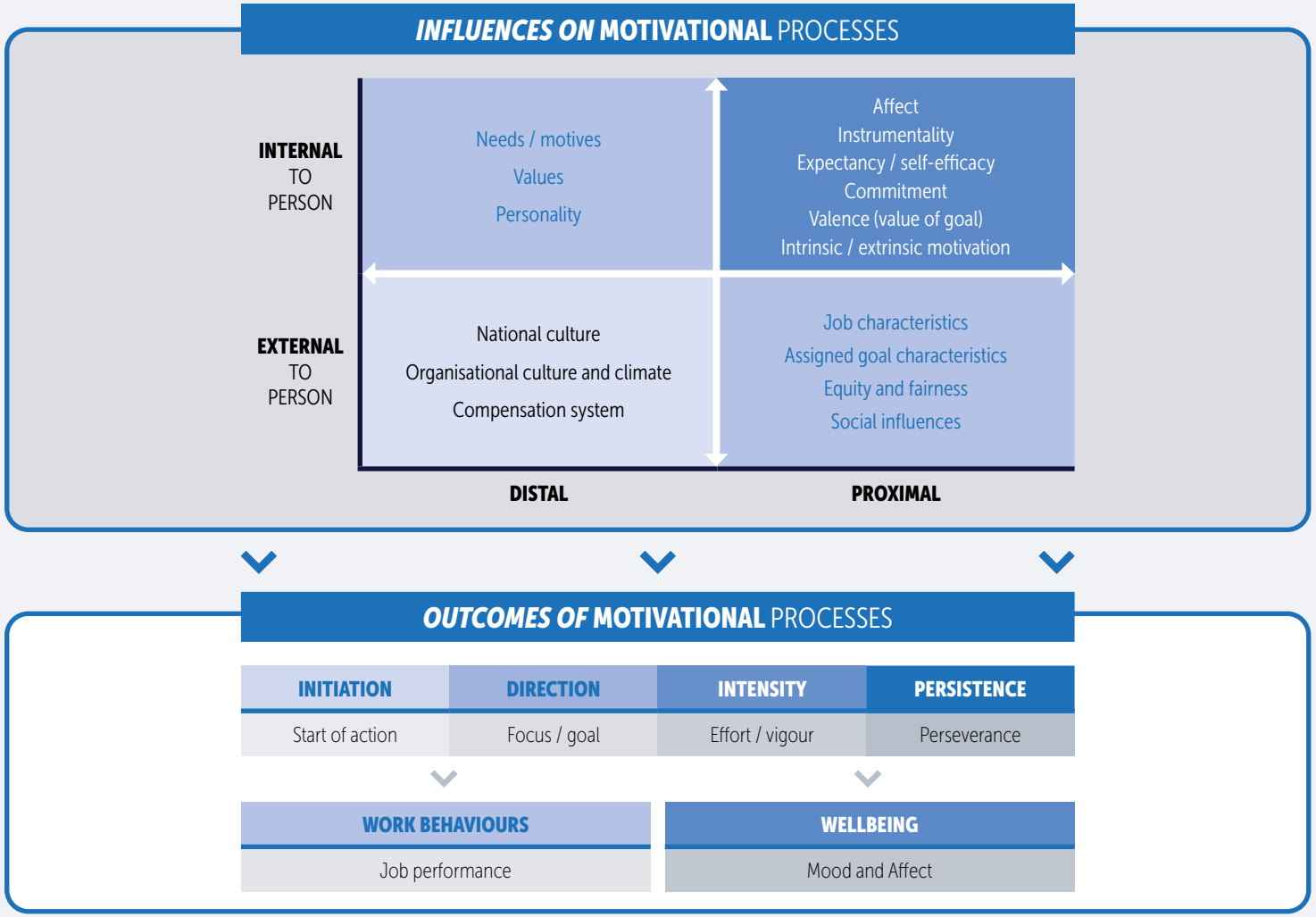
This figure (adapted from Diefendorff & Chandler, 2011) shows a range of influences on motivation. Some of which are external to the person and some are internal. Some external influencing factors are more distal or further away from the job itself (e.g. culture) and some are much closer and more directly relate to the job (e.g., job characteristics).

Likewise, some internal influencing factors are further away from the person's everyday experience of motivation (e.g., needs) and others more directly influence motivational processes during a particular motivational episode (e.g., instrumentality or goal commitment).

Collectively, and in different configurations, these factors affect the four stages or parts of the motivation process which, in turn, lead to work behaviours (which may also constitute work performance) and wellbeing.

It's worth noting that research into work motivation tends to view wellbeing as an *outcome* or *consequence* of motivation, rather than an *input* or *cause* of motivation. This perspective is in sharp contrast to HR's focus on satisfaction and wellbeing as a driver of motivation.

Influences On and Outcomes of Motivational Processes



HOW IS THIS RELEVANT TO HR?

First, knowing that motivation is a **process with different stages** allows us to consider not what only starts or initiates a desired behaviour but also what determines its direction, what is likely to help employees work towards that goal with energy and what will help them persist in their efforts. It may be, for example, that our practices are quite effective in helping employees initiate an action directed towards a particular goal but far less effective in supporting employees' energy and persistence.

In other words, we cannot help employees' motivation by assuming there is a straightforward or simple cause-effect or X > Y relationship between a HR practice and motivational outcomes.

Second, given there are a **large number of influences on motivational processes** – some external to the person and some far away, and others closer to a motivational episode – it seems highly unlikely that any one of these influences is likely to be particularly important. We need to think about these influences in combination and in the context of our own organisations.

This also means that no single motivational technique or HR practice is likely on its own to be particularly effective. As in other areas of HR, there are no silver bullets for improving employee motivation.

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR HR AROUND DEFINING AND DESCRIBING MOTIVATION

1. When we discuss MOTIVATION in our function and in our business what do we mean by MOTIVATION?
2. How do we know the MOTIVATIONAL processes experienced by our employees? Do we evaluate or observe MOTIVATIONAL processes in employees?
3. Do we understand when and why employees seem more or less MOTIVATED? *[Note: MOTIVATION refers to the processes that affect work behaviour which is not the same as work performance.]*
4. Do we (or could we) measure aspects of MOTIVATION?
5. Do we consider the distinct stages in the MOTIVATION process and how they relate to our practices?
6. Given all the possible influences on MOTIVATION which are most important in your context? How does their importance vary across roles or different parts of the business?
7. Are our practices MOTIVATING employees towards achieving goals that are relevant to organisational performance?
8. Which of the important influences on MOTIVATION are more amenable to change through HR activity?

DEFINING AND DESCRIBING 'WORK PERFORMANCE'

Above we discussed definitions and descriptions of motivation at work. These definitions broadly agree that motivation refers to numerous factors that drive a motivational process which shapes employee behaviour.

In examining definitions of work performance, as we will do now, it quickly becomes clear that **employee behaviours are not the same as work performance.** This distinction is practically important for reasons we will go on to discuss.

SOME DEFINITIONS OF WORK PERFORMANCE

Scalable actions, behaviour and outcomes that employees engage in or bring about that are linked with and contribute to organisational goals.	VISWESVARAN & ONES, 2000
(1) Work performance should be defined in terms of behaviour rather than results, (2) work performance includes only those behaviours that are relevant to the organisation's goals, and (3) work performance is multidimensional.	KOOPMANS ET AL, 2011
Job performance is defined as the total expected value to the organisation of the discrete behavioural episodes that an individual carries out over a standard period of time... Behaviour, performance, and results are not the same. Behaviour is what people do. Performance is the expected organisational value of what people do. Results are states or conditions of people or things that are changed by what they do in ways that contribute to or detract from organisational effectiveness.	MOTOWILDO & KELL, 2013
Things that people actually do, actions they take, that contribute to the organisation's goals. Someone must identify those actions that are relevant to the organisation's goals and those that are not, regardless of whether they are in a written job description.	CAMPBELL & WIERNIK, 2015
Job performance is the extent to which an employee's actions contribute to achieving the goals and objectives of the organisation.	LATHAM & WEXLEY, 2020

Motivation is about understanding what motivates specific behaviours. **Work behaviours are only related to work performance if, as these definitions state, those behaviours produce outcomes that are relevant to the organisation's goals.**

This distinction is practically highly relevant. HR practices focused on motivation may be having a very positive effect on motivational processes and work behaviours. However, unless those behaviours are relevant to what the business is trying to do then such practices are not contributing to the work performance of employees or the organisation's goals.

