The Impact of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivators on Employee Engagement in Information Organizations

Rajesh Singh

Division of Library and Information Science, St. John's University, New York,
Email: singhr1@stjohns.edu

Understanding motivation in the workforce is a crucial step toward creating a dynamic work environment that enriches and fulfills workers. This research stems from LIS management class discussions on the topic of motivation and highlights the need for radical shifts in management approaches to motivation in information organizations. Our analysis of 98 MLS students from four student cohorts from spring 2013 to spring 2014 shows that intrinsic motivators are far more influential than any "carrot and stick" type of approach. The findings indicate that future information leaders and managers should recognize that intrinsic factors play a bigger role in employee motivation and put more effort into creating a culture of respect, recognition, trust, and autonomy when tailoring their management strategies to tap into the emotions of their coworkers. These intrinsic motivators are more important to staff than extrinsic factors such as money. LIS educators have a role to play in developing graduate expectations within an holistic framework that furthers professional development and career advancement.

Keywords: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, employee engagement, organizational culture, library and information science, library managers

Introduction

Motivation is considered to be the driving force behind an individual engaging in any activity. In addition to looking for fulfillment in one's work, today's employees, including library and information science (LIS) professionals, expect and seek balance in their lives. In fact, they are motivated by things other than what work typically offers. There are different levels, kinds, and amounts of motivation (Marciano, 2010; Ryan and Deci, 2000) that all play a critical role in determining how motivated or unmotivated an individual is. For example, LIS students may be highly motivated to complete their strategic plans, advocacy plans, or grant writing assignments in order to learn and develop some skills that might be useful for their careers. Additionally, they might be motivated to prove to themselves that they have the necessary aptitude and knowledge to complete these challenging projects and assignments. Other students in the same program, however, might be primarily driven by the fact that they will pass another course that will bring them closer to finishing their degrees once they complete their course assignments. Furthermore, they might be motivated by the salary raises or promotions they will get at their workplaces after completion of their degrees. While both groups of students are highly motivated, they are obviously motivated by different things. So what fuels motivation for these two types of LIS students in the above example, and why?

Discussions with students in an LIS management course on the topic of motivation inspired this research, as there was a great deal of interest among students in the surprising findings of workplace motivation studies. The discussion questions

examine what motivates future information professionals to give their best at the workplace, and what kinds of interventions might be required to address the intrinsic motivations of future information professionals.

Although there is no single formula to create an engaging pedagogy through combining theory and practice, this paper shows how students were engaged by helping them to see connections between management theory and practice.

This paper first reviews the relevant literature on extrinsic and intrinsic motivators followed by a description of the class discussion procedure and analysis. Thereafter, findings and implications are discussed that emerged from the class discussion that point to a need for some radical changes in the traditional management practices of some information organizations.

Review of Relevant Literature

Motivation is a very complex concept. Not only does it entail extrinsic and intrinsic characteristics but it is also influenced by personality and expectations of each individual. Though extrinsic and intrinsic motivations may seem diametrically opposed, the two motivation categories can be used together to create an efficient workplace. Understanding what motivators work best in a given situation is key to motivating information professionals at individual, team, and organizational levels. Information organizations can devise a strategy to tap into what motivators work best for information professionals in their unique situations. In order to develop an understanding of the concept of motivation theories and conceptualizations, this section briefly reviews and unfolds some of the relevant management literature that students were exposed to before engaging in discussions on the topic of extrinsic versus intrinsic motivators.

