

A REFLECTION ON ENTRY-LEVEL EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION

William B. Grow

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INTRODUCTION.

As I meet business executives these days, the most pressing concern they raise about their organizations is the low level of motivation on the part of their newer entry-level workers. They point out the difference in attitudes between these new employees and the older veterans of the company. They are quick to point out the more rapid turnover of the former and the more dedicated commitment of the latter. They lament the disappearance of the "work ethic" and "job pride" that seemed more characteristic of recruits in the decades of the '40s, '50s and '60s. They often talk about it as a loss of traditional values.

One general manager expresses it this way: "Every new employee is here just for the pay; he says, 'Here I am; what can you give me?'" Another executive says, "In the old days you could assign a person an area of responsibility and he would do everything necessary to fulfil the job; now, for the new employee, you have to define in detail every task necessary to the job or he won't do it."

Because it is mature and thoughtful business leaders who are voicing this concern and asking for advice, it will not suffice to offer any pre-packaged solution or the prescriptions of the latest motivation guru. Instead, the subject of motivation deserves serious reflection and dialogue before guidelines become evident. Furthermore, the practical application of these guidelines will probably vary considerably from company to company. I hope this document can be a contribution to this much needed dialogue.

I. HOW IT USED TO BE: SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT.

It is quite natural to compare our present tribulation with a more pristine past, a time when things seemed better, when the work ethic was prominent, job pride evident and "traditional" values held sway. Workers must have been more highly motivated in those days, so the logic goes. But the problem of motivation is history-long and world-wide. There has probably never been a time in our human history when high motivation was a common characteristic. Many people would be surprised to learn that only a minority of colonists supported our Revolutionary War and that morale was extremely low in our Continental Army. In fact, the only battle we won in that war was the last, at Yorktown, and that victory was only possible because the French fleet blocked the harbor.

George Eliot, writing in her 1858 novel Adam Bede, has this to say about British country life at the time:

"All hands worked on in silence for some minutes, until the church clock began to strike six. Before the first stroke had died away, Sandy Jim had loosed his plane and was reaching his jacket; Wiry Ben had left a screw half driven in, and thrown his screwdriver into his tool-basket; Mum Taft, who, true to his name, had kept slience throughout the previous conversation, had flung down his hammer as he was in the act of lifting it; and Seth, too, had straightened his back, and was putting out his hand towards his paper cap. Adam alone had gone on with his work as if nothing had happened. But observing the cessation of the tools, he looked up, and said, in a tone of indignation, 'Look there now! I can't abide to see men throw away their tools i' that way, the minute the clock begins to strike, as if they took no pleasure i' their work, and was afraid o' doing a stroke too much.'"

Her description could just as well have fit an American construction site at the time.

In a similar vein, my father-in-law, when he was working as a maintenance person in a Vancouver (British Columbia) bank during the '30s and early '40s lamented the fact that he could never find a "responsible" assistant janitor. He ended up having to do all the janitorial work himself.

On a more personal note, I remember well the day in January of 1958 when I applied for an engineering job at the Boeing Airplane Company in Seattle. I never got over the fact that everyone of the other fresh recruits in my group were grumbling over the "lousy deal" they had just gotten. Because I was rather naive at the time, I found their cynicism and ingratitude absolutely appalling, especially when you consider the fact that Boeing was in the midst of laying off a large number of its workforce at that very moment.

Perhaps this can all be summed up in an old jingle that goes like this:

"My grandad in his house of logs
said things were going to the dogs.
His grandad in his old skin togs
said things were going to the dogs.
His grandad in his wooden clogs
said things were going to the dogs.
There's just one thing I can relate
those dogs have had a good long wait."

The point is, if we romanticise the past in regard to a present

felt need, we stand in danger of misinterpreting what is actually going on and what the real issue is in respect to our contemporary work force. Most likely, executives and other leaders have always had the problem of low motivation and job pride to deal with, and not only at the entry-level positions. After all, it was just this concern in the '60s that inspired Frederick Herzberg's great classic on motivation published in 1968. If highly motivated and committed employees are the exception rather than the rule, what is it that we are lamenting? If one of the primary tasks of leadership has always been to elicit motivation from plain folk, then how does that challenge present itself to us today in contrast to previous epochs? Another way of putting the question is, what are the contributing factors that shape contemporary employee attitudes today in regard to their work, especially at the level of the unskilled or low skilled high school graduate seeking his first or second job?

II. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE CHALLENGE OF MOTIVATING ENTRY-LEVEL WORKERS.

Every epoch has its unique factors that contribute to the formation of worker attitudes and behavior. As late as the 1930s, for instance, malnutrition, undernourishment and diseases such as polio and tuberculosis probably represented the single most demotivating factor in the workforce. Remember also that then we were still largely a rural agricultural nation. Many of the people who joined the workforce had no opportunity for a secondary education because they were pulled out of school early to do the farm chores. Neither of these factors are the case today. In the 1950s, cultural disparity and discrimination had a pronounced effect on worker motivation. Today this factor is against the law. Also in the '50s and '60s, higher inflation rates and accelerating living costs eroded incomes more dramatically than today and caused a different kind of motivation problem and solutions. Furthermore, probably none of the factors we are about to propose were present in any consequence in these earlier epochs.

1. A DEPENDENCY MIND-SET.

When President Roosevelt launched his welfare program in the early '30s he warned us at the time of the danger that his program could create a dependency state among the populace by robbing them of initiative. Now, over four generations of people have experienced the benefits and perils of this system. Many young people seeking entry-level jobs today are products of the welfare system. Often, their parents were, and still are, welfare recipients. I have even heard of accounts where four generations of the same family live under the same roof, all drawing welfare. It is not unusual these days to discover a teenage woman in the employment office seeking a job to support herself, her mother and her child. What do you think her primary

concern is? What can I do to help your company? Of course not. She is trying to survive, and she is absolutely dependent. On the other hand, maybe we should ask where she got the courage, the motivation, to even attempt to get a job. After all, all she has to do is keep the father of her child out of the house and she, too, can collect a welfare cheque.