This appears to be a common problem in performance management systems discussed in one of our earlier reports, ***Driving Organisational Performance: HR's Critical Role***. It is quite possible that individuals are achieving all the goals they have been set but are not contributing to organisational performance. This happens when the organisation's strategic objectives are not effectively cascaded down through the organisation and used to design and set individual goals.

The definitions of work performance discussed thus far focus on task performance and what employees often do as part of their formal job description and the extent to which behaviours contribute in a relatively directly way to organisational goals. However, **employees typically engage in many actions and behaviours that are not technically part of their formal task or job requirements but nonetheless contribute (or detract) from the organisation's goals.** Such behaviours are sometimes referred to as *extra-role behaviours* as they fall outside explicit role requirements.

Widening the definition of work performance to incorporate other employee behaviours beyond formal or explicit role requirements represents one of the major developments in the way work psychologists think about the meaning of work performance.

Dimensions of Work Performance Beyond Task Performance

DIMENSIONS

TASK PERFORMANCE	**CONTEXTUAL** PERFORMANCE	**ADAPTIVE** PERFORMANCE	COUNTER PRODUCTIVE WORK **BEHAVIOUR**
Completing job tasks, work quality, job skills, job knowledge, keeping knowledge up-to-date, working accurately and neatly, planning and organising, administration, design making, solving problems, oral and written communication, monitoring and controlling resources.	Extra tasks, effort, initiative, enthusiasm, attention to duty, resourcefulness, industriousness, persistence, motivation, dedication, proactivity, creativity, cooperating and helping others, politeness, effective communication, interpersonal relations, organisational commitment.	Generating new, innovative ideas, adjusting goals and plans to situation, learning new tasks and technologies, being flexible and open-minded to others, understanding other groups or cultures, showing resilience, remaining calm, analysing quickly, acting appropriately.	Off-task behaviour, too many or longer breaks, presenteeism, absenteeism, complaining, tardiness, doing tasks incorrectly, accidents, insulting or gossiping about coworkers, fighting or arguing with coworkers, disregard of safety, misusing privileges, aggression, theft, substance abuse.

CONSTRUCT

INDIVIDUAL WORK PERFORMANCE

This figure (adapted from Koopmans *et al.*, 2011) shows four dimensions of work performance along with specific indicators of each of those dimensions or types of work performance.

TASK PERFORMANCE

is broadly similar to the definitions of work performance already discussed and refers to taking actions that are part of the formal role or job description.

CONTEXTUAL PERFORMANCE

is a potentially confusing term but it refers to behaviours and actions that contribute to aspects of the psychological, social and broader organisational context which in turn shape employee behaviour in ways that contribute to organisational performance. A related concept is **organisational citizenship behaviour** which, as the name suggests, are those behaviours you might expect to observe in someone regarded as good citizen of, for example, a local community.

ADAPTIVE PERFORMANCE

refers to a type of performance that is particularly important for work performance in uncertain, dynamic and complex environments. Relevant behaviours include coming up with new ideas, problem-solving and learning new tasks and technologies.

COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE WORK **BEHAVIOUR**

as the name suggests refers to behaviours that are certainly not part of the job role and which contribute negatively to the performance of other employees and the organisation.

If we think about work performance as consisting *only* of task performance and what people do as part of their formal and explicit role, then we miss a whole range of other employee behaviours that are likely to be very important for organisational performance.

There are **five key features** of these additional types of work performance.

1. They are **extra-role** in that they are not part of formal job requirements. An employee cannot *go the extra mile* if that mile is no longer extra or additional to existing requirements.
2. Related to this, they are **discretionary** in that employees can choose to do them or not. If such behaviours are incorporated into formal job requirements or goals they then become in-role and are no longer discretionary.
3. On the whole, these behaviours are **relatively spontaneous.** Typically people don't plan to engage in creative problem solving (adaptive performance) or insult their colleagues. This feature is consistent with the idea of motivational processes more generally discussed earlier in which motivation is considered to be episodic and to ebb and flow.
4. It is possible that there are **trade-offs between these different dimensions** of work performance. For example, if someone focused only on role behaviours then they would not be engaging in extra-role behaviours. Conversely, if someone is a very good citizen of the organisation and spends most of their time helping others they may be neglecting their core job requirements. The appropriate mix of these different types of work performance will vary over time and across contexts.
5. These other dimensions of work performance beyond task performance may be **essential for the effectiveness and even survival of the organisation.** Imagine a workplace where employees focused *only* on the formal requirements of their role and did nothing else. In a few roles and a few organisations this wouldn't necessarily matter. But in most it would likely make a profound difference to the ability of employees and the organisation to function.

HOW IS THIS RELEVANT TO HR?

One of the main purposes of HR is to help shape and support employee behaviours that lead to individual work performance which in turn contribute to organisational performance. It is therefore vital that HR has a good understanding what work performance actually means.

First, **employee behaviour and work performance are not the same.** This is for two reasons. First, employees may be highly motivated and engaging in the required behaviours but this may not be leading to the performance outcomes required. Second, even if goals are met this cannot be considered to be good work performance unless those individual goals are contributing to organisational goals.

When thinking about what we can do to more effectively motivate employee behaviour, we need to ensure those behaviours are actually achieving desired goals and that those goals are relevant to the business.

Second, **work performance is not just about task performance.** Employees engage in a potentially very wide range of behaviours which are not part of their formal role or explicit job description but which can be vital for the functioning of the business. For HR functions it is important to consider which of these other dimensions of work performance are important for the business and what can be done to help shape them. In other words, **what types of work performance does the business need now and where in the business does it need them?** For example, during periods of heavy customer demand and limited resources, contextual performance (e.g., extra-role behaviours) may be particularly important for organisational performance. In other periods, for example during major business transformation, adaptive performance is likely to be most helpful for the organisation.

A third key point is that just like the motivational processes that drive it, **work performance is episodic and dynamic.** There is a tendency within HR and more widely to think of work performance as a relatively stable between-person phenomenon. In other words, that some individuals have higher levels of work performance than others and that such differences are stable. It certainly may be the case that at the extremes of work performance some employees may *on average* have higher or lower levels of performance.

However, there is typically much **more variability within people** than between people when it comes to work performance. This variability occurs over many time frames including minutes, hours, days, weeks, months and years. If you think about your own work performance, particularly in terms of the episodic processes that drive motivation, you can probably identify such variability. For example, there may be days when you are aware that your performance is a little sluggish and you haven't achieved much whereas on other days you are able to accomplish a huge amount.

In order to shape and support work performance, HR needs to work with and acknowledge this within-person variability rather than view it as a relatively static difference between people.

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR HR AROUND DEFINING AND DESCRIBING WORK PERFORMANCE

1. When PERFORMANCE is discussed in your organisation and within HR how is it defined?
2. Do you make clear distinctions between motivation and WORK PERFORMANCE or do you tend to consider them to be the same thing?
3. To what extent do you include the full range of WORK PERFORMANCE dimensions when thinking about performance in the business?
4. Which dimensions of WORK PERFORMANCE do you tend to focus on and why?
5. To what extent do you consider and act on the idea that some types of WORK PERFORMANCE are more important in different parts of the organisation than others?
6. Does the relative importance of different PERFORMANCE dimensions change over time? Do you incorporate this into your work?
7. Do you measure WORK PERFORMANCE? Are your measures valid and reliable? Do you ensure that you only assess WORK PERFORMANCE which is *relevant to organisational objectives* through checking that individual goals relate reasonably directly to organisational objectives? In other words is there a clear line of sight between individual goals and organisational objectives?
8. When assessing WORK PERFORMANCE do you take account of the variability in level of PERFORMANCE within people?
9. What practices, policies or other activities does your function deploy to shape WORK PERFORMANCE?

Having discussed definitions and descriptions of motivation and work performance we now turn to work motivation theories which attempt to explain what shapes motivational processes and how these processes shape work behaviour.

WORK MOTIVATION THEORIES

As discussed earlier, there is considerable agreement that the idea of **motivation** refers to a process or set of processes that influences the initiation of an action, its direction, the intensity with which it is performed and how long the action persists. Motivation is influenced by a great many different factors that may play a role in any of these stages in the unfolding motivational process.

There is also considerable agreement that **work performance** does not mean all those behaviours that emerge from motivational processes but rather only those behaviours that are relevant to organisational objectives. There is also a shared understanding that work performance is not just about task performance but a number of types of performance including contextual and adaptive which indirectly contribute to organisational performance. Work performance is dynamic and changes over time and the performance levels vary considerably within people.