Taylor's *Principles of Scientific Management* (1911) functioned on the premise that employees needed to be closely supervised and were motivated by economics, and he advocated for a fair wage for the employees despite the harsh treatments and micromanagement they endured in his time. Elton Mayo and his colleagues (1933) performed a number of experiments at Western Electric Hawthorne Works near Chicago from 1927 to 1932 and concluded that it was the social environment and attention given to employees that resulted in their increased performance. Despite the controversy surrounding and conclusions drawn from this study, it sheds light on the importance of psychological factors affecting employee motivation and productivity, including worker autonomy, attention to social factors, and group cohesiveness among others.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1954) model explained human motivation based on meeting needs at different levels and proposed five categories such as physiological needs, safety, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization. Physiological, safety, and existence needs may be met by extrinsic sources such as wages, whereas belongingness, affiliation, relatedness, bonding, self-actualization, growth, and learning needs are primarily intrinsic feelings that may be met by creating opportunities for interpersonal and social interaction, autonomy, achievement, and growth. Despite the lack of enough empirical research, Maslow's work has stood the test of time and readily predicts and explains human behavior during difficult economic times and varying work conditions enhancing or decreasing their productivity. Since the 1950s, there have been a number of significant developments in the field of human motivation and a plethora of theories including, but not limited to, McGregor's Theory X and Y (1960) and Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964) that attempted to unfold the mysteries behind motivation and its impact on human behavior in the workplace. The expectancy theory of motivation provides an explanation as to why people choose

to act out a specific behavior as opposed to another and what they expect the result of that selected behavior will be. In brief, the expectancy theory explains the mental or cognitive processes that an individual undergoes to make choices. Theory X and Theory Y postulated by McGregor in 1960 assumed that average workers dislike work, and that the only way to maintain productivity was to simplify the production process, supervise the employees closely, and motivate them in short-term. Theory X assumes that workers are lazy, avoid accountability, and dislike their work while Theory Y assumes that average workers desire self-control and responsibility (McGregor, 1960; Lu & Wu, 2013). Different researchers have agreed with or refuted either Theory X or Theory Y, but the dichotomy is important to remember. There is a heavy connection between the two theories and extrinsic and intrinsic motivation at the workplace.

Intrinsic motivation is defined as "the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions" (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p. 56) or "performing an activity for the pleasure inherent in the activity" (Story, Stasson, Mahoney, and Heart, 2008, p. 707) rather than for some outward and separable outcomes resulting in an external reward or recognition. In a study done by Lee et al., (2012), it was learned that intrinsic motivation is actually a complex neurophysiological activity wherein an individual goes through an intense psychological process that stems from inherent feelings. In other studies by Ryan and Deci (as cited in London, 2009), they found that "intrinsic motivation makes an individual much more likely to be motivated and perform well as opposed to those that were extrinsically motivated," and "intrinsic factors may increase satisfaction, organizational commitment, and satisfaction" (p. 7). In fact, those who had more inherent intrinsic motivation were "less susceptible to the external motivation of financial intervention" (p. 248). Therefore, it can be concluded that the intrinsic motivators are

psychological feelings that employees get from doing meaningful work and performing it well.

Extrinsic motivation is defined by London (2009) as "doing something because it leads to a separable outcome . . . [which means] that outside encouragement or rewards are earned from performing a task rather than actual enjoyment of the task" (p. 5). Extrinsic rewards—usually financial—are the tangible rewards that managers provide employees, such as salary, bonuses, promotions, and benefits. They are called "extrinsic" because they are external to the work itself, and other people control their size and whether or not they are granted. Money, however, is not the only motivator that is considered extrinsic. Factors such as organization characteristics, type of work, job security, and advancement opportunities are also considered extrinsic motivators (London, 2009). Extrinsic motivators take the focus off doing the task itself well and on to doing what is necessary to earn a prize. Some of these, such as promotions and other accolades can lead to an increase in intrinsic motivation, but the initial motivators themselves are extrinsic (Cooper and Jayatilaka, 2006).

