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Using the Pyramid of Neurological Levels in the Human Resources Motivation Management

Antonio SANDU¹

Abstract: Staff motivation is a great responsibility of the managers, most of the times making the difference between the performant, and the less performant ones. The article aims to present a possible theoretical model of using the Pyramid of Neurological Levels formulated by Dilts in the construction of the intrinsic motivation of human resource in the postmodern organisations. The Pyramid of Neurological Levels is an extension to the pyramid of needs, being structured by Dilts on the following levels: environment, behaviour and language, abilities, competences and talent, beliefs and values, identity, belonging and spirituality, mission and supreme goal. Each of these levels was attached to a series of motivational practices, more or less used in postmodern organizations.

Keywords: Pyramid of Neurological Levels; Dilts' Pyramid; motivating staff; human resources; postmodern corporations.

Introduction

Motivating staff is a great responsibility of the managers, most of the times making the difference between the performant and the less performant ones. Motivation is a process for each individual, based on their own system of values, needs and own personality (Dodu, Raboca & Tripon, 2011). Therefore the relationship between motivation and performance is given by the capacity of the manager to direct the process of achieving values, needs and interests of the employee into fulfilling the organization's objectives. The article aims to present a possible theoretical model of using the Pyramid of Neurological Levels formulated by Dilts into constructing the intrinsic motivation of human resource in postmodern organizations.

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Motivating staff as a function of the human resources management

If the staff selection should bring the organization the potential human resource corresponding to its needs, the managerial component of motivating the personnel should lead to transforming the potential of each employee into concrete results of fulfilling the organization's objectives. The uniqueness of each person makes it impossible to have a unique network that would ensure motivating the personnel up to a level that ensures performance.

An interesting theory on work motivation is formulated by Ticu Constantin and the collaborators, about a stage of work motivation, the authors identifying a step of motivational involvement translated through the individual's disposal to engage in an activity, and motivational perseverance, referring to the individual's perseverance in carrying out that activity (Constantin et. al., 2008). Most of the motivational theories target one of the two stages, when in fact, motivation should be treated differently based on the stage of the individual's involvement in the action, or his perseverance. If the motivational approach based on primary needs targets mainly the involvement in action, only reaching the superior needs leads to perseverance in developing the activity and implicitly in professional performance. From this perspective would result the hypothesis according to which the financial motivation based on big wage values leads to involving the individual in the professional activity, but doesn't constitute a sufficient motivation for persevering in maintaining high professional standards. For the latter one, the non-wage motivation related to the values of professional identity and belonging should be added as a working climate that would generate the feeling of belonging to a specific professional culture and the identity construction around the professional values or those of the organization.

Defining professional performances includes two dimensions, one of organizational performance and another one, of individual performance. The organizational performance is understood as a *complex notion* that meets the meanings generated by the general and specific opportunities of each organization (Muntean, 2014). The organizational performance depends on a series of frameworks, among which the flow of capitals, the institutional environment specific for the markets in which it operates, and mainly on the quality of the human capital that the organization has access to. The individual performance of the employees is understood as an update of the individual's potential in the area of action. The human potential brings

together the general and specific skills, competences and talent of the individual.

The work motivation

At the core of any human behaviour there is a series of needs, whose fulfilment generates a good feeling of accomplishment, it creates and maintains an emotional tone and a high energy level. From the perspective of aligning to the individual's needs, there are two types of motivational factors: going towards a desirable result – *pull factors* – and avoiding a desirable result – *push factors* (Kirkwood, 2009). In certain situations, both categories reunite in motivating a particular behaviour.

Work motivation is linked to the individual's feeling that his work will satisfy a/certain needs at a high enough level that would compensate the effort of doing the job, and eventually a high level of satisfaction produced by his involvement in work.

