

Nurturing human motivation for sustained high performance

V.S. Mahesh

Director, The centre for Service Management



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The objectives of the research

- Through primary research, identify
 - the conditions under which *Volkswagen UK* employees perform at their best
 - The frequency with which employees experienced such conditions – age-wise, department-wise, etc
- To interpret primary research results using my *East-West model of Motivation*
 - Ref. “*Thresholds of Motivation: The corporation as a nursery for human growth*”, Tata McGraw-Hill, 1993
- To recommend to VW –UK specific actions to be taken to improve and sustain high levels of motivation and performance across the Group

Primary Research

- VW (UK) agreed to let me test my model
 - A Polish research student, Petya carried out the field research under my supervision
- 50% of VW employees were sent questionnaires to fill
- This questionnaire was developed based on preliminary interviews and secondary research
- A fundamentally different approach from assessing employee “satisfaction”, which the other 50% were subjected to.

Highest percentage of employees felt the following when they were performing at their best

- 82.3% - I was allowed to take decisions when needed
- 80% - I had genuine interest in my task and derived enjoyment from just doing it well
- 75.4% - There was clarity on what my goals were
- 73.8% - I was working very hard (and under pressure)
- 70% - I knew that my achievements would provide me with an opportunity to grow and develop myself
- 63.1% - I felt an integral part of a cohesive team
- 60.8% - I was a member of a small team characterised by mutual respect and trust
- 60% - My manager struck the right balance between guidance and freedom

The statements with lowest scores

- 7.7% - I knew that failure in this job could lead to loosing my job
 - In other words, fear was not the driving force at all!
- 9.2% - I was working by myself and not as part of a team
 - So much for the so-called individualistic society of the west!
- 10.8% - It was a stress free period
 - Most employee satisfaction survey promoters would look at this as a terrible negative score!
- 13.1% - The most important reason for my performance was the financial gains that would come as a result of it
 - And yet, most organisations believe that incentives and pay for performance are keys for improved performance!

The VW list matches my earlier research findings (>20,000 people in 4 continents)

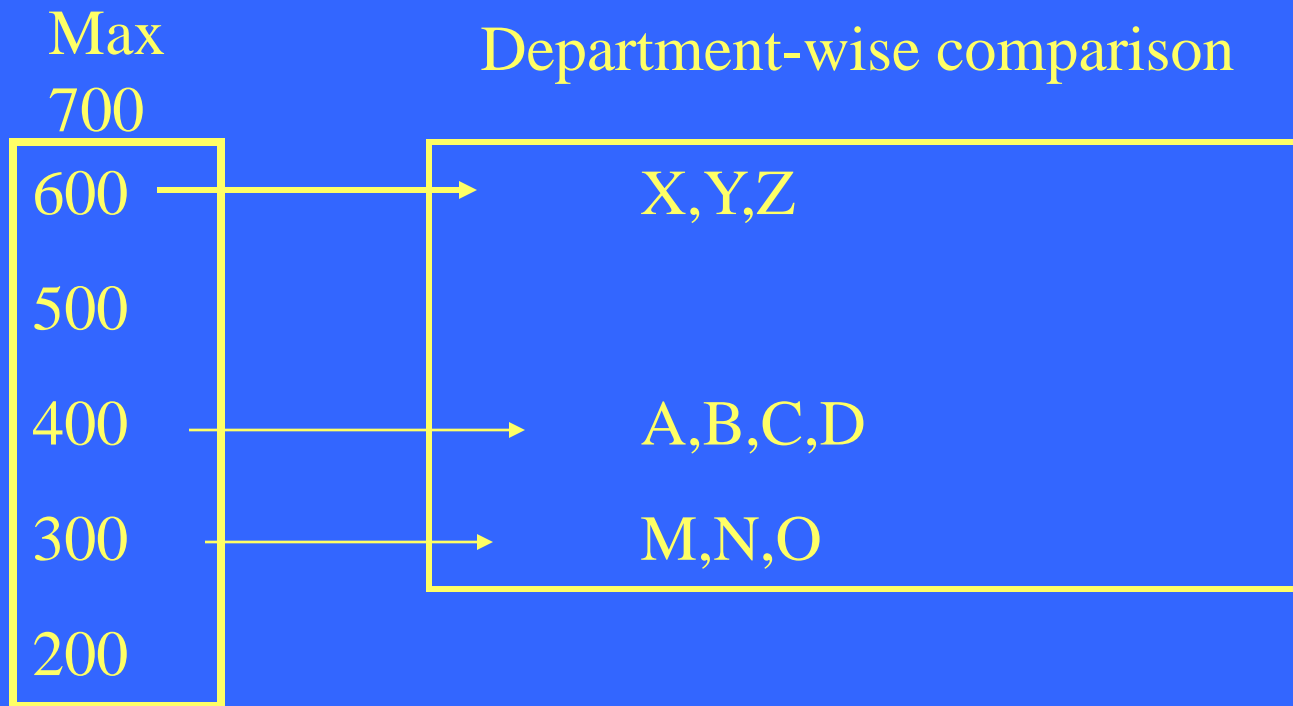
- Most people perform at their best when the following conditions are met:
 - Pressure induced by a challenge
 - Clear, non-negotiable targets
 - Knowledge of importance of target to overall target of organisation
 - Freedom to work out how to achieve the tough target
 - A feeling of one's accountability to role and team achievement
 - Camaraderie and trust amongst peer group
 - A supportive boss who lets go without abdicating responsibility
 - Recognition rather than rewards
 - Team achievement more important than individual achievement
 - Prime motivation intrinsic and no thoughts whatsoever for rewards