One of the direct results of the welfare system is the attitude that all basic needs are perceived as rights to be granted rather than as responsibilities to be assumed. On top of this, the basic needs themselves have expanded to include many forms of fringe benefits. For many reasons this attitude has spread beyond the welfare environment to infect an entire generation of youth. Little wonder that the new employee comes to the factory door assuming that you will take care of him in every respect. It is just taken for granted by him. For those of us who have struggled hard to earn our way, this is a bitter pill to swallow.

Another companion piece to this dependency mindset that is carried over into the workplace by this employee is the sense of helplessness and powerlessness to create his own satisfaction or sense of fulfillment. Whether we name it low self-esteem or the victim image, breaking this dependency cycle remains the employer's most difficult challenge today.

2. BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENCY.

Today's youth, with or without a high school diploma, are severely handicapped in the basic skills of reading, writing and conversing, as well as in geography and elementary math. Of course, some of this has always been with us, but the scope of the problem today is disastrous. Think of all the bungled messages, the data-input errors, the urgent package sent to the wrong city, the over-paid bill due to someone's misunderstanding of percentages in the purchasing office, a receptionist's thoughtless conversation with an important client, and on and on it goes. Here is the way one analyst, writing in the January 1990 issue of Working Woman, reports on this theme:

"Recently, applicants for entry-level teller jobs at Security Pacific Corp. couldn't add and subtract well enough to balance their own checkbooks. Only 2 out of every 15 applicants for clerical positions at Michigan Bell pass the required reading and math tests. And New York Telephone had to test 60,000 applicants to fill 2,100 entry-level positions."

There are many factors that have led to this problem. Some people point their finger at the schools. Others point to the absence of parents to help with homework or offer adult conversation in the home. Many point to the lack of discipline on the part of young people. TV catches a lot of fire in its

creation of an entertainment instead of a learning mind-set among the young. Even the telephone takes the blame, as modern youth have virtually no experience at letter writing.

I'd like to add some others: I had a paper route when I was a kid. I had to calculate what people owed and collect and count their money once a week. Those kinds of jobs (or the interest in doing them) have virtually disappeared from the marketplace today. I had a stamp collection early in life and learned a lot of geography in the process. Who collects stamps today? Watch who asks for new mints the next time you are in a post office. It is not kids. How did you multiply when you were growing up? I memorized multiplication tables. I can still multiply 7x8 automatically, but try testing this out on one of your younger employees. (There are times we need to do this kind of basic calculation in spite of the availability of hand calculators.)

Regardless of the sources of this problem, the fact of the matter is that an astounding proportion of newly employed people are illiterate. This not only contributes to low self-esteem, but makes young workers defensive and sometimes aggressive as cover-ups for this deficiency. Again, employers have been dumped with the challenge of remedial education of their younger workforce whether they like it or not. This factor contributes directly to poor motivation, weak commitment and low job pride.

3. UNDEVELOPED SOLITARY AND REFLECTIVE CAPACITIES.

If you take the late '40s as the time when TV started on the road to mass popularity, then today we are in the midst of the third TV generation. TV has made its way into the lives of every American, and by the time a person has reached 17, he has been a captive audience for about 17,000 hours. Though doubtless there have been positive contributions of TV in our lives (it has raised consciousness levels and broadened our understanding of other life styles, for instance), I believe the negative ramifications of TV have done serious damage to the American mentality. Let us begin with some personal reflections.

My generation did a lot to entertain ourselves in our childhood and youth. I read novels and stories, built model planes and trains, collected stamps, played parlor games, studied piano and, later, accordion, engaged in scouting and its associated crafts and played and worked a lot outdoors either by myself or with friends. Didn't you do things like that? Apart from also spending many months in hospitals recuperating from asthma attacks, I believe I led the life of an average middle class kid. I, like so many others of my generation, had to create my own world, often in solitude. I would struggle for hours to fit some stubborn pieces of balsa together. When something broke, I had to fabricate the replacement. In the process, unknown to me at the time, I was developing the capacity to live within myself, to

know and direct my mind and my emotions. When I read Greek mythology or Grimm's fairy tales, I had to convert the words into images inside my brain and recreate the drama internally. Again unknown to me at the time, I was building my imagination and learning how to reflect, create a sense of values and process events internally. Even the radio entertainment of my youth required me to translate the audible symbols, such as "the thundering hoofbeats of the great horse Silver", into visual images inside my mind. I had to do that translation; it was not done externally for me.

I believe that TV has replaced most if not all of the self-generated entertainment described above. In place of solitary reflection has been a constant saturation of images and sounds from cradle to the first employment. It seems that contemporary youth are rarely alone with their own thoughts and often surrounded by noise. Even on the job we see situations where TV is available to the employee and Walkmans abound to protect him from the threat of silence and its accompanying introspection. TV has done all the image creation externally; the viewer is audience to a pre-canned external universe which requires of him no internal processing. He has been brainwashed since infancy in values and behaviors that he has rarely been challenged to think through for himself. Little wonder that the new entry-level employee seeks to be entertained by his job and to have others do his thinking for him. If his tasks do not entertain him, then where is the motivation to see any inherent value in them.

Furthermore, TV seems to have had a jaded effect on commitment. As Robert Bellah says in Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life,

"Since images and feelings are better communicated in this medium than ideas, television seeks to hold us, to hook us, by the sheer succession of sensations. One sensation being as good as another, there is the implication that nothing makes any difference. We switch from a quiz show to a situation comedy, to a bloody police drama, to a miniseries about celebrities, and with each click of the dial, nothing remains."

