

Episode 105: What are hygiene factors?



You often hear people talk about ‘hygiene’ or ‘motivator’ factors. This comes from the work of Frederick Herzberg. This time we look at what they are and why it matters.

1. Hygiene Factors

These tend to be things that do not motivate us but their absence demotivate us. Consequently, people don’t work harder based on addressing 'hygiene' needs. They will work less if these factors are absent at work.

In this list are: Company policies, relationship with supervisor, status and security. What surprises more people are that salary or wages are also included in this list. This tells us that people view these things as basic requirements for working.

Let us use an example of the temperature at work to make the point.

If you are cold you will not work hard, but a nice temperature doesn’t make you work harder.

2. Motivators

These factors are things that make you work harder or longer. Their absence does not however demotivate us. Herzberg identified things as achievement, advancement and development here.

They represent a far deeper level of meaning and fulfillment.

It is fair that while salary may not be a motivator, a bonus plan may be. This is particularly true for people in sales.

3. Why it matters

It should be pretty clear that you have to manage both factors at work.

People need to feel comfortable at work and content to come work.

Your teams will watch how you manage the ‘hygiene’ and gripe when you do not.

In fact when people are griping at work, you can be sure it’s about hygiene factors.

What you really want is that your team is more than content – you want them happy.

Getting them happy gets them motivated and enables your productivity to grow.

Achieving this means you need to recognize achievement and give advancement.

Using Maslow’s hierarchy of needs: The bottom two layers, Physiological and Safety, are hygiene factors.

The top 3 layers, Belonging, Esteem and Self-actualization, are motivating factors (see Episode 39).

Bottom line: You might think people should be motivated just because you pay them but the truth is motivation is more than that.