The main motivational strategies target the retributive dimension of rewarding the performance and sanctioning the negative performances. This approach considers the theory of *pull-push* motivational factors, that together lead to strengthening the desired behaviour of the employee. The salary-based motivation is based on quantifying the effort in money. Increasing the revenue level is a *pull* factor, an increased income meaning a potential higher living standard. The salary penalties are a factor that should lead to avoiding the undesirable organizational behaviours, and especially the counter-performance. The salary-based motivation is based on the theory of Taylor (1911), who assumed that the performance in work is directly proportional with the increase of financial revenue reward. This theory applies to the industrial or pre-industrial societies, being only partially applicable in the post-industrial ones. A positive relationship between the increase of salary level and the employee's performance is recorded in a relatively small section of salary values, kept at the level that allows satisfying primary needs, or immediately superior to the primary ones. From a certain level of incomes, the correlation between salary motivation and performance is no longer kept in the same trend, the financial compensations having to be higher and higher for the unit of supplementary effort requested from the employee. In these circumstances, it emerges the non-salary motivation, based on other needs, such as those answering the need of self-esteem, of belonging, of self-realization, etc.

The most famous hierarchy of needs, used in establishing the motivational strategies for performance, is represented by Maslow's pyramid.

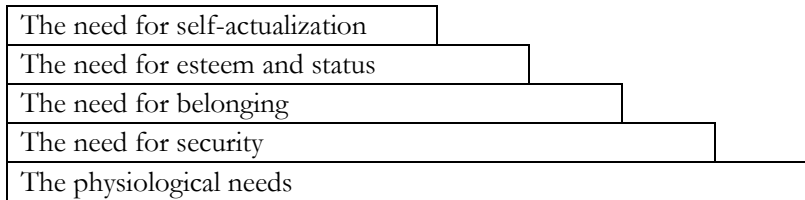


Figure 1 – The hierarchy of needs proposed by Maslow (1943)

Meeting the needs must be done from the bottom to the top, the superior needs not being able to be satisfied until the basic ones aren't sufficiently satisfied. This is the reason for which Taylor's model works on a certain range of values, for which increasing the work efficiency is proportional to the degree of satisfying the primary needs, and partially those of security based on increasing the level of income. Exceeding this threshold leads to the inefficiency of the measures of salary stimulation of work performance. The costs generated by the increase in salary are no longer covered by the significant increase of performance. The motivational strategies should aim – only from the point in which the employee has reached a certain degree of safety and financial comfort – at satisfying the superior requests, the organization being invited to outline a favourable environment for satisfying the need for belonging, self-esteem and statuses, and even of self-actualization.

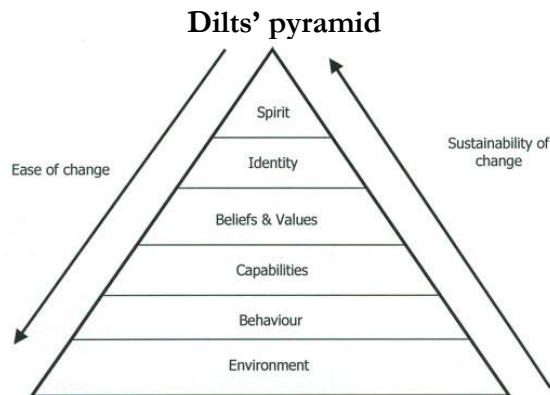


Figure 2 - Dilts' pyramid of neurological levels. Diagram taken from Clarke (2007)

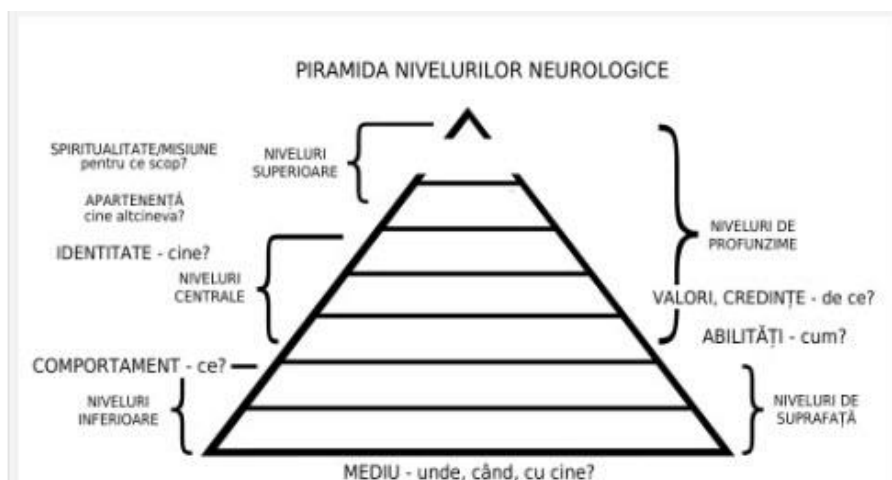


Figure 3 – Another representation of the Pyramid is done by Răzvan Goldstein, and taken from Alexandrescu Ștefan (2012)