A cursory review of literature reveals that the LIS literature has focused on many aspects of management such as leadership, service quality, marketing, public relations, and advocacy in the last two decades. However, only a few relevant studies were found about intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. The study done by Kuhlthau (1993) primarily focuses on the importance of motivation in library and information science research. Smith and Galbriath's research (2012) provided some interesting insights on improving practices in the recruitment, retention, and motivation of student employees of the millennial generation in an academic library. However, both of the above studies do not discuss the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators at the workplace. In a study done on intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation on

Library Media Specialists (LMS), where they had to learn what motivated children to learn more about the library, it was found that the middle school LMS used more motivational strategies than the elementary school LMS. This study demonstrated that there was more need to motivate middle school students as opposed to elementary, because of the greater number of competing distractions in their lives, for example, sports (Small, 1999). As people age from childhood, there is less intrinsic motivation. The LMS found it more useful to apply more extrinsic motivation at the middle school level than elementary. As a typical workplace in any information organization consists of workers who represent different generations and different motivation levels, it would be useful for managers to consider a combination of strategies for motivating information professionals in order to achieve better results and create more enjoyable opportunities.

Library and information organizations often have tasks that are repetitive in nature and might affect the motivation of LIS professionals. Thomas & Holley (2012) summarized the findings of their study by stating that the ways to increase employee motivation include enriching the work experience, communicating effectively, offering appropriate incentives, and treating employees with dignity and respect. Furthermore, it is also important that library directors pay more attention to creating attractive workplaces and images of values and space for personal and professional development of LIS professionals (Pors & Johannsen, 2002). The concepts of extrinsic and intrinsic motivators are not only important for individual performance but they also play a critical role in influencing the performance of teams in a project or organization and worth exploring for managers in information organizations. As was stated in an article, "Since the individual plays such an integral role in the overall performance of the team, exploration of these factors [extrinsic and intrinsic] is relevant both to library theorists and

library practitioners" (O'Connor, 2006, p. 136).

Summary

A brief review of the management literature on motivation reveals that employees are motivated by a combination of factors including, but not limited to, employees' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs besides interplay of numerous social factors at the workplace. The presence of intrinsic motivators outweighs the lack of extrinsic ones, and researchers largely discredit the effectiveness of extrinsic motivators. While it may seem like extrinsic motivation does not have as much of a place in an organization as intrinsic motivation, the ability to strike a balance between both is a fine art and may result in surprisingly positive outcomes for workers at an individual, team, and organizational level.

Students learned about the conspicuous lack of literature on the topic of extrinsic and intrinsic motivators in the LIS discipline. They also learned about the gradual evolution of the concept of motivation in management literature, thus deepening their understanding of extrinsic and intrinsic motivators. The next section discusses the procedure for class discussion on the topic of motivation as it evolved.

Discussion Procedure and Analysis

Discussion Background and Context

Before facilitating class discussions on the topic of motivation, students learned how motivation at the workplace has been the topic of many research investigations, particularly in the corporate world. As discussed in the previous section, some of the prior works on motivation such as Taylor's *Principles of Scientific Management* (1911), Mayo's Hawthorne Studies (1933), Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1954), McGregor's Theory X and Y (1960), and Vroom's Expectancy Theory

(1964) were reviewed. The students also learned that, while management literature has discussed intrinsic versus extrinsic motivators, the carrot and stick type of motivators have remained dominant in the workplace. Furthermore, students also learned about the results of a 2012 Gallup poll (Crabtree, 2013) that found that only 30% of people were engaged in their work, while 52% were not engaged, and 18% were actively disengaged.

As a consequence, it appeared that there was still much to learn about motivation in the workplace. Thereafter, it seemed logical to discuss what motivated students to give their best as current and future information professionals, and what their expectations were from management. This was the background that students were given before facilitating class discussions on this topic.

Discussion Questions

As part of a class discussion in an LIS management course, 98 Masters of Library Science students were asked:

> *"What motivates you to give your best at your workplace? List three key factors that you consider the most important in mobilizing you to make a difference in your organization."*

Respondents were from four different sections of the required management course taught by the same instructor from spring 2013 to spring 2014 at a small midwestern university. The courses were taught in a blended format, and the discussions took place in the face-to-face class meetings. No demographic information was collected from the respondents.