Given the nature of these two key constructs – motivation and work performance – it should come as no surprise there are **many theories of work motivation.** No theory could possibly explain every aspect of motivation and work performance, so what each theory does is examine how *some* of the factors that influence motivational processes affect *some* aspects of work performance.

WHY DISCUSS THEORIES OF MOTIVATION?

Theories of motivation are important practically because they aim to explain the links between motivation and work performance and provide guidance on how we can best shape motivational processes in ways that are likely to shape work performance.

As in other areas of HR, we never have a complete or precise picture of exactly what's happening in the links we hope exist between the practices we design and implement and the effects of these on employees and the business. Theories allow us to think through what these links might be and help us identify how to design practices and evaluate their effects.

Or, to put it more simply, **if our goal is to do something to shape employee behaviour it's important to have some understanding of how it might work.**

A CHRONOLOGY OF THIRTEEN PROMINENT WORK MOTIVATION THEORIES

Drawing on the history of work motivation (Latham & Budworth, 2007), these are some examples of the most prominent theories of work motivation, some of which will be discussed in more detail later. The prominence of these theories does not tell us much about their validity. For example, there is little scientific support for one of the best-known theories of motivation – Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. However, it is still useful to get some sense of the range of approaches to explaining work motivation.

MASLOW, 1943

Hierarchy of Needs
People have a range of needs (physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem, and self-actualisation) organised in a hierarchy. Behaviour is motivated towards fulfilling lower-level needs first and when these are fulfilled, needs at the next level motivate behaviour.

HULL, 1943

Drive Theory
Biological drives such as thirst and hunger drive motivation.

HERZBERG, 1959

Two-Factor Theory
This suggests there are two sets of factors that affect job satisfaction and motivation. Motivators (such as challenging work and work involvement) and hygiene factors (such as status, salary, holidays). The presence of motivators leads to satisfaction and higher motivation. The presence of hygiene factors does not lead to higher satisfaction and motivation though their absence will result in dissatisfaction. This theory draws on an analogy with hygiene in human health. Hygienic conditions will not lead in themselves lead to better health but will help prevent illness.

MCGREGOR, 1960

Theory X and Theory Y
Managers adopt one of two assumptions or theories about employee behaviour and this affects the way they manage and lead. Theory X assumes employees dislike work and lack ambition and so need control through rewards and punishments. Theory Y assumes employees are interested and motivated and so need support and a good working environment.

MCCLELLAND, 1961

Three Needs Theory
People are motivated by three needs: For achievement, affiliation and power.

VROOM, 1964

Expectancy Theory
People choose (or not) to engage in particular behaviours because of their perception of three factors. Expectancy – if there is a belief that making effort will result in attaining the goal. Instrumentality – the belief that achieving the goal will lead to a reward. Valence – the value the person places on the reward.

ADAMS, 1963

Equity Theory
Drawing on social exchange theory, equity theory suggests that employees are motivated by how fairly they believe they are being treated. Employees calculate their inputs to the job and the outcomes they receive in return and compare this with coworkers. If they feel they are being treated unfairly they will attempt to reduce inequity by reducing their inputs and thus become less motivated.

ALDERFER, 1969

ERG Theory
This theory argues that three needs (for existence, relatedness and growth) drive motivation.

HACKMAN & OLDHAM, 1976

Job Characteristics Model
This theory suggests that there are five core characteristics of jobs (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback) which lead to a number of critical psychological states in employees which in turn affect motivation and satisfaction.

LOCKE & LATHAM, 1979

Goal-Setting Theory
Setting difficult and specific goals that are accepted by the employee and they have the ability to attain will lead to higher performance than do-your-best or easier goals.

DECI & RYAN, 1980

Self-Determination Theory
Motivation depends on the extent to which the environment supports or thwarts the individual's experience of three needs: Autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

DECI & RYAN, 1985

Cognitive Evaluation Theory
This is an extension of self-determination theory focusing on the specific effects of external and tangible rewards on intrinsic motivation. It suggests that offering tangible rewards for behaviour reduces people's sense of autonomy and competence and thus reduces intrinsic motivation (doing something for its own sake). In other words, external rewards could crowd out intrinsic motivation.

BAUMEISTER & HETHERTON, 1996

Self-Regulation Theory
This considers how people regulate and change their behaviour in order to achieve goals. This involves setting standards of desirable behaviour (to meet the goal), the drive to meet standards, attending to situations and thoughts that might lead to breaking standards and willpower or strength to regulate the self.

Many of the oldest theories of motivation draw on the idea of **needs.** In general, need theories (with the exception of Maslow) have gone out of fashion partly because they have limited scientific support but also because they don't help us understand motivational processes and episodes. The idea of needs is, however, still present in the much more recent self-determination theory.

COMMON ASSUMPTIONS IN WORK MOTIVATION THEORIES

One way of getting a sense of the numerous theories of work motivation without having to examine each in detail is to examine some of their core assumptions or themes (Diefendorf & Chandler, 2011). What are the basic assumptions made across most of these *more contemporary* theories?

ASSUMPTION **1**

Behaviour *is goal directed*

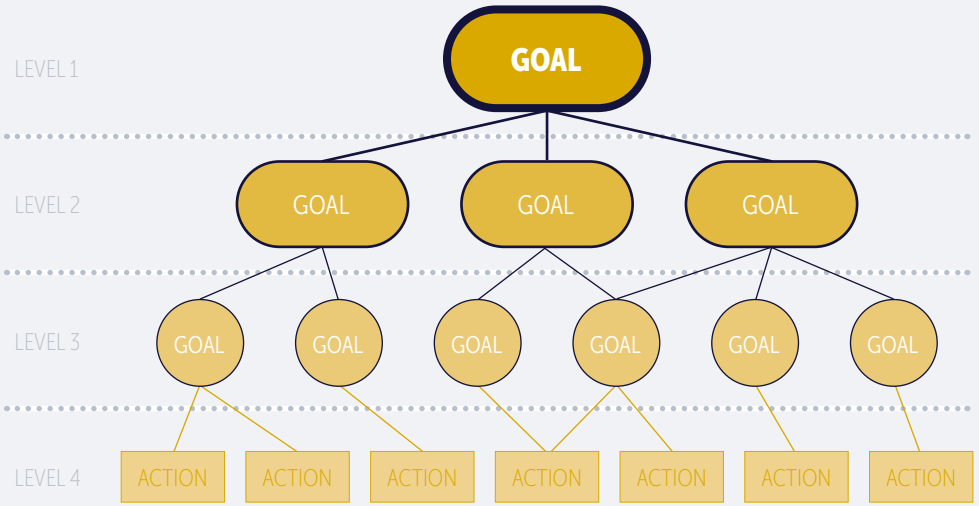
Goals are internal representations of what we want to achieve or desired end-states. The assumption here is that the purpose of all or almost all behaviour is to help us achieve a goal. In other words, behaviour is purposeful and active.

ASSUMPTION **2**

Goals *are hierarchically arranged*

Goals can be large and longer-term or small and relatively immediate. What directs our minute-to-minute attention and motivational process is a focus on immediate goals or actions that will in principle help us attain a goal at a higher level.

A Goal Hierarchy



ASSUMPTION **3**

Discrepancy reduction
is a basic universal process

Goals drive behaviour because there is a *discrepancy* between the current state and the goal. If there is no discrepancy it means the goal has already been achieved and so we no longer need to direct our behaviour towards achieving it. In general, discrepancies feel uncomfortable or unpleasant and reducing or removing the discrepancy produces positive feelings.

ASSUMPTION **4**

Approach or avoidance
underlies all motivational tendency

Approach goals are those we want to attain to produce pleasure or a sense of satisfaction. Avoidance goals are those we want to attain to avoid something unpleasant. In the case of meeting a deadline, for example, this could be an approach or avoidance goal. We may work towards the goal in order to experience the pleasure of being effective and meeting the deadline. On the other hand, we may work towards the goal so we avoid the unpleasant feelings that accompany missing a deadline.