These findings are consistent with **Karma Yoga** as well:
Here is a transliteration and translation of Stanza 19,
Chapter III, *The Bhagwad Gita*

- *tasmad asaktah satatmam*
karyam karma samacara
asakto hy acarana karma
param apnoti purusah
- Therefore, do you always without attachment, perform action which should be done, for performing action without attachment man reaches the Supreme

Getting back to VW, we also carried out an Inter-departmental comparison

- Overall motivation levels of departments



Correlation between length of service and Motivation

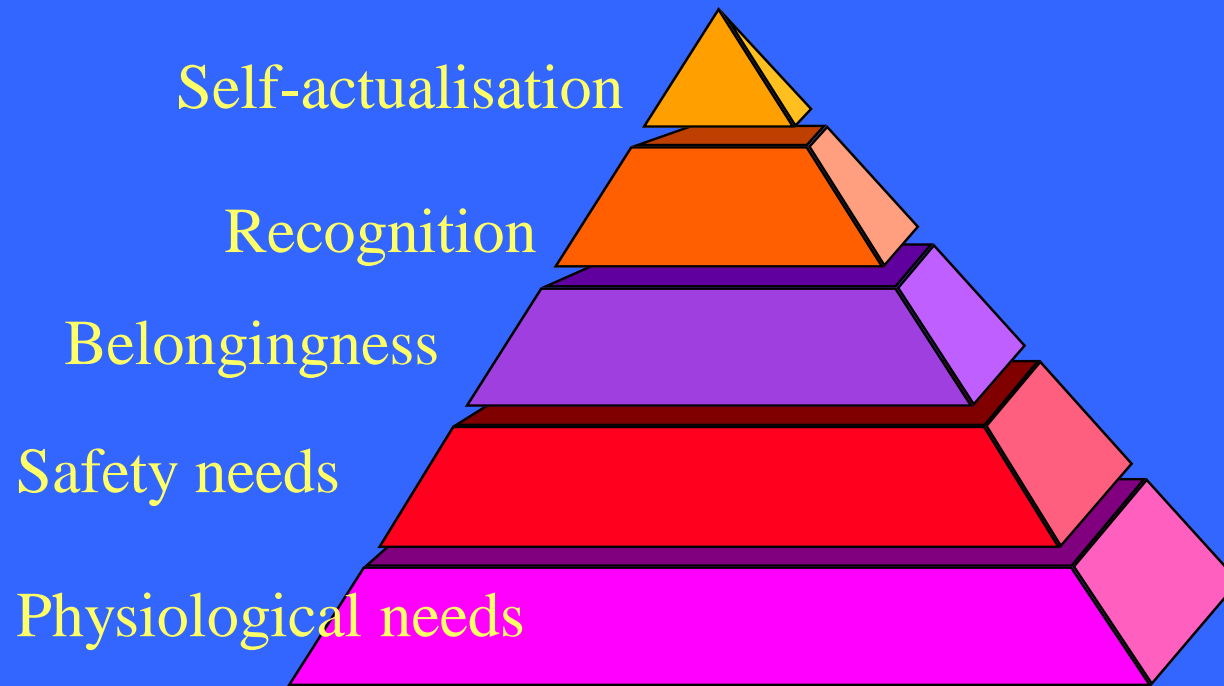


Explanation of research results

- VW management told us that our results were accurate – it matched their actual inter-departmental *performance levels* as also employee age, etc
- Theoretically, while there are other explanations possible, I have used my *East-West* model of motivation to interpret the results

The western roots of my model

- Abraham Maslow 1908-70



Strengths & Limitations of Maslow's model

- **Strengths**: The power of the hierarchy when lower needs are acutely dissatisfied; satisfaction rather than dissatisfaction the basis for human motivation and behaviour
- **Weaknesses**: Limits to satisfaction not dealt with, relationship with work not addressed; abnormal behaviour not explained.

Understanding what Maslow did not address.

Stage 1

What happens when needs are excessive (aka as seeking excessive satisfaction)?

Self-actualisation



Stage 3: Applying Rajasekhara's model to modify Maslow's model



INTRODUCING THE CONCEPTS OF THRESHOLD LIMITS, SPRINGS & STRINGS

View human needs in two parts: *appetite* and *desire*

Set *threshold limit* as close to satiation of *appetite* as possible; design a spring for oneself to pull back if one's desires expand, e.g., *for each extra scoop of ice cream, an extra five minutes on treadmill!*

When constant transgression stretches *the spring* beyond its *elastic limit*, the ability to pull back is lost.....till either a “great learning experience” occurs or “conditions of quality” are created

Let me demonstrate with an exercise

- Step 1: Individually, reflect on your past and identify what, according to you, was your greatest single learning experience?
- Step 2: Now, consider what your emotions were at the **START** of this experience and write them down
 - e.g., happy or unhappy, scared or safe...
- Step 3: Pick two or three of the strongest emotions you felt at that time

Exercise (continued)