In relation to job pride and commitment, this factor of undeveloped solitary and reflective capacities is complicated even further by the fact that many supervisors and managers of entry-level personnel are also of a generation similarly effected by TV. How to undo this damage imported into the workplace remains another critical challenge for the executive who wishes to build a new level of motivation in his organization.

4. PROGRAMMING FOR IMMEDIATE GRATIFICATION IN A HIGHLY PRIVATIZED WORLD VIEW.

In the last 40 years our culture has moved into the fast lane. There is fast food, fast plastic credit, fast pain killers, fast computer response time, and so on. Add to that overnight delivery, micro-wave ovens, automatic teller machines, jet flight, quickly-resolved high tech wars, snap-together models, gender identification of the unborn infant, convenience stores, convenient sex, instant coffee and instant everything else. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with most of these "advances", yet it seems like an entire generation has been programmed for immediate gratification of desires, without the necessity of having to wait for anything. The discipline of having to wait for satisfaction of a desire, the struggle of coping with disappointment over the unmet need and the creativity of devising alternative plans and solutions for our unfulfilled hopes were once an important part of our character formation.

Christopher Lasch, writing in the December 29, 1989 issue of The New York Times, offers an interesting analysis of this phenomenon:

"The moral bottom has dropped out of our culture. Americans have no compelling incentive to postpone gratification, because they no longer believe in the future. It is the young, especially, who doubt the existence of the future. They have grown up in the shadow of nuclear war, environmental catastrophe, crime and violence, political duplicity and corruption. They do not find it easy to think that things are going to get any better. The dream of a better world collapsed in the late '60s, and nothing has taken its place. When you get beneath the surface of their cheerfulness, young people in the suburbs are just as hopeless as those in the ghetto. They, too, are tempted by drugs, vandalism, pointless violence.

I believe that young people in our society are living in a state of almost unbearable, though mostly inarticulate, agony. They experience the world only as a source of pleasure and pain. The culture at their disposal provides so little help in ordering the world that experience comes to them in the form merely of direct stimulation or deprivation, without much symbolic mediation.

To the question, 'What do they want, then?' there is only one answer in the case of people whose desires are unformed by the experience of participating in a culture larger than themselves: 'Everything.' Hence the pain carried by those who discover, too late, to modify their exorbitant demands on life, that in fact they can't have it all'."

If Lasch is correct about the loss of a viable future, then the loss of the past is even more evident in this generation. The young man or woman sitting opposite you in the employment

interview has a history that goes back to the week before, if that far. The only past he brings into the situation is a memory of being turned down from a job at the last place, or a recollection of the last unpleasant encounter he had. Does he sit there with the confidence bred in the pride in the soldiers, kings or pioneers of his ancestry? More likely, he is straining to cover up a sense of shame over a recent embarrassing event in his home. Does he feel within himself the support of his childhood heroes cheering him on? More likely, he has just seen on TV the toppling of one of his heroes in a news release. Does his countenance reveal a man who has stood in victory with the Greeks at Marathon, with the English at Agincourt and with Robert the Bruce at Bannockburn? More likely, it betrays him smarting from his latest defeat.

Such a truncated historical reference frame, the amnesia in reference to the past and hopelessness in relation to the future, combined with our culture's relentless downbeat on private happiness, personal ambition and glamorous promises of consumer goods, have conspired to condition this generation's world-view around two over-riding realities: "now" and "me". Although there are certainly exceptions to this general narcissism in our new workforce, the task of leadership in drawing its employees out of their private and immediate world to focus on client service and performance excellence is formidable.

5. ACCLIMATIZATION TO TEMPORARY AND SUPERFICIAL RELATIONSHIPS.

It is amazing that today's youth have the degree of human relations skills they do have, because everything in our culture works against it. You know the litany: broken families (sometimes several times over), frequent changing of residence and schools, isolated living in the suburbs or in the urban housing complex, repetitive live-in relations, impermanent job situations, and the rapid shifting of TV images before our eyes.

Young people today are skeptical about engaging in any relationship in depth, so their friendships are largely utilitarian. They are either postponing or abandoning the institution of marriage. The gap between the idealized family and the sore reality has imparted feelings of anger, mistrust and even betrayal toward parents and, by extension, toward all adults and institutions. In regard to company loyalty, hear what Michael Mantell writes in his 1994 book, Ticking Bombs, Defusing Violence in the Workplace:

"The days of starting your career with one company fresh out of high school or college and staying there through your retirement seem long gone. Even civil service positions or military service - historically known as 'cradle to grave' employment situations - are falling victim to the 'downsizing' axe.

The face of long-time employment has changed. Employees either change jobs on their own volition, or the job ends and they are then forced to seek other work. Because working for some company - as opposed to being self-employed - involves this constant risk of layoffs or other terminations, it's difficult for employees to feel very loyal to a firm that may give them a pink slip within the next week or month.

Business owners and executives who criticize the average American worker as disloyal should place themselves in their shoes. How can you ask for loyalty to a company that does not reciprocate it?"

This overwhelming experience of transitory and shallow relationships among youth (and many adults) today creates a prohibitive atmosphere when a person attempts to form a more profound and lasting covenant or tries to demonstrate his care in a situation, whether at work or in his community. Not only must he buck the teasing or cynicism of his peers, but he even risks a lawsuit against him if he should intervene in a situation out of his concern. In spite of this cultural opposition, I believe today's youth carry within them a great deal of care, and that it is often frustrated and expressed as anger, which is one of the faces of passion.

Once again, I feel we cannot overlook the powerful influence of television in this matter. Whether TV is more a reflection of American culture or more an influence on it is an irrelevant question when we are faced with the following evidence in Robert Bellah's Habits of the Heart:

"But television operates not only with a complete disconnectedness between successive programs. Even within a single hour or half-hour program, there is extraordinary discontinuity. Commercials regularly break whatever mood has built up with their own, often very different, emotional message. Even aside from commercials, television style is singularly abrupt and jumpy, with many quick cuts to other scenes and other characters. Dialogue is reduced to clipped sentences. No one talks long enough to express anything complex. Depth of feeling, if it exists at all, has to be expressed in a word or a glance.