So, in this example, at the very top at level 1 we may have a higher order work goal: *To be an effective manager.* In order to achieve this, the three goals below at level 2 could be, for example, *make sure I develop the right skills, understand the needs of those I manage, and provide support where needed.* Taking the first of these level 2 goals, in order to develop the *right skills to be an effective manager* it may require *asking for feedback* and to *engage in development opportunities.* At the lowest level 4, the two goals or actions to get feedback could be to *organise 360-degree assessments* and the goal or action that would help *engage in development opportunities* is *to book onto a training course about how to give performance feedback.*

In order to understand why someone is pursuing a lower level goal we need to understand how that goal relates to higher-level goals. This process is implicit in development reviews where we may ask an employee what they want to achieve as a higher level goal and help them consider ways they can do that by accomplishing lower-level goals.

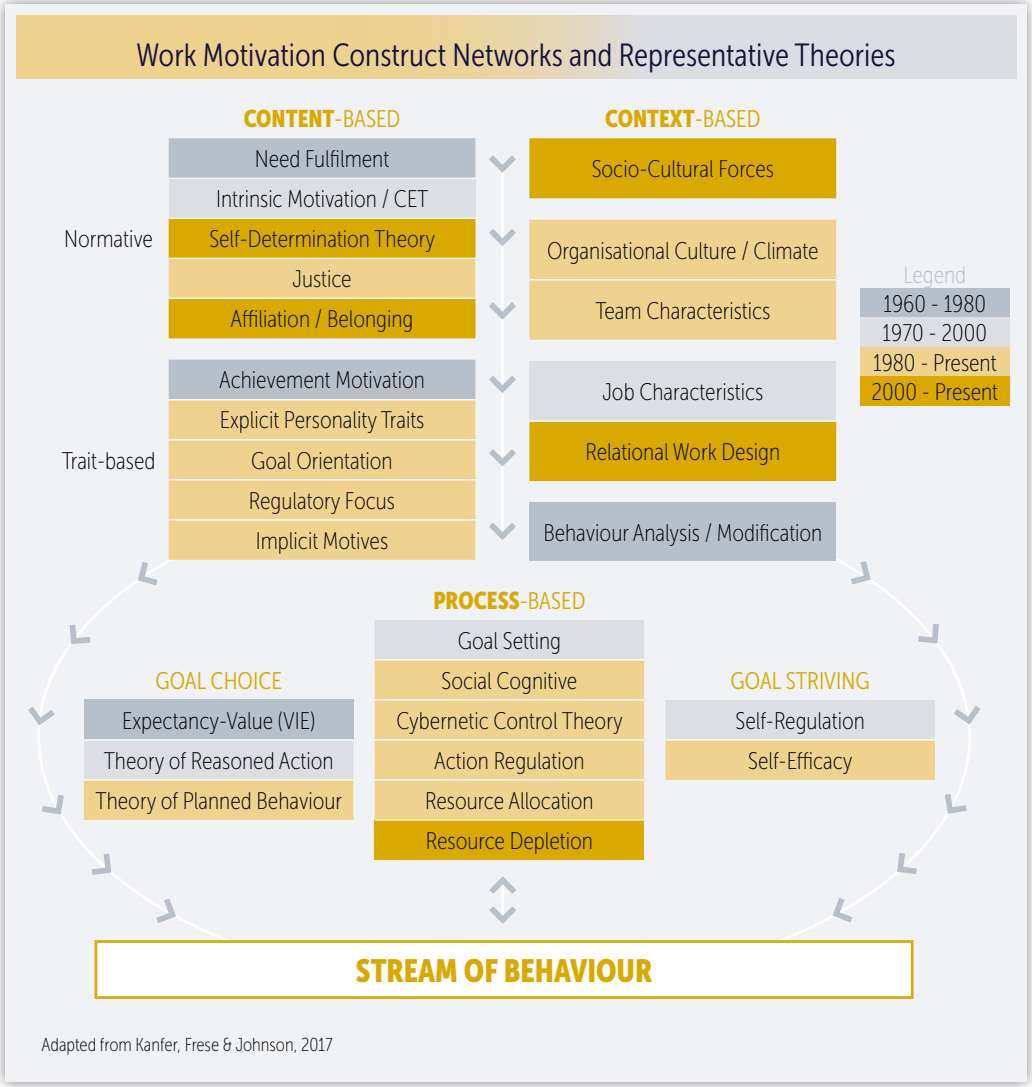
TYPES OF THEORIES OF WORK MOTIVATION

As discussed, given that the ideas of both motivation and work performance are quite broad there are not only many different theories of work motivation but they tend to explain motivation in rather different ways.

One way of thinking about these different types of theory is to consider their main focus. In general, we can consider three approaches:

1. **CONTENT**-BASED These focus on person-based determinants such as traits, motivations and tendencies to explain motivation.
2. **CONTEXT**-BASED These consider features of the environment as drivers of behaviour.
3. **PROCESS**-BASED These see motivation as consisting of two interrelated systems. One involved with goal *selection* and one with goal *enactment*.

This figure provides examples of these three approaches to motivation theory.



Adapted from Kanfer, Frese & Johnson, 2017

Next we discuss an illustrative example of each type of theory. These have been chosen partly because they are a good representation of the theory type, but also because each is supported by a reasonable amount of scientific evidence. Though, as with any HR technique or intervention, its relevance and value still depends on the organisational context. For more on taking an Evidence-Based HR approach to identifying organisational issues and likely solutions, see our report Evidence-Based HR: A New Paradigm.

As mentioned earlier, the practical value for HR of discussing work motivation theories is because **if our goal is to do something to shape employee behaviour (which it often is), it's important to first have some understanding of how that process might work.**

THREE EXAMPLES OF WORK MOTIVATION THEORIES

We will describe the basic principles of each theory and some examples of how the theory can be applied in practice.

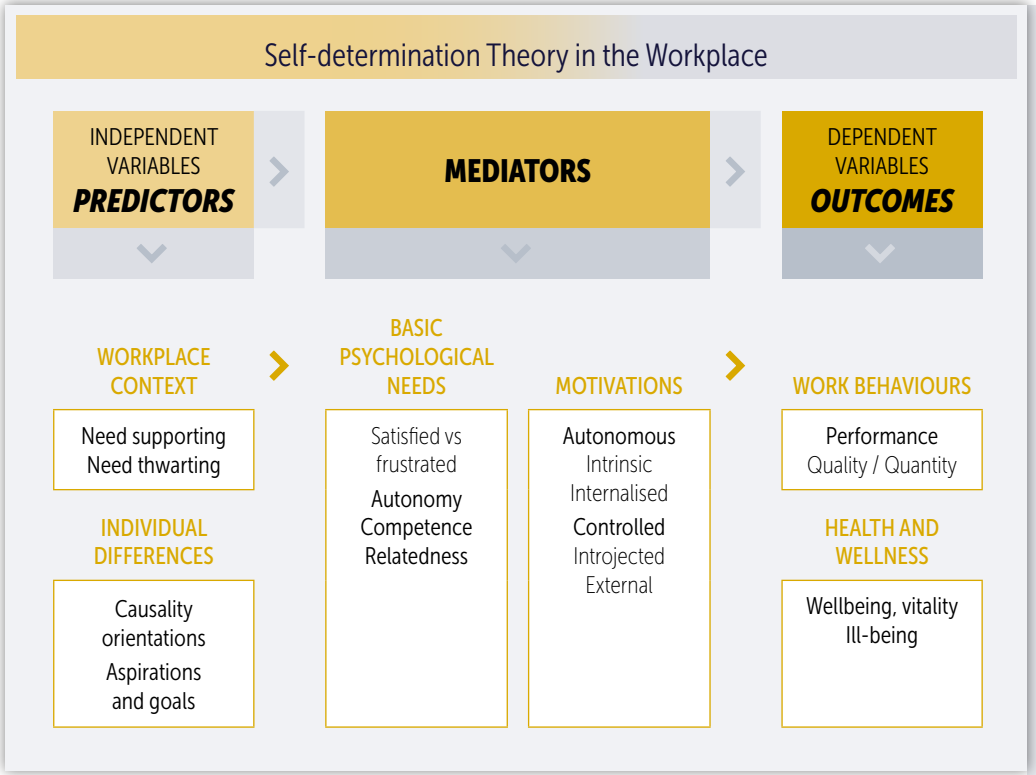
EXAMPLE **1**

Self-determination theory
CONTENT-BASED

This theory starts with the assumption that people have three basic needs relevant to motivation:

1. To feel competent or effective.
2. To feel a sense of belonging and connectedness to others.
3. To feel autonomy and self-determination.