After students responded to the above questions individually on a blank paper sheet, they were asked to discuss the motivation factors they listed in a group of three to four students for 15 minutes. The idea of this peer discussion was to help them learn the similarities and differences in their motivation levels and what

they would expect from their libraries and information organizations in order to motivate them to make a difference at their workplace. Thereafter, a large class discussion (30 minutes) ensued, and students were invited to report the findings of their group discussion. A lively, engaging, and passionate discussion emerged on what motivates them and what information organizations should do in order to motivate them.

Post Discussion Review of Relevant Management Literature

After facilitating lively and passionate student discussions on the motivation topic, the instructor discussed Pink's (2009) conceptualization on motivation regarding autonomy, mastery, and purpose and asked students to see if their listed motivation factors were related with Pink's contemporary notion of motivation and to what extent. The goal was not to make any comparison between students' listed motivation factors and Pink's motivation conceptualization. Instead, the idea was to make students aware of the latest development in motivation theories and concepts and have them discuss the topic of motivation further in order to develop their understanding on the topic of motivation. Furthermore, students also learned about Zappos and Google's work culture and how these organizations have different but highly successful strategies to motivate their employees. As a class, we discussed how libraries and information organizations draw inspiration from these highly successful organizations in order to motivate their employees.

Discussion Analysis

After witnessing the lively, engaged, and passionate student discussions on the motivation topic and seeing some potentially interesting patterns emerging, the instructor decided to compile the responses of students in four consecutive semesters

from spring 2013 to spring 2014. The respondents' answers to the question asked were organized into five categories:

- Money
- Autonomy
- Recognition
- Culture of Respect, Trust, and Rapport
- Engagement in the Work Itself

The data was analyzed from the three cohorts taught in Kansas (KS) and one cohort in Oregon (OR). The next section will demonstrate how their perspectives and expectations point to a need for some radical changes in the traditional management practices of some information organizations.

Findings

The findings indicate that engagement in the work (intrinsic motivation—34%) was the prevailing motivator in three out of four cohorts. A surprisingly small percentage of respondents (11%) considered money to be a primary motivator. An analysis of the four cohorts shows that intrinsic motivators are more influential than anything related to the carrot and stick philosophy. The findings appear to highlight that employee motivation is influenced by a combination of factors related to management (recognition, autonomy, and engagement in the work itself—67%) and

Figure 1. Summary of extrinsic and intrinsic motivators in four student cohorts.

organizational culture (respect, trust, and rapport—22%).

Money

Money was the comment least frequently made by 11% of the respondents and was always listed as a base need: that is, money doesn't make up for a lack of other motivators, but it needs to be sufficient to support a quality of life, as reflected in the following comments of the respondents:

"Money doesn't matter, except when it does"

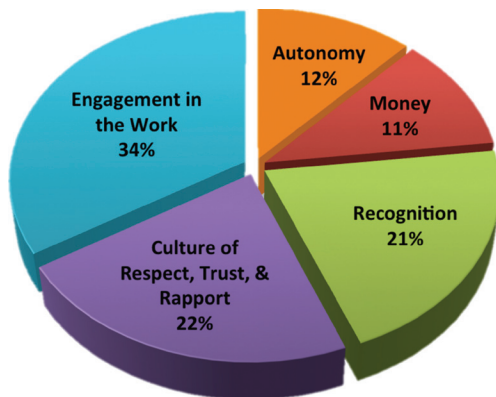"Without enough to live on, other motivations don't matter"

The above statements indicate that money can motivate performance, and it might matter a lot at the very low end of the pay scale where an additional dollar an hour can make a significant difference to an individual. This might be applicable to the information professionals joining the workforce at the entry level position. However, the contemporary research shows that the impact of money might be short-lived once people's basic needs are fulfilled. Therefore, it would be useful for managers to discover what motivates their employees rather than assuming that more carrots will help motivate them.