Robert Dilts (1990, 1996) proposes a pyramid of neurological levels, as a developed version of Maslow's pyramid. Dilts' pyramid is tributary to the theories from the Neuro-lingvistic Programming (Bandler & Grinder, 1975; Bandler, Dilts & Grinder, 2014). According to Dilts' theory (1990, 1996) a change produced at the superior levels of the pyramid, which represents the more and more profound perceptive states of the brain, produces a transformation at its inferior levels. Robert Dilts' theory (2008) – also called the theory of neurological levels of change – wishes to be a model of coaching that can be used both in personal and organizational level (Porumbu & Beldianu, 2012) and which we consider important in the construction of the management strategies of the personnel, including the side of motivation for excellency.

Neurological level: medium

The first level, called *medium*, is the *context of self-expression* of the individual. At this level it is constituted the specificity of the experience (Dilts, 1996), or the context of the *social construction* (Gergen, 2005) of that experience, as communicational act. At this level there are a series of generalizations referring to self-trust and the trust in others (Alexandrescu, 2012; Necșoi, Porumbu & Beldianu, 2013). From the perspective of motivating the personnel, the medium level – work environment – represents the framework in which the professional success can/cannot be

reached. The environment ecology targets both the environment – the space ergonomics, the natural/artificial light available, the environmental aesthetics – as well as the ecology of work relationships – the conflictual or cooperating environment, the team-work or the individualist perspective, etc. The sanogenous working environment allows the expression of the superior neurological levels of the individual, and as such, transfer motivation from the areas of avoiding the inhibiting professional environmental factors into attractive, stimulating environment.

Neurological level: behaviour and language

The next level is represented by the behaviour and language. At this level, we manifest towards the environment outside the contents of our consciousness – the constructs – either in an explicit and conscious form, or implicit and less or not conscious at all. Changing a behaviour is often difficult, as long as the behaviour reflects in the environment the neurological superior levels of the consciousness (Alexandrescu, 2012; Necșoi, Porumbu & Beldianu, 2013). Changing certain neurological benchmarks of beliefs, self-perception, values or identities leads to a change of behaviour in direct consonance with the new values, the new identity built. The behavioural change is a form of anticipatory socialization, generated by restructuring the individual's neurological levels. The converse is also true, in some situations, the voluntary change of behaviour leads to a restructuring of superior neurological levels. Changing the beliefs on the symbolic and social value of work, and implicitly of work ethos – as a result, for example, of converting to a Protestant religious belief (Weber, 2003) – may lead to success – perceived as a key value of constructing the identity. This is seen, according to the opinion of the German sociologist (Weber, 2003) as a sign of divine grace, and as such, success becomes an intrinsic motivation of work. On the contrary, the belief that the individual is exploited by the organization and that his shareholders take unfair advantage of the results of this work, leads to a behaviour of postponing work and avoiding task clustering. In this situation, an additional extrinsic motivation – through performance bonuses, could lead to a pro-active behaviour of tracking the performance due to the attractive bonuses. Once the successful behaviour learned, it should be reinforced through symbolic bonuses added to those of performance, such as professional promotion, public acknowledgment of results, prizing, etc. The pro-active behaviour, once learned and reinforced, becomes an agent of changing the superior

neurological conditions of the individual, for example by changing his self-image, self-esteem, by adopting the values of the organization in his own axiological universe.