If the work environment supports (rather than thwarts) these needs then the employee will be *intrinsically motivated* meaning they will be *motivated and rewarded by the activity itself* as opposed to *extrinsic motivation* where employee engages in the activity in order to gain a subsequent or separable reward. HR can potentially play a role in shaping the work environment in ways that supports these needs.



The figure (adapted from Deci *et al.*, 2017) starts with the independent variables or predictors of work motivation. These predictors are not only the work context but also individual differences such as causality orientation. There are three dimensions to causality orientation: Autonomy orientation where a person is oriented to aspects of the work environment that stimulate intrinsic motivation; Controlled orientation which refers to the extent to which someone is oriented towards being controlled by things such as deadlines, rewards, and instructions from others; Impersonal orientation which is about the extent to which an employee believes that attaining the desired outcomes is within or outside their control.

In the middle of this model are two sets of mediators. In general, mediators describe the mechanisms through which a predictor influences an outcome. There is often not a *direct* relationship between predictor and outcome. Rather, the predictor impacts a mediator which *in turn* impacts the outcome. In this case, the mediators are the extent to which the three needs are satisfied or frustrated and the consequences of this for intrinsic (or autonomous) and extrinsic (or controlled motivation).

As Gagné & Deci (2005) put it, intrinsic motivation *"involves people doing an activity because they find it interesting and derive spontaneous satisfaction from the activity itself"*, whereas extrinsic motivation is tied to some form of external reward such that *"satisfaction comes not from the activity itself but rather from the extrinsic consequences to which the activity leads."* Another way of thinking about intrinsic motivation is to consider those tasks or activities you would choose to do even if you were not asked or required to do them.

Finally, the outcomes of this process are employee performance and wellbeing.

An **assumption** of this theory – and a broader assumption in work motivation research – is that **intrinsic motivation is somehow superior to extrinsic motivation.**

This motivation continuum (adapted from Visser, 2017) describes why this may be the case.

Ideally we would probably all want ***wantivation*** rather than ***mustivation*** at work. Most HR functions would probably want to support employees to experience high levels of *wantivation* though, as we will go on to discuss, which theories are likely to be useful and relevant to the HR function depends on the organisational context.

The Motivation Continuum

CONTEXT	Extent to which basic psychological needs (of autonomy, competence, and relatedness) are satisfied					
TYPE OF MOTIVATION	**Amotivation** Feeling unable and unwilling, finding nothing interesting or important	**CONTROLLED motivation** **MUSTIVATION**		**AUTONOMOUS motivation** **WANTIVATION**		**INTRINSIC motivation**
		EXTRINSIC motivation				
				INTERNALISED motivation		
REASON FOR BEHAVIOUR	**Inactivity** Passivity, avoidance, oppositional behaviour	**External pressure** Doing something because of external pressure (punishments, rewards, threats)	**Internal pressure** Doing something because of internal 'musts' and expectations	**Usefulness-driven** Doing something because experienced usefulness, relevance	**Value-driven** Doing something because it fits with one's own deeply held values	**Interest-driven** Doing something because it is interesting or enjoyable
EFFECTS	Insecurity, fear of failure, resistance, apathy	Tension, anxiety, little engagement and persistence, dissatisfaction	Feelings of guilt, shame, low sense of self-worth	Sense of volition, pleasure, energy, persistence, deeper learning, performing well, gratification		

© 2017. Translated version adapted from Visser, C.F. Leren and Presteren. Just-in-Time Books
This figure is based on the work by Richard Ryan and Edward Deci and many other researchers in the field of Self-Determination Theory. The terms 'Mustivation' and 'Wantivation' were coined by Maarten Vansteenkiste.

EXAMPLE **2**

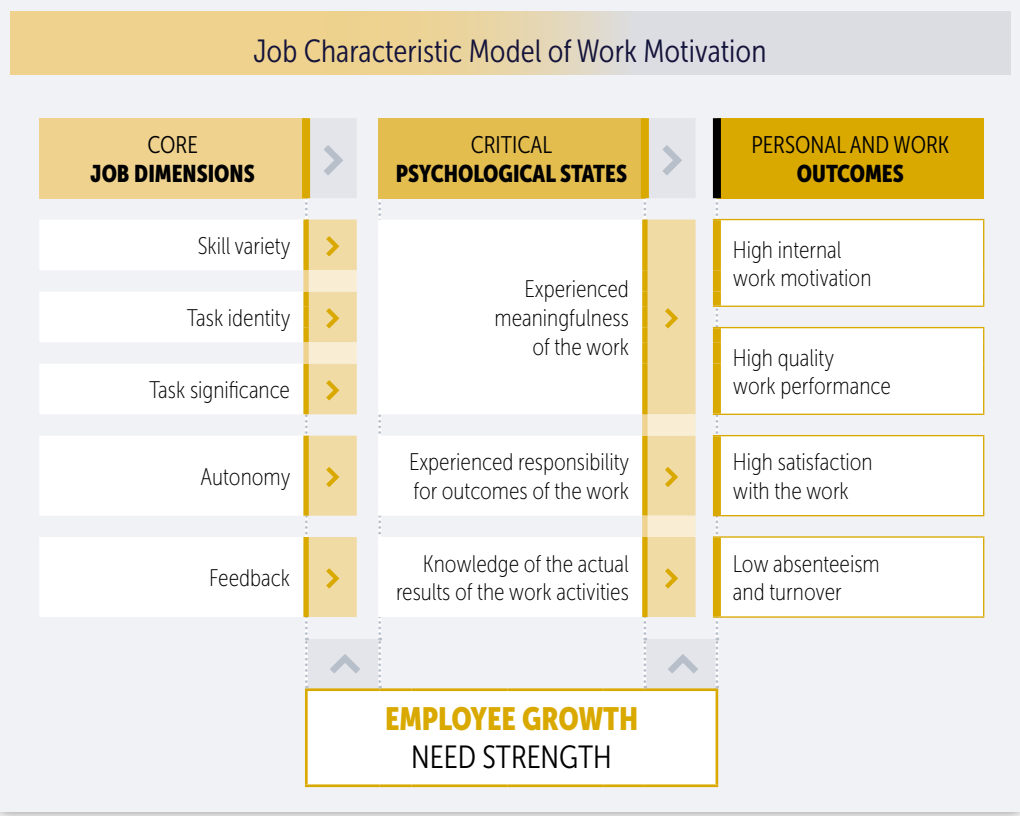
Job characteristics model

CONTEXT-BASED

This represents one of the oldest theories of motivation and focuses on the characteristics of jobs along with other factors as potential drivers of motivation.

These core job dimensions (or characteristics) affect critical psychological states which in turn affect outcomes. The three critical psychological states that employees experience are meaningfulness of the work, responsibility for outcomes of the work, and knowledge of the results of work activities. Last, the outcomes include motivation, performance, satisfaction and lower absence and turnover. It's noticeable that here too (as discussed earlier) job satisfaction is not viewed as a *cause* of job performance but is something also caused by job characteristics.

The strength of the relationships between the core job dimensions, the critical psychological states and the outcomes depends on an individual difference variable – growth need strength. Employees with high need for personal growth will respond more positively to motivating job characteristics than those with low need for personal growth.



This model (adapted from Hackman & Oldham, 1976) starts with five core job dimensions (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback). It's important to note that these are regarded as features of the job which in principle *HR can shape through job design and redesign.*

