

# MOTIVATING EMPLOYEES IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

ANDRZEJ BOROWSKI

University College of Enterprise and Administration in Lublin, Lublin, Poland.  
E-mail: a.borowski@wspa.pl

**Abstract** The purpose of the publication is to present the specifics of motivating in public administration. There is no doubt that employees should be motivated regardless of the workplace. The publication presents the definition of motivation and its theory. It contains tips on what should be particularly considered in creating an incentive system in public administration. Particular attention was devoted to creating the foundations of a motivational system that has roots in motivation theories. The most common motivational theories and their importance in shaping the incentive system were presented.

**Keywords:**

motivation,  
public  
administration,  
employees,  
motivation  
theories,  
incentive  
systems

## 1 Introduction

Motivation is a very important element of management in every workplace, including in public administration. A well-motivated public administration employee provides better quality services to the residents. Managers who can find the key to the internal motivations of their subordinates can use huge energy sources and thus effectively influence the achievement of the organization's goals.

The question then arises: how to motivate the employee to work willingly, to be creative in his work and to be successful, which will translate into high quality work of the whole company?

There are a wide range of ways to influence the efficiency of the work of employees. These methods have been developed over the decades and further research is still ongoing. The purpose of this article is to identify and discuss different ways of motivating public servants.

The article shows that different motivational tools can be used in public administration.

## 2 The importance of motivation

Motivation triggers, directs, and sustains specific human behavior. It has many meanings. It is often referred to as the set of internal forces that make people behave in a certain way. Thus, motivation is a person's readiness to take specific actions. Motivation can be stimulated and strengthened in various ways.

“Motivating is a complex process of reaching employees' motivation. Evoking readiness for a specific attitude and action”<sup>1</sup>.

Motivating employees is considered one of the basic functions of management. It means influencing people in such a way that, as a result, it increases not only the work efficiency of individual people, but also the value of the organization, its effectiveness and efficiency. This is particularly important in public administration

---

<sup>1</sup> Tadeusz Listwan [red], Zarządzanie kadrami, Wyd. IV, Wydawnictwo C. H. Beck. Warszawa 2010, p. 169.

in view of the growing expectations of citizens. Motivating is always personal: someone motivates someone to do something. The manager motivates the employee to work more efficiently. Self-motivation is also of great importance when a person motivates himself.

There are therefore two basic types of motivation: internal and external. In the case of intrinsic motivation, the employee finds the will and strength to act on his own. This happens when the work is relevant, interesting, provides autonomy, gives the opportunity to develop and is fairly remunerated.

Externally motivated is when certain external actions are taken to motivate people. These include, for example, rewards, bonuses, praises and penalties. External motivators bring quick but not long-lasting effects. Internal motivators bring deeper and long-lasting effects<sup>2</sup>.

According to H. V. Glaser, each effective work depends on three factors: willingness, abilities and possibilities<sup>3</sup>. The first factor is related to internal motivation, the second to competences, and the third is related to the participation of managers who should:

- ensure the sense of the work performed,
- set goals,
- specify expectations,
- share knowledge,
- define the expected results,
- openly talk to employees about their performance.

Motivated people are convinced that their work will bring the expected results, and with them appropriate remuneration that will meet their needs. Well-motivated people are able to commit themselves to achieving the goal, however, most of the employees need external motivation<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>2</sup> Michael Armstrong, *Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi*, Wyd V, Warszawa 2011, p. 287.

<sup>3</sup> Tadeusz Oleksyn, *Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi w organizacji*, Wyd. III, 2014, p. 292.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Armstrong, *Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi*, Wyd V, Warszawa 2011, p. 286.

### 3 Theories of motivation

There are many theories related to motivation in the literature. The most important of them are briefly described below.

According to McClelland's theory of endeavor, people pursue one of three goals:

- 1) professional achievements and creativity,
- 2) power,
- 3) good relations with the job environment.

In the process of motivating, managers should first recognize people's aspirations and then motivate them accordingly.

The expectation theory was developed by V. Vroom and suggests that motivation depends on two factors<sup>5</sup>:

- 1) how much people want something,
- 2) the expected probability of fulfilling that desire.

The author draws attention to the fact that people with low self-esteem are very difficult to motivate because they do not believe in the possibility of achieving even relatively simple goals. Managers should therefore encourage employees, tell them that they "believe in them", that they "can". Such simple phrases are driving force, while criticism is destructive.

B. F. Skinner's theory of reinforcement emphasizes that people are willing to duplicate actions that in the past brought them success or are associated with pleasure, and avoid those that once led to failure or are associated with pain. It results from people's subconsciousness, and it often has its roots in childhood. The great importance has persistence of behaviors learned in the first hours and days spent at work. If someone from the beginning was treated as redundant, his professional life is not very successful.