The form of television is intimately related to the content. Except for the formula situation comedies (and even there, divorce is increasingly common), relationships are as brittle and shifting as the action of the camera. Most people turn out to be unreliable and double-dealing. Where strong commitments are portrayed, as in police dramas, they are only between buddies, and the envioning atmosphere, even within the police force, is one of mistrust and

suspicion."

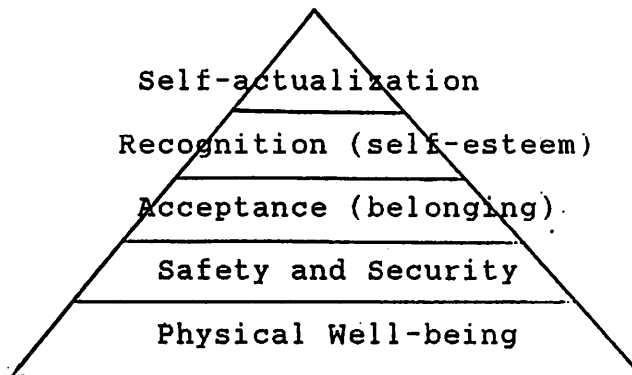
If we want our organizational culture to inspire responsible and quality workmanship, devotion to tasks and a depth community spirit, all of which are marks of a motivated workforce, this dreadful addiction to temporary and superficial relationships must be addressed.

III. CLASSICAL 20TH C. MOTIVATION MODELS.

It must be stated emphatically at the outset, that no one can prescribe for an organization what is best for it to do to meet its motivation challenge. It is only in close, participative sharing with the organization that external wisdom and resources can be helpful in solving this problem.

There does exist classical research in this area that can serve at least as theoretical guidelines for an organization. Yet even classical wisdom must be modified over time and in new circumstances. The most famous work on motivation in this century centers on two important American psychologists, Abraham Maslov and Fredrick Herzberg. Let us first take a brief look at their principle contributions.

Abraham Maslov (1908-1970) is noted particularly for his seminal theory of the motivational hierarchy of inborn needs (or, simply, the Needs Pyramid), as shown below:



Maslov's conclusions, from scientific behavioral studies in the 1950s, showed that the first level of motivation occurs in respect to physiological needs. A person's basic physical needs for food, clothing and shelter had to be satisfied first. Only when they are fulfilled, can the needs of the next level become the paramount motivation (income security, health insurance, etc). Then, only when these are met can the person be motivated to seek satisfaction at the level of social affiliation needs (belonging to a group with shared values, beliefs and concerns). Once these needs are satisfied, the need for self-esteem becomes the next motivator. This need is fulfilled by feeling good about yourself as a result of recognition and praise from others for

your quality of work. Finally, once you develop self-esteem, you are motivated by the need for self-actualization, the innate yearning to become all that we can be in life.

This model has provided a useful guideline during the last 30 years, one of its gifts being the acknowledgement that you can't focus on motivation at, say, level three, if levels one and two are not satisfied. The problem in applying this model today is that most new employees already consider their needs of the first two levels (and often the 3rd level as well) as their rights rather than their responsibility. As long as this mentality exists, based largely on the dependency mind-set and the voracious appetite for immediate gratification discussed earlier, the young employee can never be finally satisfied at these basic levels because these needs are unfulfillable in terms of his own demands. This is one reason why so many employers find that giving bonuses to employees has such little impact on performance. If this is the case, then do we not have a very pessimistic prognosis, with the vast majority of our young employees plateaued forever around level two?

Fredrick Hertzberg's motivational theory can help us out of this dilemma. Again through scientific methods in the 1960s, he developed his model of two factors: motivators and dissatisfiers, as listed below in the order of most impact:

Motivators

Achievement
Recognition
The work itself
Responsibility
Advancement
Growth

Dissatisfiers

Company policy and administration
Supervision
Relationship with supervisor
Work conditions
Compensation
Relationship with peers

According to Hertzberg, the items listed under motivators have a direct impact on motivation, while, on the other hand, the items in the dissatisfiers list have little or no effect on motivation once they are satisfied. For example, an organization's poor personnel policies will cause dissatisfaction, but good policies can only create satisfaction, not motivation. Furthermore, your satisfaction threshold - for instance, your idea of a good salary - rises over time, making dissatisfaction a strong possibility in the future.

The gift in Hertzberg's model is that it helps us to focus on the real motivating factors and not get lost in trying to manipulate the dissatisfiers (which Hertzberg calls "hygiene factors") to gain a motivation increase. The problem here is not a problem with the model but how to implement the motivators knowing that the character of the young employee is such that he may never be satisfied, regardless of how well the dissatisfying factors are

ameliorated. For example, we have seen how so much of contemporary relationships among the young are marked by transience and shallowness. How can doing anything to improve peer relationships on the job bring any real satisfaction as long as the overriding cultural style is such an obstacle? Therefore, the real issue is, how can young people be motivated in spite of the fact they cannot be satisfied. If history is any guide, then we know this can be done, for it is the story of every famous achiever: highly motivated and perpetually dissatisfied. Therefore, how do we do it?

IV. PRACTICAL APPROACHES TO MOTIVATING THE ENTRY-LEVEL WORKFORCE.

With the simultaneous break-down of so many of our traditional social structures, family, schools, government and religious institutions that separate piety from the real world, the workplace remains one of the hopeful areas that can lead the way in personal and societal transformation. It has the physical, technical and financial resources, the intact command structures, a very focussed mission and, most significant, people spend most of their waking time in their jobs.

