Needs Theory of Motivation

Effectively motivating employees has long been one of management's most important and challenging duties.**Motivation** refers to the psychological processes that stimulate excitement and persistence of voluntary actions aimed at some goal. Because motivation can be highly individualized, managers use a wide range of techniques to keep their employees motivated and happy. Therefore, it is essential for managers to understand the psychological processes involved in motivation so that they can effectively direct employees towards organizational goals.

**Needs theories** attempt to identify internal factors that motivate an individual's behavior and are based on the premise that people are motivated by unfulfilled needs. For example, if you were dissatisfied with living in your parents' basement at age 40, you might go out and find your own apartment. In doing so, you will fulfill the need for privacy, independence and the ability to bring a date home without having to explain why you still live with your parents. **Needs** are psychological or physiological insufficiencies that provoke some type of behavioral response. The needs a person has can range from weak to strong and can vary based on environmental factors, time and place.

|  |
| --- |
| Abraham Maslow |
| ***Maslow developed the hierarchy of needs theory.*** |

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

One of the most popular needs theories is **Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory**. Maslow proposed that motivation is the result of a person's attempt at fulfilling five basic needs: physiological, safety, social, esteem and self-actualization. According to Maslow, these needs can create internal pressures that can influence a person's behavior.

**Physiological needs** are those needs required for human survival such as air, food, water, shelter, clothing and sleep. As a manager, you can account for physiological needs of your employees by providing comfortable working conditions, reasonable work hours and the necessary breaks to use the bathroom and eat and/or drink.

**Safety needs** include those needs that provide a person with a sense of security and well-being. Personal security, financial security, good health and protection from accidents, harm and their adverse affects are all included in safety needs. As a manager, you can account for the safety needs of your employees by providing[safe working conditions](http://study.com/academy/lesson/safe-working-conditions-purpose-lesson-quiz.html), secure compensation (such as a salary) and job security, which is especially important in a bad economy.

**Social needs**, also called **love and belonging**, refer to the need to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance. Social needs are important to humans so that they do not feel alone, isolated and depressed. Friendships, family and intimacy all work to fulfill social needs. As a manager, you can account for the social needs of your employees by making sure each of your employees know one another, encouraging cooperative teamwork, being an accessible and kind supervisor and promoting a good work-life balance.

|  |
| --- |
| hierarchy of needs |
| ***The five basic human needs*** |

**Esteem needs** refer to the need for self-esteem and respect, with self-respect being slightly more important than gaining respect and admiration from others. As a manager, you can account for the esteem needs of your employees by offering praise and recognition when the employee does well, and offering promotions and additional responsibility to reflect your belief that they are a valued employee.

**Self-actualization needs** describe a person's need to reach his or her full potential. The need to become what one is capable of is something that is highly personal. While I might have the need to be a good parent, you might have the need to hold an executive-level position within your organization. Because this need is individualized, as a manager, you can account for this need by providing challenging work, inviting employees to participate in decision-making and giving them flexibility and autonomy in their jobs.

As the name of the theory indicates, Maslow believed that these needs exist in a [hierarchical](http://study.com/academy/lesson/hierarchies-definition-lesson-quiz.html) order. This **progression principle** suggests that lower-level needs must be met before higher-level needs. The **deficit principle** claims that a once a need is satisfied, it is no longer a motivator because an individual will take action only to satisfied unmet needs. If you look at this pyramid you can see how Maslow's needs are organized with basic physiological needs, such as air, food, water and sleep, at the bottom and the idea of self-actualization, or when a person reaches the full potential in life, at the top. Again, according to Maslow, before a person can take action to satisfy a need at any level on this pyramid the needs below it must already be satisfied. To better understand how Maslow's hierarchy works, let's take a look at the following example.