Autonomy

Autonomy means acting with choice, which means we can be both autonomous and happily interdependent with others (Pink, 2009). The results of this study indicate respondents' desire to be self-directed, that is, having a sense of control in managing their projects. Some of the comments made by the respondents demonstrate this sentiment:

"Being trusted to use my time wisely and efficiently to complete my tasks"

"Flexible work hours"

Most of the comments provided by the respondents (12%) indicate that they would like to be trusted to complete their projects rather than being micromanaged by their supervisors. Furthermore, they also prefer to be able to manage their time. Information organizations can support autonomy by giving LIS professionals real control over various aspects of their work—whether it's deciding what to work on, when to do it, how to do it, or finding their own ways of accomplishing the tasks provided within a certain time frame, given certain parameters and guidelines provided by their supervisors. However, autonomy should not be misinterpreted if future information professionals expect only autonomy but no accountability. Contemporary behavioral studies show that people want to be accountable—and making sure that they have control over their task, their time, their technique, and their team is the most effective pathway to that destination. This approach will result in more engagement, as Pink (2010) states that control leads to compliance but autonomy leads to engagement. A sense of autonomy might have a powerful effect on individual performance and attitude.

Recognition

Recognition means a psychological feeling of being valued and praised for contributions. Many institutions have formal reward and recognition programs in their organizations, and libraries are no exception. Some of the comments made by the respondents highlight their desire to be recognized for their accomplishments and contributions they make to their organizations:

"Feeling like my efforts are valued, not ignored"

"A simple "thank you" goes a long way"

"Praise and recognition of accomplishments"

"Acknowledgment across the organization that everyone contributes is what leads to success"

Recognition might be interpreted both extrinsically as well as intrinsically. The extrinsic reinforcement might reduce intrinsic motivation and will be short-lived. The above statements seem to be geared towards intrinsic feelings of sincere recognition. Therefore, it would be more useful to rely on the reinforcement of intrinsic motivators such as sincere appreciation and "thank you" for their contributions for a sustainable and long-term success of information organizations.

Engagement in the Work

Based on the responses we received (34%), engagement in the work was considered as the generation of opportunities for information professionals to be able to engage in or be involved in challenging and meaningful tasks that help them become difference makers in their organizations. Some of the sample responses from this category were as follows:

"Interesting or intellectually challenging"

"Being able to help the library advance/ make it more useful to patrons"

"Opportunities for creativity and innovation"

"What I'm actually doing makes a difference"

It is clear from the above statements that employee engagement is a whole different attitude. Respondents' comments indicate that engaged employees will go above and beyond what is simply required of them in order to see their organization succeed. The findings have implications for the educators teaching the required management course and seem to indicate that it would be worthwhile putting efforts into helping future generations of informa-

tion professionals learn the importance of intrinsic motivators and how they can be engaged at their workplace. Moreover, it also calls for information managers, leaders, and practitioners to pay attention to radical shifts in the work habits, motivations, and expectations of their employees. It would be useful for the supervisors to consider spending more time in finding out the interests, motivations, and passions of future information professionals in order to delegate the right tasks to them. Furthermore, the findings also highlight the importance of designing a workplace that provides information professionals opportunities to be able to engage in challenging, meaningful, and creative projects and help them accomplish something transcendent or serve something very purposeful beyond themselves. As this was the biggest category that emerged in our discussion findings (34%), it does seem to indicate the importance of engagement at the workplace.

Culture of Respect, Trust, and Rapport

The findings of this study demonstrate that the respondents expect, value, and appreciate a culture of respect, trust, and rapport (22%) in their organizations. Some of the statements made by the respondents indicate that they would like to be treated with dignity and respect at their workplace:

> "If I'm not treated with respect or made to feel like I matter, I disengage"

> "Having the freedom to work without someone watching over me at all times"

> "Want to be treated fairly and others to be treated fairly as well"

> "Having someone who can clarify and answer any questions or concerns I have about work"

It is clear from the above responses that

the future information professionals joining the workforce would expect a culture that values and trusts them. Furthermore, they also expect to be treated fairly and prefer to have a good mentor who might help them if they have any questions regarding their work. It is obvious from the responses that a clear, positive, and respectful culture will help library managers and leaders be able to get the buy in from their employees in their important and critical projects for their organizations. The information professionals will be more engaged in the workplace because of the belief that their contributions matter and can make a difference. The craving on the part of information professionals to be able to "make a difference" has already been demonstrated in the preceding section under "engagement in the work," and leadership in information organizations can take advantage of their desires, passions, and interests by tapping into their intrinsic motivators.