As we explore practical approaches to motivation, we should keep in mind the principle factors that we are suggesting influence entry-level workers: (1) dependency mind-set, (2) basic skills deficiency, (3) undeveloped solitary and reflective capacities, (4) programming for immediate gratification in a highly privatized world view, and (5) acclimatization to temporary and superficial relationships. The following approaches do not necessarily match these challenges one-on-one, however the combined action of these approaches does seek to address them all.

1. RESPONSIBLE EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION.

A useful rule of thumb is that any entry-level worker who is to be directly affected by an operational decision should be brought in on the decision-making process for the change, and as close to the initial planning stage as feasible. There do exist extenuating circumstances (such as issues of confidentiality or personality considerations) that could preclude participation. One of the ramifications of this action is that line supervisors and department managers are going to have to be helped, at the same time, to reimage their role in the organization as coaches, mentors and facilitators instead of assuming the traditional function of gate-keepers in the hierarchy. The aim of such participation is to promote a sense of ownership within the workforce. One of the greatest sources of job pride comes from a person's knowledge that he owns his work rather than feeling his labor is owned by the company. This means he is out to please himself as well as his supervisor, which can be a big victory for

motivation. One of the by-products of such participation is that many typical communication problems are ameliorated in the process.

Another level of responsibility involved in participation has to do with the degree of responsibility the worker has in implementing his tasks. Hertzberg has spelled out succinctly what he means by responsibility as a motivation factor: self-scheduling (sometimes called agenda-control), authority to communicate (laterally and vertically in the organization), control of his resources, and self-accountability. What would this mean for a nurse's aide whose major tasks are making beds and seeing to the comfort of the patient in a hospital or nursing home?

According to Hertzberg's criteria of responsibility, she should manage the scheduling of her tasks (and check it with her supervisor if necessary); she should have the authority to talk directly to an aide on another floor if she needs assistance in an emergency, and she should know she has the freedom to express her ideas to upper management without penalty as long as she uses discretion and integrity in the process; she should have the kind of control over her materials (sheets, towels, etc) so she doesn't have to fight a supply bureaucracy every day; and she should be trusted to hold herself accountable to the checklists and other instruments of control necessary to monitor the quality and efficiency of her service (in fact, it would be highly desirable if she could participate in the design and modifications of these instruments). Of course, such responsible participation doesn't happen by permission alone; it also requires constant contexting and training, which is the subject of our second approach.

2. RE-IMAGING THE WORKPLACE AS A LEARNING ORGANIZATION.

A lot has been written about the workplace of the '90s as a learning organization. David Garvin of the Harvard Business School, writing in the July-August 1993 Harvard Business Review, gives the following working definition of a learning organization:

"A learning organization is an organization skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights."

He goes on to say that, "these organizations are skilled in five main activities: systematic problem solving, experimenting with new approaches, learning from their own experience and past history, learning from the experiences and best practices of others and transferring knowledge quickly and efficiently throughout the organization."

The speed of change and need for constant flexibility and adaptation practically mandates this approach in any contemporary organization. In fact, the failure of the big three auto makers to recognize this in the decade of the '70s led to the ruination of Detroit. I believe this re-imaging must be taken so seriously that when the new entry-level worker is hired, he must be encouraged to understand that he is entering school, not leaving school behind to start a job. Listen to how one of the largest HMO's in the U.S. does this:

"U.S. Healthcare's training begins with the Image Building department, a new employee's first stop within the company and a hub to which employees return at many points thereafter.

The new employees' 30-day training is conducted partly in classrooms equipped with computers and partly under supervision within the work group. At the end of the 30-day period new hires are back in Image Building, studying the company's mission, products and position within the marketplace in greater depth so that they understand what their own jobs contribute to the big picture."

The additional challenge of integrating entry-level people with insufficient basic skills has prompted some organizations to do remedial education within the workplace. Aetna Life & Casualty Insurance Company inaugurated an innovative program in 1989 called Hire and Train, in which severely underqualified applicants are hired to be trained for entry-level jobs, such as claims processor. The workers, who test from a 6th grade to a 12th grade level, are enrolled in four to eight weeks of classes in writing, math and word processing. Because most never have worked in a corporate environment before, they also take classes in a course called "The World of Work", covering topics such as how to talk on the telephone and how to handle a boss. Listen to the story of one of their early grads of these programs as told by Pamela Kruger in "A Game Plan for the Future" (from Working Woman, January 1990):

"Marva Greenfield, a native of Jamaica, has surpassed Aetna's hopes. A high-school dropout whose previous work experience was as a limbo dancer at hotels in her homeland, a cruise-line steward and a sales clerk, Greenfield now processes applications for Aetna policies. Her job involves keeping abreast of complicated state regulations, working on computers and writing business letters.

Greenfield, 24, recently obtained her high-school equivalency diploma and now is considering going to college through Aetna's tuition-assistance program. 'As a black woman, I never thought I would get an opportunity like this,' says Greenfield. 'Who would have wanted little me -

a high-school dropout who had no experience? Now I say I can work anywhere. I can do anything.'"

But the learning organization doesn't stop with inhouse training programs. It means reimagining every person in the organization as a learner and a teacher. Every contact in the company takes place in an atmosphere that is promoting learning and instructing. And nobody makes a better teacher than the client, whether an internal or external client. Listen to a health worker's own testimony which was related to me in June 1994:

"I became the top aide in the nursing home where I worked. Do you know how I did it? When I was just starting out, I went up to make a bed for a woman who was very ill. She said, 'Oh I hope you won't hurt me like the other ones have.' I had never changed a bed for a person this ill. I said, 'Tell me how to do it so it won't hurt you.' She said, 'First put up the rail on the side. Now pull the draw sheet as far as you can. Now reach over me and get the other end of the draw sheet and pull it so I roll over toward the rail. Good. I'll hold onto the rail. Now go to the other side and untuck the sheet and push it toward me as far as you can. Put the new sheet on and tuck it in and cover as much of the bed as you can. Now put the rail up on that side. Stay on that side and reach over and pull the draw sheet and I will roll with it until I can hold the rail on that side. Now you can pull out the draw sheet and the old bottom sheet as well as spread the new sheet on the other side. See, you've done it without poking or squeezing or pulling me! Thanks!'"