EXAMPLE **3**

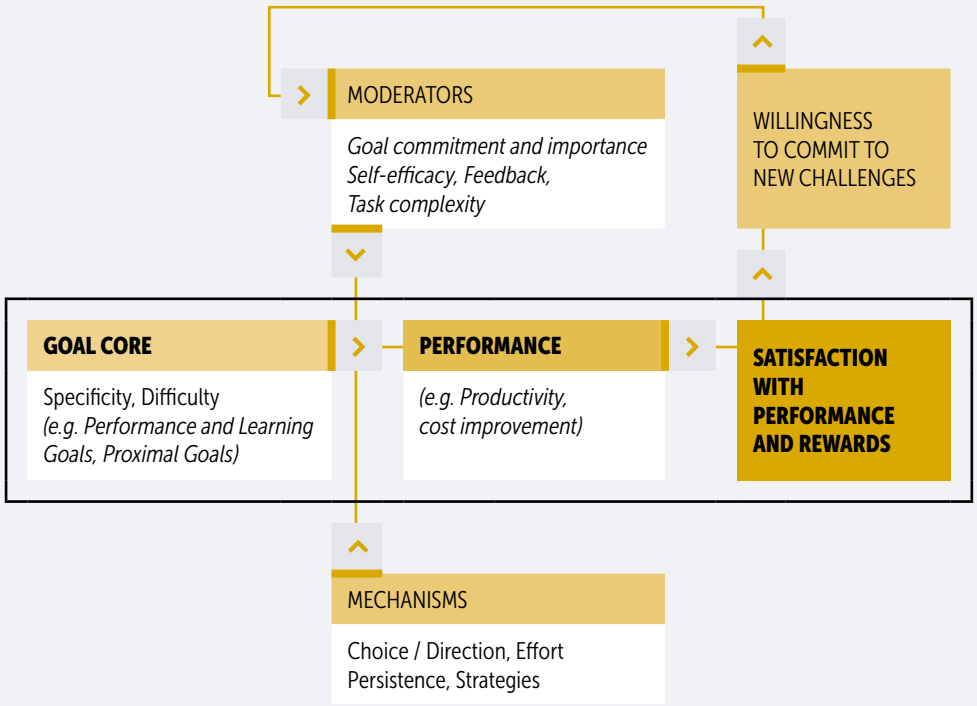
Goal-setting
PROCESS-BASED

Like every other example theory, goal-setting theory does not attempt to explain all the factors that might affect motivation. Rather, it focuses on how goals and goal-setting shape motivation.

According to this theory, there are four mechanisms through which goals affect work performance:

1. Goals *direct attention and effort* towards goal-relevant behaviours and away from goal-irrelevant activities.
2. Goals have an *energising function*. High goals lead to more effort than lower goals.
3. Goals *affect persistence*. If people are allowed to control the time they spend on a task, harder goals prolong effort. Tight deadlines produce a quicker work rate than looser deadlines.
4. Goals *affect action indirectly by leading to the discovery or use of task-relevant knowledge and strategies*. In other words, goals help people make better use of the knowledge they have or develop new strategies.

Key Elements of Goal-setting Theory and the High-performance Cycle



This figure (adapted from Locke & Latham, 2002) shows the key parts of goal-setting theory. On the left is the goal itself which, according to the theory, are more motivating if they are difficult and specific. Note that there are also different types of goals.

The relationship between goals and performance is moderated by a number of factors including goal commitment and goal performance. So, for example, even if a goal is specific and difficult it may have little impact on performance if the employee is not committed to it and doesn't regard it as important. Also, progress towards the goal can only happen if there is feedback (usually from the task itself). In addition to moderators, there are a number of mechanisms, just discussed, that explain how goals drive performance.

If the employee is satisfied with their performance (note again, that satisfaction is viewed as an outcome not a cause of performance) then they are more likely to be willing to commit to new challenges which will feed back in a high performance cycle to commitment to future goals.

There are many ways in which HR can shape the process that links goals and goal-setting to performance. For example, it could be used to design situational interviews to explore how candidates might respond to goals, or employees and managers could be trained in goal-setting, or to establish mutual goals between managers and employees.

More specifically the theory can be used by HR to design the goal-setting process during performance management where tasks are specified in reasonable detail and the goal is made specific and difficult though attainable. The way performance will be measured is made explicit along with the timescales and the relative importance of different goals.

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR HR AROUND WORK MOTIVATION THEORIES

We have briefly discussed a dozen or so THEORIES OF WORK MOTIVATION and discussed three in more detail. We have also examined four assumptions common to many work MOTIVATION theories.

These are some questions HR professionals and functions could ask about their practices in relation to WORK MOTIVATION THEORIES.

1. When we discuss MOTIVATION in our function and in our business are we drawing on any particular work MOTIVATION THEORIES? If so, which theories? If not, are you working with your own informal or local theories that help you explain MOTIVATION?
2. Do WORK MOTIVATION THEORIES play any role in the way we design HR practices – both practices focused on MOTIVATION specifically but also practices more broadly?
3. Do we feel some of these THEORIES are more or less relevant to our business? Are there some that seem appropriate? Are there others that don't really fit?
4. Do these different THEORIES and types of THEORY apply in a similar way to all groups of employees? Or are some THEORIES better suited to particular groups or roles.
5. Do the leaders in our business seem to subscribe to any particular approach to WORK MOTIVATION such as job design or goal-setting?
6. Are any of the four assumptions in many WORK MOTIVATION THEORIES also present in any of your HR practices around WORK MOTIVATION?
   1. Behaviour is goal directed;
   2. Goals are hierarchically arranged;
   3. Discrepancy reduction is a basic universal process;
   4. Approach or avoidance underlies all motivational tendency.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF MOTIVATION AND WORK PERFORMANCE DEFINITIONS AND THEORIES

It is only possible to apply work psychology definitions, theory and evidence if we first have a good and well-informed understanding of the practical issue we are dealing with in our business and, once this is understood, then making a similarly well-informed decision about what intervention or practice is most likely to resolve that issue.

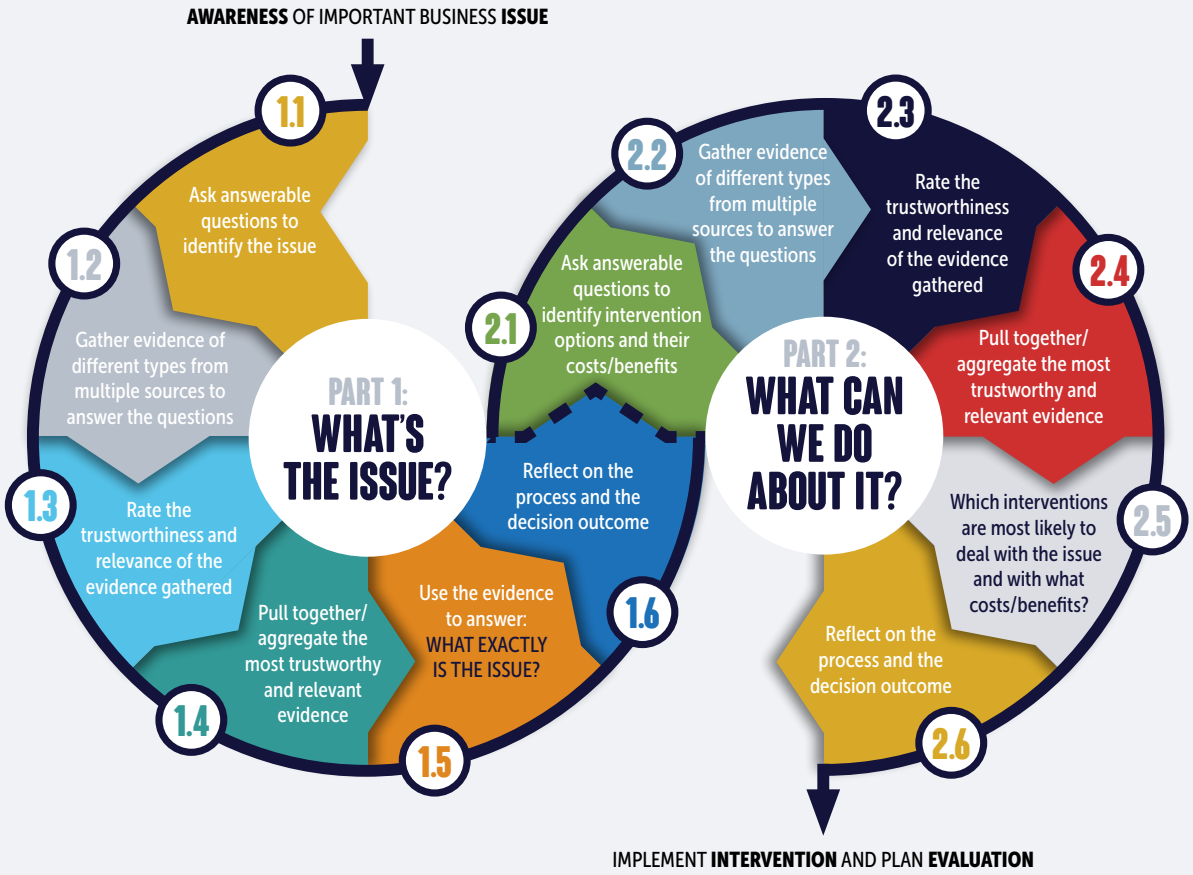
In other words, it is only through an **Evidence-Based HR approach** that we can understand how and if insights from work psychology are relevant and useful.

Before we discuss some specific motivation and work performance interventions, we will discuss how we would use the Evidence-Based HR approach to first diagnose or understand an employee performance issue.