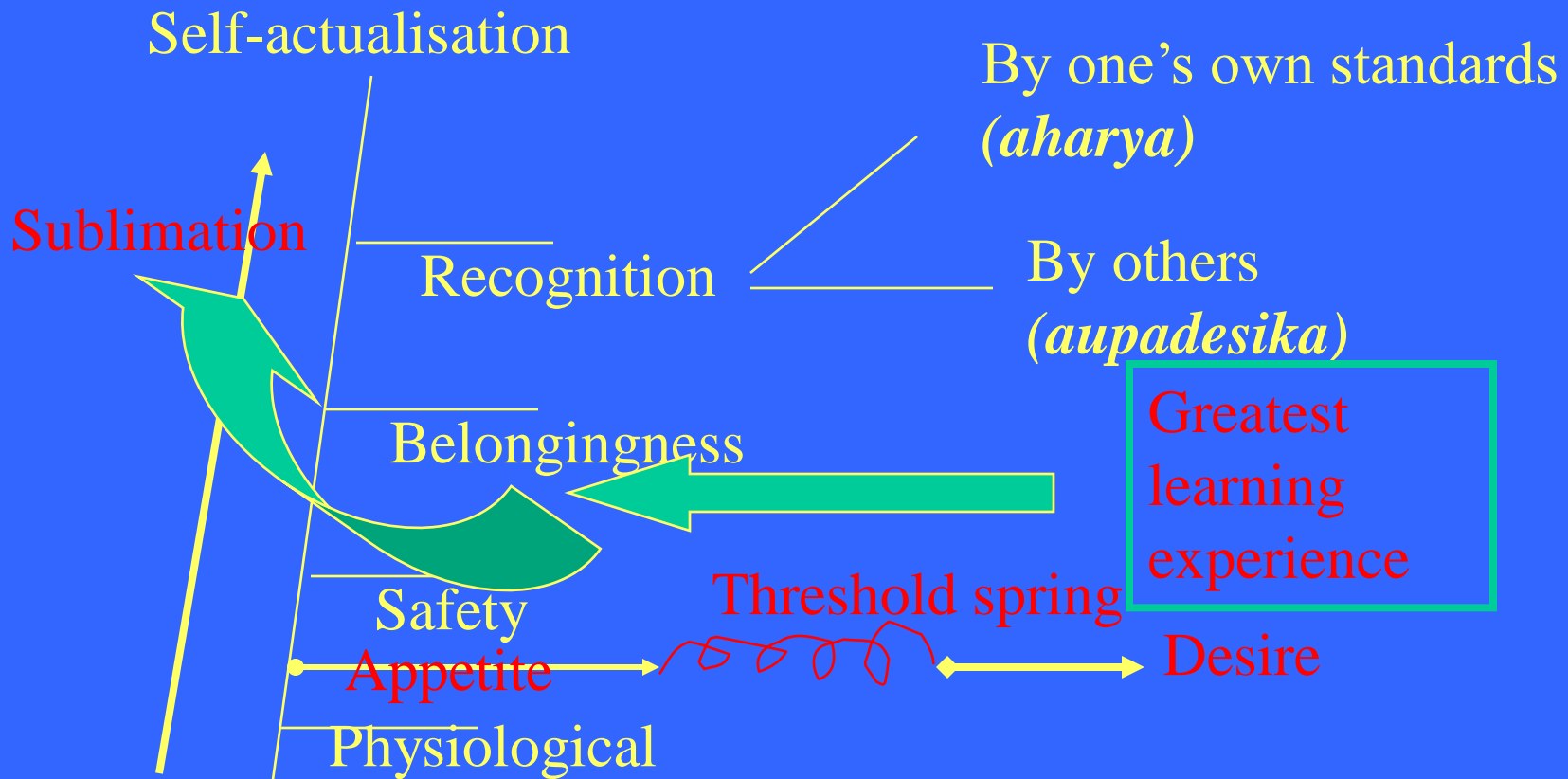
- Step 4: Let us compare what your feelings were with my research covering over 20,000 people around the globe – covering four continents – America, Europe, Africa and Asia

How many of you experienced feelings such as the following at the start of your greatest single learning experience?

- Anger
- Fear
- Cornered
- Threatened
- Lost
- Stressed
- Back to the wall

Explanation using my *East-West* model of Human Motivation

Sahaja



Human nature and motivation: The long way around and back

- Human nature is universal and *a-cultural*
- Human nature is far nobler and grander than contemporary society makes it out
- Organisational performance critically dependent on creating the conditions for human self actualisation
- The HRD professional's job is to convince his/her top management that *Karma Yoga* works very well in practice – *when people stop working for the fruits of their labour but for intrinsic reasons, they perform at their best!*

Implications for top/senior management

- Mind-set and attitudinal shifts that might be required to create such “conditions for quality performance”
- Lead by example
- Change Performance Management systems and approach to kindle and nurture IM rather than EM
- Follow the FEDEX, John Lewis, SWAirlines examples for sustained high performance, which are quite consistent with what I have been talking of so far.

What does this mean for the HRD pro?

- Change the policies to nurture intrinsic motivation for excellence in performance
- Move away from focusing on extrinsic motivation
- Fair, competitive wages OK, but that attends only to Hygiene needs (à la *Herzberg*) and has little impact on performance
- Intense Leadership training top/senior/line management to create the “conditions for high quality performance” (à la my research findings) is the key for sustained high performance – and that is the heart of the HRD professional’s job
 - **Risky but worth the effort!**

- Some ways forward
 - Develop a customised tool for measuring motivation levels, carrying out a survey like I did at VW-UK , analyse results and convince top management to move HR policies from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation
 - Train line management to create the conditions for high quality performance
 - If you want my help, get in touch: email me at vs.mahesh@buckingham.ac.uk or call me on +44 1280 820149.
 - I will be back home in Chennai for good early 2010.

THANK YOU and *Namaskaram*