3. JOB ENRICHMENT.

There are two principle types of job enrichment, horizontal job loading and vertical job loading. According to Hertzberg, horizontal job loading in its traditional application "merely enlarges the meaninglessness of the job." He claims it does this by (1) increasing the amount of production expected, (2) adding a second meaningless task to the existing one (usually some routine clerical activity), (3) rotating the assignments of a number of jobs that need to be enriched (like washing dishes for a while, then washing silverware), and (4) removing the most difficult parts of the assignment in order to free the worker to accomplish more of the less challenging assignments. Many are the managers who unintentionally fall into this trap in the attempt to do job enrichment.

Vertical job loading, on the other hand, means focussing on the existing tasks, their purpose and efficacy in relation to the client, the manner in which they are performed, the latitude the worker has in performing them, and the efficiency of the steps themselves. It involves what Michael Hammer calls "re-

engineering work". Similar in approach to Hammer, but less draconian (Hammer insists "Don't automate; obliterate") is the highly respected thinking of Peter Drucker. In the November-December 1991 Harvard Business Review article "The New Productivity Challenge", Drucker offers five helpful steps in vertical job enrichment:

First, ask the questions "What is the task?", "What are we trying to accomplish?" and "Why do it at all?" A productivity increase, and corresponding increase in job pride, will happen by eliminating what does not need to be done, especially when it causes "splintered attention". For example, the bank teller of a small branch who has to double as an analyst's phone receptionist at the height of the lunchtime rush on the bank.

Secondly, cure the problem of unnecessary tasks by focussing on the client (in the case of the teller, an external client). One solution would be to get the analyst an answering machine so the teller can concentrate on her main job. The questions to ask here are "What do we pay for?" and "What value is this task supposed to add?"

Thirdly, define what you mean by performance. For some workers it means quality; for service workers it is generally a mixture of quality and quantity. The performance of jobs like filing, handling death claims in an insurance company and making (empty) hospital beds is generally measured primarily by quantity. The question here is "What works?" Then, the steps of the job must be analyzed in detail and a simple job flow designed. (The re-engineering advocates insist there is no existing job immune from such scrutiny.) I would like to add at this step an observation by my colleague John Epps, who is a consultant in Malaysia. He says that it is important to define the job in such depth, disclosing the inherent value in each task, so that the worker can stake his integrity on it. No job is trivial.

Fourthly, management should form a partnership with the workers with the aim of building responsibility for production and performance into every service task. The workers' knowledge of their job is the starting point for improving productivity, quality and performance. Drucker insists, "It is the only way!".

Fifthly, treat the organization as a continuous learning and teaching place. Drucker recognizes that you learn most when you teach, therefore it behooves the entry-level worker to inform and explain to management what is working and what could be modified, as this employee is almost always closest to the external client.

Recommendations such as these have been shown to give an aura of professional expertise to the most menial of tasks and proven to raise workers' self respect and pride in their work.

4. CONSTRUCT AN APPRECIATIVE ENVIRONMENT.

This is the simplest yet probably the most important approach of all in respect to motivation. Nothing works more magic in a person's life than a complement, a word of appreciation or a simple acknowledgement. Put yourself in the place of a receptionist who has been bombarded by customer complaints for three hours. Her manager happens to overhear some of her patient and helpful responses to these calls and makes a point of saying to her on his way out of the office, "Barbara, I'm really impressed with the way you're handling those calls." Can you imagine what that mean't to her? Are you also aware that most managers in most companies in every nation of the world fail to be this thoughtful most of the time? Lost motivation opportunities abound because of this failure. All of the most ingenious and costly incentive and award programs in the world lack the power of an appreciative environment.

The only thing to beware of in this approach are the twin dangers of paternalism and false praise. If appreciation is delivered in a patronizing manner, to maintain control of the employee, or is undeserved, then it only feeds resentment and cynicism. The best way to avert this is just to think twice before offering praise.

After that is considered, don't let a single day go by without some word of appreciation! (And if you're too shy to do this, just remember what it mean't once upon a time in your own life.)

5. COMPREHENSIVE CAREER PATH PLANNING.

One of the saddest realities of our times is the erosion of the concept of vocation, that one's life is purposeful enough to be endowed with a sense of calling to a significant life task. The almost total disappearance of this self-understanding among today's youth is bound up with the loss of the future described above in the contributing factor number four. As long as one views his life as a fated circumstance rather than as a destinal journey, motivation can never soar to the level of Maslov's self-actuating person. Perhaps a recovery of vocation in our times can be effected in the kind of intentional conversations with workers that enable them to work through their illusions, share their accomplishments and explore new vistas of opportunities and advancement in the workplace.

This does not mean the type of advancement that specifies predetermined steps up a ladder that leads to the fabled retirement package that allows a person finally to devote himself to what he has postponed wanting to do for 40 years. In the first place, there is diminishing room at the top and in the mid-levels of organizations as a result of the massive (and permanent) downsizing and restructuring that is the trend in global business. In the second place, who says advancement, one

of the important motivators, has to be only vertical and only monetary?

I met a woman recently who coordinates a "total quality" program in a network of banks in a Georgia city. She started out 12 years ago as a young teller, got some experience in the accounts department, then worked as secretary to the bank president, then did some time as an administrative sales assistant. None of these shifts represented much, if any, vertical movement in the bank. But, as she herself acknowledges, her lateral experience has made her one of the most knowledgeable and effective members of the staff. Now she has been entrusted, not with a management position (which she could measure up to by anyone's standards), but with probably a more important role in the company, that of seeing to a quality transformation within the workplace. She is a bright, shining picture of motivation, commitment and job pride. I believe the next time I see her I could have a conversation with her about vocational journey and servant leadership which she would understand. I feel that particular bank group has the acumen to guide her to ever more comprehensive responsibilities in her career, expanding the horizons of her usefulness and compensating her justly without ever having to lock her onto the slippery ladder of success.