Neurological level of: abilities, skills and talent

A superior neurological level is that of abilities, skills and talent (Dilts, 1996; Necşoi, Porumbu & Beldianu, 2013). This neurological level represents the internalization of social constructs, the behavioural patterns and the cognitive repetitive schemes. The skills level includes those cognitive-behavioural schemes, more or less automatized, that are developed at a superior level and who make the individual perform in that field. From the perspective of motivating the personnel, there should be highlighted this neurological level as a place for constructing self-trust, as a performing professional. Strengthening the behaviours that led to success should come in addition to the continuous competence-based training of the staff. The construction of self-motivation strategies at this level should be centred on appreciating those defining results that have the potential to become successful strategies of success for the individual's activity. In this regard, Thatchekery and Metzeker (2008) introduce the term *appreciative intelligence* as a capacity of the individual – extremely useful to the psychologist, human resources manager, mentor or coach – to refer to the different potentialities of the individuals, and also anticipate the best strategies of updating those potentialities as competences and behaviours. Thatchekery and Metzeker (2008) defines the appreciative intelligence through the capacity to see the oak tree ever since the stage of acorn. The motivational strategies of appreciative amplification of aptitudes and talent of the individual by transforming them into competences can be completed through strategies of diverting the unwanted habitus towards desirable cognitive-behavioural strategies. In this context we can use the strategies of coaching and/or training that target the redefinition and reframing of constructs that underlie the development of unwanted automatic behaviours. Altering the meaning subjectively assigned to an automatic behaviour, brings it in the area of awareness, and the reframing makes the behaviour alter in accordance to the new construct resulted.

Neurological level of: beliefs and values

The next neurological level comprises, in Dilts' vision (1996), the beliefs and values. In accordance with the NLP axioms (Bandler & Grinder,

1975), according to which *the map is not the same with the territory*, we consider that the process of social construction of reality (Berger & Luckman, 2008) occurs by the continuous reconstruction of the individuals' functional map. This reconfiguration of the personal map takes place through the process of communicating with the other members of the community, along with imitation being the basis of the process of socialization (Sandu, 2016). In our opinion, the constructs are based on a series of *values* that manage this process of internalizing constructs. The values can be constituent – which require the emergence of a social system – and operational, which manage its operation (Caras (Frunză), Sandu, 2014; Sandu, Caras (Frunză), 2014; Frunză, 2016; Sandu, 2016). The set of values offers coherence to the social system, both at the level of the individual, and of the organizations. The system of values is that who gives meaning to the individual's actions, altering the axiological constellation leading to redefining the action. The process of emergence of the axiological universe is congruent to that of socialization, the formation of values being possible through the *communicative action* (Habermas, 2000) through socializing instances such as: friends, groups of equals, school, mass-media, job environments. Although the individual has the tendency to relate differently to values, especially the ethical ones, based on the specific situation they are facing, a certain constancy of reporting to values was highlighted in the studies conducted by researchers such as Kohlberg (1977) or Giligan (1977; 1982). From the perspective of work motivation and orientation towards success, it is important to make the values of the organization compatible with those of the individuals that are part of. The conflict of values is likely to undermine the efficiency of the individual in the organization, but also of the organization as a whole. This compatibility can be most efficient if they project the coaching strategies that would address the system of beliefs – interpretative agreements – which led the individuals to adopt their own set of values. Additionally, it may proceed to accepting a set of values that prevail in the members of the organization, to become an organizational value, either formally or informally.

Neurological level of: identity

The superior neurological level includes the subject's *identity*. At this level it occurs the self-expression, self-consciousness, the level being established based on own ideal of self, but also of self-image. This represents the level to which the key-roles of life are built, the mission of life, the

feeling of self-sense (Dilts, 1996; Necşoi, Porumbu & Beldianu, 2013). The level of identity summarizes the roles that the individual plays in different social contexts. This level shows the way in which the individual perceives himself, being correlated with the self-esteem and self-respect. At this level, the motivation of performance aims to constitute a professional identity, and the self-perception of the individual as a professional. The organization that manages to generate strong feelings of identity – in correlation with the next level, that of belonging – will attract strongly motivated employees. The social prestige of the profession, and even of the organization, transfers to the individual, strengthening the self-esteem and confirming his self-value. At this level, the most effective are the motivational speeches that use self-image and the individuals' value in the organization, and the fact that the organization is based on individuals and appreciates them for their own achievements, vital for the organizational success.

Neurological level of belonging

The membership groups of the individual are synthesized at the level of *belonging* (Dilts, 1996; Alexandrescu, 2012; Necşoi, Porumbu, Beldianu, 2013). At this level, the individual relates to the feeling of „us”, the identity is built through relating to the collective needs of the group of reference (Dorofte, 1997), transferring the identity accent from autonomy towards integration and cooperation. The superior values of the reference group are internalized through processes of anticipatory socializing (Sandu, 2014)). The motivational process, at this level, aims to form teams and reorganize the system of values of the individuals in accordance to that of the organizations.