The process begins with awareness of an important business issue. In this case, it would be a business issue around motivation and performance. There are potentially many such issues within any organisation at any one time.

For purposes of illustration, let's take the presenting and rather general issue of low work performance amongst employees. This issue may have been raised by the senior management team who have a sense that the business is just not performing as well as it should and part of the reason for that is *low levels of employee performance*.

The Evidence-Based HR Process



This figure, taken from an earlier report, *Evidence-Based HR: A New Paradigm*, sets out the process involved in Evidence-Based HR. How can we apply this to motivation and work performance?

If a performance problem was discovered, we would then move on to the Part 2 of the Evidence-Based HR Process in order to gather evidence to identify a possible solution.

EVIDENCE-BASED HR PROCESS PART 1: WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

1.1 Design and ask answerable questions to help you identify the issue. Such as:

- What exactly is the presenting problem of 'low' levels of performance? Why is it a problem exactly? In what way?
- What exactly do we mean by work performance? How is it being assessed or measured? Are our measures valid and reliable?
- Where in the business is low performance happening?
- Are there differences in performance across employee groups or roles?
- What do our measures of work performance tell us?
- Is it across all *dimensions of work performance* or just one? Which *specific* behaviours are problematic?
- Are there any identifiable trends in work performance?
- Do any of our data tell us what might be predicting low performance?
- How does our level of employee performance compare to similar organisations?
- Why in general is low performance a problem? Why is it a problem for us here? What are the consequences of low performance? Can we see any effects on business outcomes?
- What *work motivation theories* might explain our low performance if it is found?

1.2 Gather evidence of different types from multiple sources (see Sources of Evidence Framework *opposite*) to help answer the questions.

This shows the four sources of evidence you would look into to help answer the questions in stage 1.2.

- Look across the four sources to collect evidence that will help you to answer the questions asked in 1.2 and so more precisely understand the nature of the problem of 'low' employee performance.
- Start by gathering evidence to answer your questions from stakeholders – particularly the senior management team, line managers and employees – then move on to the other three sources.
- Devise a method for recording and storing the evidence you collect that's accessible to the whole team.

1.3 Rate the trustworthiness and relevance of the evidence you gather (see Evidence Quality and Relevance Framework, pg. 39 in *Evidence-Based HR: A New Paradigm*).

- Do we understand the evidence we have gathered?
- How was it gathered?
- Is it likely to be biased or incomplete and in which ways?
- How credible is each source and how do we know?
- Given our questions, which evidence is most trustworthy?
- Given our questions, which evidence is most relevant to our particular context?
- Which evidence should we definitely use, possibly use and definitely not use?

1.4 Pull together/aggregate the most trustworthy and relevant evidence.

- Go back to the questions asked to help identify the presenting problem of 'low' levels of performance set out in 1.1 above.
- Pull together the most trustworthy and relevant evidence from each of the sources that answer each question.
- Display or summarise the evidence that answers each of the questions about 'low' employee performance.

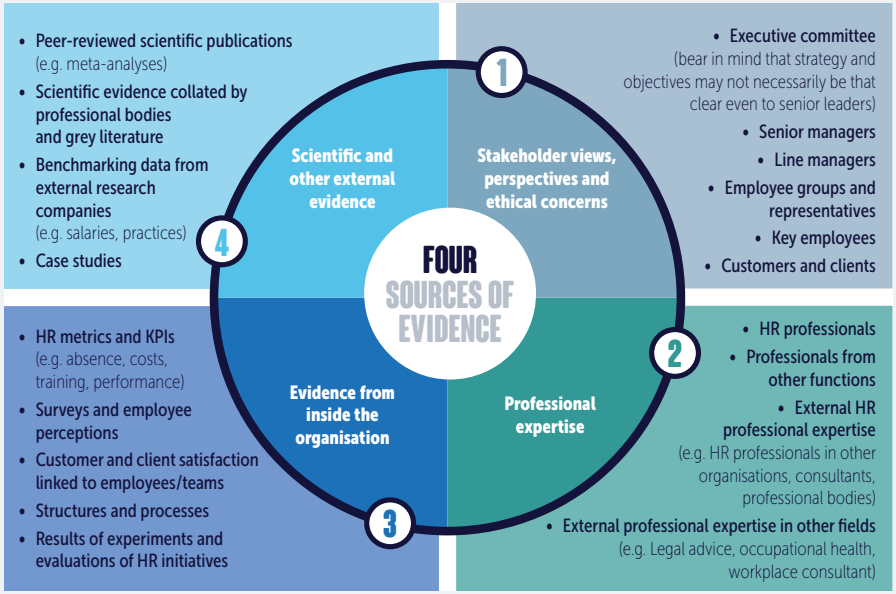
1.5 Use the evidence to answer your questions: What exactly is the problem?

- Given the available evidence what is the most accurate answer to each question?
- Returning to the starting point, can we now clearly articulate what exactly is the presenting problem of 'low' employee performance? Why is it a problem?
- Is there one discrete problem or several?
- How serious are the performance problems for the business? Do we need to intervene?

1.6 Reflect on the process and the outcome.

- How easy or difficult was the process?
- Which parts were completed more or less fully and why?
- How do you feel about any gaps?
- How did following the process change your initial perceptions of the problem(s)?
- How confident are you that you have an accurate picture of the performance problem(s)?

Sources of Evidence Framework for Evidence-Based HR



As emphasised at various points, applying work psychology requires us to have a good understanding of the specific issues faced by the business and the wider context of the organisation, which is exactly what the Evidence-Based HR process provides.

In the case of this particular type of issue – low performance – the solution may not be connected to motivation or motivational techniques at all. There are many other reasons why employees cannot perform effectively such as low skill-ability or environmental constraints. If these are found to be the most likely cause, interventions should focus on changing these rather than motivation.

EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS TO IMPROVE MOTIVATION AND WORK PERFORMANCE

These are some examples of motivation interventions drawing on various theories of work motivation and, in particular, the more episodic and process-oriented theories (Diefendorff & Chandler, 2011). As in the Evidence-Based HR example provided above, it is essential to match the motivation intervention to a specific and well-identified problem.

MOTIVATION INTERVENTION	PURPOSE AND **MECHANISMS**
ENHANCING THE VALUE OF GOALS	The value of a goal can be enhanced by ensuring the employee values the outcome and the outcomes consistently follow expected behaviours. The goal can also be linked to a person's needs. Goals can be linked to financial incentives, but rewards that focus on intrinsic motivation (e.g., accomplishment, recognition) are more likely to sustain motivation.
ENHANCING CONFIDENCE	Low confidence reduces the chances of an employee performing a task. Enactive mastery (trying, practicing and being successful), vicarious experience (watching others do the task) and verbal persuasion.
TASK FRAMING	Frame as approaching a positive outcome rather than avoiding a negative. Tasks can be framed as about learning rather than about performance.
OVERCOMING DIFFICULTIES IN ACTION INITIATION: Implementation intentions	Implementation intentions specify the conditions under which action will be directed toward a goal. Often designed in terms of *If/When-Then* statements such as: When it's three hours to go before the meeting starts then I will start preparing for it.
PREVENTING PREMATURE DISENGAGEMENT	Enhancing emotion control (e.g., emotion regulation to improve negative affect), motivation control (e.g., setting intermediate goals) and attention control (e.g., removing distractions).
SELF-MANAGEMENT TRAINING	A multifaceted approach emphasising a combination of strategies to improve goal-setting and goal-striving.

Another way of considering motivation interventions is by returning to the three examples of work motivation theory discussed earlier and consider interventions suggested by each theoretical approach. In every case we would have to be reasonably confident – through adopting an Evidence-Based HR approach – that the interventions suggested by the theory were appropriate to the issues identified and the organisational context.

EXAMPLE **1**

Self-determination theory
CONTENT-BASED

This theory starts with the assumption that people have three basic needs relevant to motivation. To feel:

1. Competent or effective;
2. A sense of belonging and connectedness to others;
3. Autonomy and self-determination.

It would first be necessary to evaluate the extent to which employees were currently having these needs met and, if they were not, whether this related to lower work performance. If we find that one or more needs are not being met and that this is related to lower motivation and performance then various things could be done to better meet employee needs.

For example, line managers could be trained in self-determination theory and be provided with tools and strategies for better meeting the needs of those they manage.

