The Essence of Employee Behavior

Behavior is a complex element of human existence; it carries certain importance due to the nature of actions, reactions, and the consequences that derive from the two. Looper (2006) mentions how, “Many behaviors are ingrained and operate out of the subconscious based on past experiences and belief systems.” It is quite interesting to know that people often respond to their established belief system whether it is enforced through one’s upbringing, company policies, the government, or simply by society itself. One’s belief system certainly impacts his mind, which leads to actions hence, creating a pattern of behavior. Since behavior is such a complicated issue, especially when concerning employment, it becomes difficult for managers to constantly look for ways to incorporate new policies to motivate employees so that they behave in such a way to enrich the company with positive attitude and increased output.

What managers should consider and try out are four alternative models of employee behavior:

- Only-money-matters
- Happy-is-productive
- Good-citizen
- Product of the environment

These models are useful for many managers, but they not always effective for all employees.

To begin, the only-money-matters model implies that employees place great emphasis on money and how much income they earn from their jobs. According to (Brickly, 2009, p.35), “Some people believe that the only important component of the job is the level of monetary compensation.” This model obviously states that money is the most important element of an individual’s work. Although this assertion may be true for some employees, it is certainly not true for many other employees who, for instance, prefer jobs that make them happy and productive. They feel their work adds value to their workplace. Surely, money is necessary for life; however, money is not always the most important component of life. There is no question that everyone is driven to seek employment in order to earn income. Yet it does not imply that individuals who are solely driven by money will also be hardworking and productive employees. Ultimately, this employee behavior puts managers in a difficult position because some workers, who seek big salaries, may not perform well.

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1 This essay was written in response to a midterm exam question in Managerial Economics (ECON 451) offered in Fall Quarter 2010. Students competed in a contest to win bonus points and publication rights.
The happy-is-productive model indicates that increasing job satisfaction is what motivates employees to be more productive. In other words, managers should find a way to make their employees happy by providing them with good benefits, rewarding them for doing a great job, and creating an environment that gives them the desire to come to work. Under these conditions, managers lead workers along a path of enhancing their performance and becoming more productive. Happiness is definitely the key to success for both managers and employees. If a manager is able to make his or her employees happy, they will in return want to make their manager happy by performing well. Happiness and productivity would lead to more profits, thus making the whole company happy. It is amazing how emotions can be so powerful, especially in a workplace. It is even more interesting to note that positive attitude can impact work performance and eventually greater financial rewards.

In the good-citizen model, “the basic assumption is that employees have a strong personal desire to do a good job; they take pride in their work and want to excel” (Brickly, p.36). Accordingly, employees have a desire to advance in the workplace, thus they are already motivated to do so. It implies that the only thing they need is to be given clear instructions by managers of what to do and what goals are to be accomplished. Some individuals are simply driven toward accomplishments and certainly toward hard work as well as success. Additionally, this model implies that every individual has this drive and that managers are neither obligated nor able to change that desire since internal drives and forces such as these cannot be changed. The world contains diversity and every person is unique in his or her own way. In a diverse workplace, a wide range of ideas, thoughts, and skills are brought to the table, all of which reflect internal drives of individual workers. For this reason, it is easy to say that not everyone is driven toward the same goals and that not everyone has the same internal drive toward achieving them.

Alternatively, the product-of-the-environment model states “behaviors of individuals are largely determined by their upbringing” (Brickly, p.36). Evidently, this model implies that employees have established certain values; hence their behavior is already set due to their childhood teachings. In addition, the model states that if employees are dishonest and lack integrity, managers cannot do anything but to replace them by those who have positive values. In other words, this model indicates that once individuals reach adulthood, they have already decided upon what values to hold and how to define integrity. For some individuals, this is definitely a true statement. Individuals go through life and learn new things, which often add to new set of values and new ways of understanding integrity and honesty. With that said, the upbringing of individuals do not always indicate the values they hold and it does not suggest that individuals cannot change their behavior through a better understanding of integrity. This model could become very confusing for managers because a manager cannot always know whether a potential employee has positive or negative values. Seemingly, this model creates greater difficulty for managers to pinpoint and choose employees who are honest and have the potential to be productive.
The model that I recommend managers to use in order to create incentives for best employee behavior is the **happy-is-productive-model**. This model is a tool that managers can use to help their employees appreciate the job they do and make them feel contributing to adding value to the firm. This approach would make employees realize that to do well at work is crucial to stay and grow in the company. Hence, employees feel that leaving or getting fired is a great loss because they will be losing jobs that provide them with the desirable working conditions.

To be specific, Lesonsky in “Survey Says: Why a Happy Employee Is a Productive Employee,” states,

> **While keeping your employees happy may be considered a nice thing to do, new data from research and consulting firm company iOpener shows it's actually a smart operating strategy as well. iOpener examined how much time employees spent ‘on task.’ For happy workers, it was 80 percent of the workweek. For unhappy workers, it was just 40 percent.”**

Research shows that when managers are able to create a “happy” work environment, employees would look forward to going to work, thus resulting in reduced absenteeism, low turnover, and increased productivity.

Likewise, Articlesbase in *Happy Employees = More Productivity* mentions how the old saying that “money cannot buy happiness” is worth considering. Indeed in a survey of 2,000 workers, 50 percent of the responded said they would choose a low paying job they enjoy over a high paying job they do not like. Likewise, 38 percent asserted that they would choose more free time over more money. So, short of ineffective bribery and unrealistic extra holiday time, simple actions like Friday’s early-out, celebrating birthdays, or holiday parties will help improve morale in the workplace. These actions do not cost much or require any changes to employment contracts.

Firms constantly find themselves in situations where they need new ideas and new ways to increase production and profit. Managers must create a friendly and happy work environment to help workers increase production. It is difficult to understand the behavior of a certain human being whether it is a parent, a sibling, a friend, or an employee. However, it goes a long way to take time to converse and discover where the issues lie. Once such discovery occurs, it is priceless to resolve the issues and create a happier work environment.
References