Careful mentoring, which includes well planned dialogue and constant contexting, is the key to guiding employees on this journey. Given the current attitudes of entry-level workers, at some point very early in the employee's relationship to the organization, perhaps even at his initial orientation, there is need for a "reality check". It might go something like this simulation:

"There are now 10 of you in this group. Three of you will make it. You will perform well on your jobs, gain pride in your work, be advanced in the company and enjoy a fulfilling career with us. Seven of you will leave. You will eliminate yourselves through boredom, anger, impatience or laziness. 75% of those of you who leave will find your next job to be just the same, and you will go on at entry-levels for the remainder of your lives. Two of you will become unemployable and will join the ranks of the marginalized people of our society. You can choose which way it will be; it's entirely your decision. I'm letting you know this now just in case the principle speaker at your high-school graduation forgot to mention it. So, welcome to Southern Mills and good luck!"

6. CREATE EVENTFULNESS IN THE WORK ROUTINE.

It has been said many times over that "the routine kills." Some routine is always necessary for the responsible fulfillment of jobs, but it has been found, for example, that motivation

increases among electrical power workers during storms that cause power outages. This kind of emergency seems to draw the best out of people, which has been proven time and again in our history, nationally and locally. If eventfulness is such an important catalyst in our lives, then why is it not structured more into the life of the organization? There is no end to the possibilities, beginning with the following list of ideas:

- a. Celebrate surprise birthdays and anniversaries in the workplace.
- b. Have an "anything can happen Tuesday" several times a year. Employees can do anything they want short of sabotaging the operations or harming someone. They could handcuff the president and lock him up for 3 hours, then make him guest of honor at a champaign and steak feast at 1 p.m. Or, a better idea might be to treat all the employees, suppliers, visitors and customers in the waiting room to an all-day banquet.
- c. Plan a work day where the entire staff puts a new coat of paint on the factory. Everyone comes to work dressed to paint. Someone is assigned to be a clown and make the rounds, or some other kind of fun during the event can be designed.
- d. The staff members throw a party for senior citizens in the community and even show them how to do some of their jobs.
- e. Have a "greening of the offices" day, with everyone bringing some kind of plant or small tree to place around in the company.
- f. Form the company into two shifts, morning and afternoon, and do an all-day town clean-up project.
- g. Do a "crazy-gift" exchange among all the employees one day after drawing names the week before. Try it in August instead of at the expected Christmas party.

People care, regardless of how proficient they have become in covering it up. Eventfulness takes people's defenses by surprise and can liberate them to be creative and resourceful. The key to making an event a success is the participation of everybody in its implementation. Surprising as it may seem, this is likely one of the places where young, entry-level staff have the least inhibitions and the most creativity. Eventfulness is an excellent integrater and motivator. Try it out!

7. SUPPLEMENT THE FORMAL COMMAND STRUCTURES WITH INFORMAL DYNAMICS.

Formal, vertical command structures are essential to any operation, no matter how much we try to disguise the hierarchical nature of this reality by flattening or even inverting the organization's triangle. But reality is also equally a lateral relationship. Informal, horizontal communication and interchange

exist whether or not they are encouraged in an organization. These informal structures almost always act as more effective communication channels than the official ones. Why not set them up intentionally rather than leave them by default to be manipulated by the instigators of gossip or complaints?

Informal structures should be understood as strategies for excellence, not as ends in themselves. They offer many alternative ways of getting work done and the mission accomplished. They also offer opportunities of engaging personnel so that their expertise can be better shared in an organization. Furthermore, there are informal structures that go beyond the company and link employees and the entire company with the external world in broadening and motivating ways. Informal structures don't have to compete with the formal command structures. They act as essential complements to hierarchical responsibility. Here are examples of some popular and some not so well known informal structures available to organizations:

a. The team. This is a semi-permanent job-related structure, essentially with a geographic locus in the company, which can be revised when necessary. Its objective is to enable the ongoing work to be accomplished better by providing a support and resource mechanism. Quality Circles are one familiar form that the team dynamic takes. The highly-touted team concept used in the GM Saturn project in Tennessee is well known and effective so far, but it runs the risk there of becoming a formal command structure itself and losing its strategic value of informality. In our work in Brazil, we experimented with a unique team management approach in the branch office of an insurance company to overcome the rigid nature of the formal structures that promoted only upward loyalty and discouraged all avenues of lateral cooperation. The result was an enormous rise in motivation, and hence productivity, all the way to the entry-level people.

b. The forum. This is, essentially, the town meeting dynamic held on the factory floor. It is usually a one-day event organized not to air complaints publically (a common misunderstanding of the town meeting) but to build a company vision, identify the challenges and propose new directions for the organization. It involves, literally, everybody in the company on an equal basis at the same time (or, in the case of a large company, it can be done by departments or branch offices and the work integrated by a special plenary committee). It's objective is to create "alignment" of employees to the company mission. Its many fruitful by-products include motivation and the building of trust within the organization. Forums can be less ambitious than this.

c. Task force. This must not be confused with the team dynamic. It is a temporary group usually of 3-5 people often from widely

different departments and all levels of the organization focussed on solving as quickly as possible a particular operations-related problem. It should be dissolved as soon as the task is done. The SWAT unit is a good holding image for the task force.