On a broader organisational level, Gagné *et al.,* (2022) suggest that other factors such as transformational leadership, autonomy supportive leadership, the core job dimensions from the job characteristics model and justice perceptions are positively related to need satisfaction. This suggests other forms of intervention to meet these needs including leadership and job redesign.

EXAMPLE **2**

Job characteristics model
CONTEXT-BASED

This model suggests that five core job dimensions (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback) lead to critical psychological states (e.g., experienced meaningfulness of the work) which in turn leads to outcomes such as performance and satisfaction.

An initial assessment would establish the extent to which jobs contained these core characteristics and if lower levels of these characteristics was related to work performance. If so, various job design interventions such as job enlargement, job enrichment and increasing autonomy may help to improve job characteristics which in turn may improve work performance.

EXAMPLE **3**

Goal-setting
PROCESS-BASED

According to this approach, goals are motivating if they are specific and difficult, though this depends on other factors including goal commitment, goal importance, self-efficacy and feedback.

The main focus of interventions suggested by this theoretical approach would be on the performance management process. An important starting point would be to examine how the process was currently working to identify if practices were consistent with the theory. For example, it may be that there are flaws with the ways goals are set such that they are not specific or challenging enough. In this case, training line managers and employees in how to set goals may be useful. On the other hand, it may be that employees have low self-efficacy in relation to some of the goals set. Providing more support, training in specific skills, or adopting a more coaching approach to line management may help increase self-efficacy.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper, and each of the papers in the CRF Work Psychology Series, is to provide an outline of work psychology theory and evidence relevant to an area of HR activity and consider its implications for HR practice.

The fields of motivation and work performance are very broad indeed but also fundamental to the purpose of the HR function. Motivational processes unfold over time and are shaped by a great many factors including individual characteristics, organisation culture and climate, leadership behaviours and job design, many of which can be shaped by different types of HR practice. Work performance is about employee performance that is relevant to the organisation's goals. Work performance is not just task performance but includes other types of performance such as generating innovative ideas, learning new tasks, being a good corporate citizen or 'going the extra mile'.

Understanding *why* employees are performing sub-optimally is essential, as performance issues can stem from a range of quite different factors, including unclear goals, inadequate line management, lack of self-efficacy, poor job design, or limited autonomy. By adopting an evidence-based approach, organisations can identify root causes and implement targeted strategies that enhance motivation in ways that, in turn, improve performance.

For HR functions to intervene effectively in motivational processes to improve work performance and organisational performance they need to be able to do three things:

1. Develop a reasonable understanding of the definitions of motivation and work performance, their practical implications and relevance to their particular context.
2. Develop a reasonable understanding of work motivation theories, their practical implications and relevance to their particular context.
3. Take an Evidence-Based HR approach to identifying and intervening to resolve specific work performance issues.

By applying the theories set out in this paper in a structured and context-sensitive way, organisations can develop motivation strategies that are tailored to the specific needs of employees and the unique challenges of the organisation, ultimately leading to sustained improvements in both motivation and performance.



REFERENCES

Campbell, J.P. and Wiernik, B.M. 2015. ***The Modeling and Assessment of Work Performance.*** *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior,* 2, 47-74.

Deci, E.L., Olafsen, A.H., and Ryan, R.M. 2017. ***Self-determination Theory in Work Organizations: The State of a Science.*** *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior,* 4(1), 19-43.

Diefendorff, J.M. and Chandler, M.M. 2011. ***Motivating Employees.*** In S. Zedeck (Ed.), *APA Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology,* Vol 3: Maintaining, Expanding, and Contracting the Organization. American Psychological Association.

Gagné, M., and Deci, E.L. 2005. ***Self-determination Theory and Work Motivation.*** *Journal of Organizational Behavior,* 26(4), 331-362.

Gagné, M., Parker, S.K., Griffin, M.A., Dunlop, P.D., Knight, C., Klonek, F.E., and Parent-Rocheleau, X. 2022. ***Understanding and Shaping the Future of Work with Self-determination Theory.*** *Nature Reviews Psychology,* 1(7), 378-392.

Kanfer, R., Frese, M., and Johnson, R.E. 2017. ***Motivation Related to Work: A Century of Progress.*** *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 102(3), 338.

Koopmans, L., Bernaards, C.M., Hildebrandt, V.H., Schaufeli, W.B., de Vet Henrica, C.W., and Van Der Beek, A.J. 2011. ***Conceptual Frameworks of Individual Work Performance: A Systematic Review.*** *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine,* 53(8), 856-866.

Latham, G.P., and Budworth, M.H. 2007. ***The Study of Work Motivation in the 20th Century.*** In L. L. Koppes (Ed.), *Historical Perspectives in Industrial and Organizational Psychology.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Latham, G.P., & Wexley, K.N. 2020. ***Increasing Productivity Through Performance Appraisal.*** Addison-Wesley.

Locke, E.A., and Latham, G.P. 2002. ***Building a Practically Useful Theory of Goal Setting and Task Motivation: A 35-year Odyssey.*** *American Psychologist,* 57(9), 705.

Locke, E.A., and Latham, G.P. 2004. ***What Should we do About Motivation Theory? Six Recommendations for the Twenty-first Century.*** *Academy of Management Review,* 29(3), 388-403.

Motowidlo, S.J., and Kell, H.J. 2013. ***Job Performance.*** In N. W. Schmitt, S. Highhouse, and I.B. Weiner (Eds.), *Handbook of Psychology: Industrial and Organizational Psychology,* Second Edition, 82-103. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Pinder, C.C. 1998. ***Work Motivation in Organizational Behavior.*** Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Schmidt, A.M., Beck, J.W. and Gillespie, J.Z. 2013. ***Motivation.*** In W.C. Borman, D.R. Ilgen and R.J. Klimoski (Eds), *Handbook of Psychology,* Vol 12, *Industrial and Organizational Psychology,* Second Edition. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Visser, C.F. 2017. ***The Motivation Continuum: Self-determination Theory in One Picture.*** In A Brief Introduction to the Process-Focused Approach: A Guide for Managers, Coaches, Teachers and Students.

Viswesvaran, C., and Ones, D.S. 2000. ***Perspectives on Models of Job Performance.*** *International Journal of Selection and Assessment,* 8(4), 216-226.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

These are resources you may wish to explore and use in your own work around motivation and work performance. Some provide more details of some of the key concepts already discussed in this report. Others are practical tools such as scales, measures and guidance about how to apply work motivation theories. See also the links to the main references used in the report as many of these provide further details and practical guidance.

Please contact us if you have any questions about using these resources or are looking for other resources related to motivation and work performance.

TASK PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The Modeling and Assessment of Work Performance
This article reviews models and measures of work performance.

Individual Work Performance Questionnaire Instruction Manual
A measure of task performance and also contextual performance. See below for other contextual performance measures.

CONTEXTUAL (EXTRA-ROLE OR DISCRETIONARY) PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Organizational Citizenship Behavior Checklist OCB-C
Assesses the frequency of self-reported employee organisational citizenship behaviours.

Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist CWB-C
Assesses the frequency of self-reported employee counterproductive behaviours.

INNOVATIVE WORK BEHAVIOUR MEASURES

Systematic Review of Innovative Work Behavior Concepts and Contributions
Review of definitions and concepts of innovative work behaviour.

Measuring Innovative Work Behavior
Supervisor and employee ratings of employee innovative work behaviour.

MOTIVATION MEASURES

The Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale
Measures three facets of work motivation based on self-determination theory.

The Multidimensional Work Motivation Scale
Another Self-Determination Theory based measure of work motivation validated in seven languages.

SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY

Self-determination Theory in Human Resource Development: New Directions and Practical Considerations
Article describing ways of applying self-determination theory in the workplace.

Understanding and Shaping the Future of Work with Self-determination Theory
Article outlining how self-determination is relevant to the development of technologies in the future workplace. *(Article also referenced in the report.)*

JOB AND WORK DESIGN

Beyond Motivation: Job and Work Design for Development, Health, Ambidexterity, and More
Article providing an overview of job design and its effects.

Centre for Transformative Work Design
A centre of research and practice focused on work design. Contains many practical resources for designing and redesigning work.

The Work Design Questionnaire
Assesses key job characteristics based on the Job Characteristics Model.

GOAL SETTING

Motivate Employee Performance Through Goal Setting
Article outlining practical guidance about using goal setting at work.

The Goal Setting and Goal Orientation Labyrinth: Effective Ways for Increasing Employee Performance
Article outlining practical guidance about using goal setting at work.