The corporate perspective accesses this level of belonging that aims to walk an organizational route of the individuals from entering positions up to managerial ones, with a high level of responsibility, but invested with symbolic power – the capacity to impose their own ideas and values in the activity of the organization – which is greater in correlation with the responsibility assumed in the organization. It often resorts to the transfer of social parts – actions – to the employees, so that the feeling of ownership to be a framework of the construction of subjective identity as belonging to the organization. Such strategies target strategies of legitimizing the organizational discourse, among which the call to social responsibility of the organization, to ethics policies at the level of the organization, to ecology programs, to sustaining regional development, etc. The level of identity and

belonging is generally accessed as motivational level in the postmodern and transmodern organizations (Ray, 2011) which are redefined as knowledge-based organization and responsible organization, etc. In this regard we give the example of a series of corporate practices in which the organization offers the employees a house, a car, offering the entire family services such as schooling for children – preferably in kindergartens/schools that were founded by the corporation or other foundation belonging to it – medical services in health institutions founded or financed by the corporation, etc. Therefore the employee carries out his professional activity, but also the personal one in the area of influence of the corporation. We call this motivational practice *corporate 24-7*, because the employer practically rebuilds its universe of existence in the area of influence of the organization he is a part of, appropriating such constitutive values of the corporation, transposing them also in the area of private life. The convergence between the private life and the professional allows a motivational persistence given by the congruence of own values with the institutional ones. Such an approach of non-wage approach can be understood as full motivation. The employer no longer perceives the motivational sources as being advantages, internalizing them as a lifestyle. Corporatism as a lifestyle can, of course, have risks related to the *burn out* syndrome, of the difficulty of loosening from the corporate environment and the insecurity and insecure identity in the de-institutionalized social environments.

Internalizing the values of the corporation is either tacit, or even explicit, by contaminating the personal sphere with these values. This operation is possible only when the construction of the policy of human resources considers identifying the constitutive and operational values of both the organization and the individual, and offering those stimulants which lead to the axiological convergence between the employee and the organization.

The neurological level of: spirituality, mission and supreme purpose

At the level of the spirituality, the individual projects the idea of mission of life, of supreme purpose, being consonant with the values and religious beliefs (Dilts, 1996). In the postmodern organization, it is discussed about the organization based on beliefs (Sandu, Caras, 2013), and even of organizational spirituality (Preudhikulpradab, 2011; Sandu, 2011; Aldridge, 2011). The idea of organizational spirituality and motivating the members of the organization based on the neurological call of spirituality, is a legacy

from the modern society, established based on the ethos of the vocation described by Weber (2003). Work considered as spiritual practice – *ora et labora* (Weber, 2003) – constitutes a strong self-motivation for performance. The process of secularization deconstructs a series of organizational practices, by changing the sense of the constitutive values which made those social practices necessary (Sandu, Caras, 2013). Behind these processes of deconstruction-reconstruction, the postmodern organization mainly remains an organization originated on faith, if we accept the consequences of Weber's theory on the Protestant origin of modern capitalism. The motivation of work in the post-ancient organization includes the idea of vocation, of achieving the personal mission as part of the organization's mission. The individual's reporting to the organization has an eschatological nature, the organization being the one facilitating the fulfilment of the personal mission.

Conclusions

The positive attitude of the employees towards the assigned tasks is a source of organizational success, and mutually an attitude of rejection, or even a reserved attitude towards those tasks is a major risk of failure for the organization. Improving the organizational performances are strictly correlated with reaching an individual level of excellency for the members of the organization – employees – and taking advantage of the maximum potential of the human resource available in the organization. The motivation represents a key dimension in increasing the professional performances of the employees and the organization. The performance of the employee increases with the level of wage – financial motivation – for a range of values of the income that would be sufficient for fulfilling the basic needs. Beyond these, the non-financial motivation which addresses other needs of the individual should be increasingly better represented. Accessing the superior needs at the level of values, identities and belonging of the individual requires a rethinking of the very idea of organization, which thus becomes *responsible organization*, learning organization, etc. The pyramid model of the neurological levels built by Dilts can be a starting point for a new management of motivation in the postmodern organization.

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