d. The commission. This is a temporary group formed from across the company to deal with exceptional subjects usually related to company policy, such as forming human resources guidelines. It usually takes longer to accomplish its mission than a task force and can be reconvened (often with new members) at some future date to follow up on the implementation stage of its proposals. One of the most interesting applications of the creative edge of the commission dynamic is taking place where companies are forming partnerships with local high-schools to offer internships and other skills training links with an eye to developing the pool of future entry-level recruits. One such pioneering program designed for non-college bound students that has been "a roaring success" in the eyes of the insurance industry was initiated in 1989 by Mariellen Whelan, president of the Insurance Society of Philadelphia. (See the article, "A Game Plan for the Future", in the January 1990 issue of Working Woman, p. 76.). Just imagine what it could do for self-esteem and motivation to include some of your entry-level personnel on a commission to explore such a school linkage in your community.

e. The council. This is a permanent informal body with rotating membership. It can be appointed, but it is usually better to compose it more democratically through company-wide election. It is focussed on monitoring and making recommendations to the top management in regard to themes such as continued quality control, community relations and other executive advisory areas. It is important to have safeguards built into this dynamic so it does not become a politicized group competing for power with the formal command structures.

f. The guild. This is a profession or vocation-based organization with a long and distinguished history in civilization. Every craftsman of England belonged to his own special guild in the 16th century. The drapers guild still goes by its original name, "Brethren and Sisters of the Fraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Mystery of Drapers of the City of London." Oglethorpe was sponsored by a guild when he came from England to form the colony of Georgia. The American Medical Association is a guild dynamic. For many unskilled or semi-skilled people in the U.S., the labor union movement looked, in part, like it was substituting for the missing guild dynamic in those fields, and in the more comprehensive unions we can find the guild emphasis on quality workmanship, apprentice training, vocational journeying, achievement recognition and the promotion of meetings and networks to ennoble the sharing and work of entry-level and trades people. The door of creativity is wide open today for the creation of informal groupings within and

between companies such as a secretary guild, or better, "The Colquitt Chapter of the Exalted Association of Administrative Assistants," or how about this for janitors: "The Middle Flint Chapter of the Illustrious Order of Home and Office Beauticians," and so on. Such experimentation with informal structures like the guild for entry-level personnel may well be a hallmark of the next 20 years.

g. The think tank. This is a temporary group of people with their minds "wired together" under pressure and with minimal supervision to think up a new product, a technological innovation, an organizational structure or new advertising strategies, etc. Its primary objective is the creation of new company wisdom, not the solution of a problem (although a problem might be solved as one by-product of the process). One of the more famous manifestations of the think tank dynamic in the last 20 years was the succession of "Skunk works" at such major companies as 3M, General Electric, IBM and Texas Instruments that resulted in the invention of many recent technological innovations. Do you need to do something soon to get your organization off a plateau? Do you need to get your people quickly on top of the fast developing technology in your industry? Do you need to project your own company "megatrends" for the next decade? Then the think tank is a useful informal tool. It is also where an entry-level worker might catch a vision of his life vocation.

h. The academy. Many companies are picking up on the learning organization image and initiating special education ventures within their organizations. The courses can be of a technical or general (academic) education nature, or both. The objective can be the upgrade of intellectual capacities, the improvement of technical or job-related competencies, or even remedial literacy tutoring. The coming renaissance in American culture could gain a big impetus from this kind of grass-roots company-level reconstruction of Plato's civilization creating instrument known as the Academy.

i. The core. This informal structure is a small group of staff (3-5 members) who meet regularly to plan how to guide the organization into the future. The core dynamic often happens by the coincidental confluence of dedicated persons who are mutually concerned about the nature and destiny of the company. Sometimes the core is intentionally formed. Obviously, the core should be composed in part by the top formal leadership of the organization, but there have been cases where the core arose from the lower echelons as a response to dehumanizing and despotic leadership. I have been involved in the work of such a core in a major multinational's foreign subsidiary where we were able to influence a shift in the leadership style at the top through the careful planning in a core. But this is an unusual example. In practice, every organization already has its own informal core

operating. The question is, does it exist to bring comprehensive and futuristic benefit to the organization or only to satisfy the selfish interests of some disgruntled employees. If it is the later, then it must be replaced or superceded by the former.

This is a sampling of some of the most important informal groupings within an organization. Remember that they are strategic dynamics, not ends in themselves, and that they are essential for building a motivated and committed workforce.

8. BUILD AN ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT AT EVERY LEVEL.

One of the great contributions to organizational development theory in the decades of the '70s and '80s was the concept of the manager as entrepreneur. This came at a time when diversification was the key to survival, and many companies encouraged their managers to create new businesses, or at least new processes and techniques, within their main business. It was a time of converting cost centers to profit centers. Training departments in large companies, like Xerox, Citibank and IBM, became profitable consultants selling their expertise to other companies, and so on.

Why not expand on this insight and push the entrepreneurial spirit all the way down to the entry-level? For instance, retirement home service workers could engage the elderly in story-telling and drama presentations, charging admission for the local community. They could even take such a show "on the road." Another thing they could do is teach a team of elders how to do data entry into a computer and manage mailing lists for local businesses. They could use the same computer to publish their own stories that could be sold on the market. A group of secretaries in a small manufacturing company could start a singing trio, write their own music, perform at public relations functions to promote the image of the company, and sell a tape or video of their performance, with the proceeds going to a special company community service fund. Almost any research done as a part of an organization's daily operation is also marketable information. The utilization of think tanks throughout the organization could get you started, and the possibilities are endless.

V. CONCLUSION.

As a conclusion, I would like to quote from an article by my colleague, John Epps:

"'You cannot motivate anyone. Real motivation comes from inside.' This is a true statement and is well expressed by Tom Peters and Nancy Austin in their superb best selling book, Passion for Excellence. It's corollary, however, is not 'Nothing can be done about motivation'; nor is it 'All

you can do is to hire motivated people.' Indeed, the whole of their book is a documentation of how sensitive companies do provide an atmosphere and structures that call forth commitment and creativity."

I hope that this document can be helpful in trying to understand and to apply the reality that Peters and Austin discovered in excellent organizations.