Implications

Although it was not the goal of the present study to compare the motivation levels in four different cohorts, Figure 2 highlights many important points and major implications of this study. It is obvious from Figure 2 that the level of motivation varies from cohort to cohort, which might be due to the makeup of their personalities, education levels, work experience, demographics, geography, and many other reasons. At the same time, this figure also reminds us to remember that although engaged employees are truly passionate and thoughtful about their work and strive to make a difference in their organizations, their motivation drivers might differ from library to library, team to team, culture to culture, and even from country to country. For instance, the respondents from the OR (Oregon) cohort appeared to value the "engagement" aspect of their job more than other cohorts in Kansas (KS). Similarly, there are differences in other types of

motivators from cohort to cohort. Library managers and leaders need to dig deep in order to develop a firm understanding of what engages their employees in the work itself.

Based on the analysis of the findings in the preceding sections, this class discussion appears to highlight the following implications for LIS educators, library leaders, and managers:

• The current model of carrots and sticks, that is, extrinsic motivators, is not appropriate for our current service-oriented and knowledge-based work environment;
• Intentionally teaching information professionals the value of intrinsic motivators in LIS schools by an engaged pedagogy;
• Designing an engaged pedagogy in management courses that combines theory and practice in order to prepare tomorrow's information professionals for advocacy and social change;
• Designing a workplace by building upon the concepts of employee engagement, autonomy, recognition, and by creating a culture of respect, trust, and rapport into our information organizations that will provide better results; and
• Developing appropriate management strategies by striking a good balance between extrinsic and intrinsic motivators by library managers and leaders to tap into intrinsic motivations of future information professionals.

The analysis of our class discussion of four student cohort demonstrates that information organization leaders and managers should recognize that the future generation of information professionals appears to be driven by intrinsic motivators. Therefore, they may influence radical change in the management practices of information organizations. Furthermore, information leaders and managers should understand that intrinsic factors play a bigger role in employee motivation and put effort into creating a culture of respect, recognition, trust, and autonomy when tailoring their management strategies to tap into the emotions of their coworkers.

Conclusion

The workplace and its employees are very different today. One of the biggest changes is employees' expectations and their relationship to work. Every organization have its own unique method of motivating its employees, and libraries are no different. This study demonstrates that it would be useful for the library leaders, managers, and supervisors to give up the traditional beliefs about the role of carrot and stick motivation approach that affect employee motivation if they are to deal effectively with today's workforce and make their organizations productive. At the same time, it ought to be remembered that the theories behind intrinsic and extrinsic motivation still apply, and striking a balance between them might be the key to managerial success.
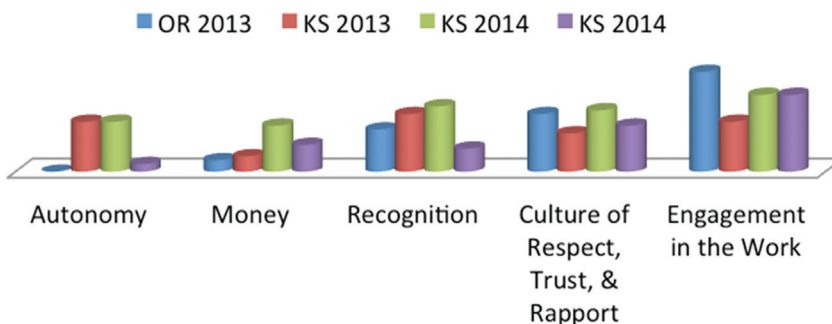

Figure 2. Comparative analysis of extrinsic and intrinsic motivators in four student cohorts.

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