---

<sup>5</sup> Agnieszka Zakrzewska-Bielawska [red.], Podstawy zarządzania, Wydawnictwo Oficyna, Warszawa 2012, pp. 338-441.

The theory of resistance, according to which "change creates resistance," signals that workers counteract management actions that would restrict their choice of action. Managers of their activities cause active or passive resistance of employees if the interests of employees are violated. In the process of motivating, both sides interact<sup>6</sup>.

The shared goal theory states that people are highly motivated if they participate in setting goals together. Motivation is additionally increased when there is a good exchange of information between employees and the manager. When the degree of achievement of the goal is discussed, the accompanying circumstances, difficulties and ways to overcome them.

The theory of justice was developed by J. S. Adams. It assumes that motivation and connection with the organization are stronger when people believe that they are treated fairly and rewarded commensurate with the results of their work. It is just fair to reward people doing the same job of equal value and rewarding the best employees<sup>7</sup>.

Despite the differences, theories of motivation complement each other. Their assumptions remain valid and can be successfully applied in public administration conditions.

#### **4 Specificity of motivating in public administration**

In motivating public administration employees, it is important that the manager of a public institution gets to know the factors that motivate his subordinates. The mental state of the employee is of significant importance, expressed in the readiness to make a specific effort to achieve the organization's goals. The motivational system of public administration employees is based on hard and soft motivators.

The undoubted advantage of hard motivators is that they are noticeable and immediately bring about the desired effects. Providing a sense of security and stability, enabling the implementation of plans, job satisfaction, a variety of tasks that are soft motivators lead to long-term and stable motivation of the employee and

---

<sup>6</sup> Alan Gick, Małgorzata Tarczyńska, *Motywowanie pracowników, PWE, Warszawa 1999*, pp. 111-112.

<sup>7</sup> *Op. Cit.* pp. 342-343.

eliminate dissatisfaction. Soft motivators, however, require time, their results are not visible immediately and it is more difficult to translate them into concrete, measurable effects.

In the Polish public administration environment, tough motivators include: seniority bonus, functional bonus, special bonus, jubilee award, additional annual salary, award for special achievements.

The seniority bonus amounts to 5% of the monthly salary and is paid monthly after 5 years of work. Each year of work, the bonus increases from 1 to 20 percent of the monthly base salary

The functional bonus is granted to employees employed in independent positions in connection with their function. Its rates range from 40 to 250% of the lowest national wage.

A special bonus is granted to the mayor of the city, the starost and the marshal of the voivodeship. It ranges from 20% to 50% of the basic salary and function allowance.

Additional annual remuneration, the so-called "Thirteen" is paid in the amount of 8.5% of the sum of remuneration for work received by the employee during the calendar year.

Financial rewards should be paid for outstanding professional achievements that go beyond the scope of normal duties.

The incentive tools typical for public administration include benefits paid from the Company Social Benefit Fund. Public administration entities are legally obliged to create such a fund. The most popular benefits of this type include:

- co-financing of holiday rest,
- subsidizing summer camps for employees' children,
- Christmas packages,
- benefits for random accidents,

- sports tickets,
- trips and integration meetings,
- preferential loans,
- group insurance.

Soft motivators in public administration include:

- sense of security and job stabilization,
- sense of realizing the social mission,
- job satisfaction,
- training and development opportunities
- recognition and prestige of the position held.

In the public administration employees' motivation system, it is important not only to know the motivating factors, but also those that have a demotivating effect. The most frequently mentioned demotivators are lack of positive support from management, lack of objectivity, unequal division of tasks, unfair distribution of rewards, favoritism, lack of trust, unclear scope of duties, lack of decision-making, bad atmosphere at work, holding back initiative.

The manager's lack of recognition and respect is one of the most important demotivators in public administration. Every employee has a desire to be appreciated. Improper behavior by a manager may result in disregard of duties and inaccurate performance of tasks by the employee. Employees want to be informed, especially about matters related to shaping working conditions, pay and promotions. Good and effective communication plays a vital role in human relationships. It aims to create conditions that encourage employees to express their thoughts, views and opinions as well as to present their own ideas and proposals. Good communication affects the atmosphere at work and mutual relations, which in consequence improves motivation and cooperation. Lack of effective communication, poor information flow or a complete lack of information negatively affects employee

motivation<sup>8</sup>. It can be assumed that this applies to any organization regardless of the sector and country of origin.

## 5 Summary

Creating an effective incentive system in public administration is not an easy task. When creating it, it is worth using the achievements of motivation theory. Understanding the needs of employees is crucial. It is also worth using a variety of motivational tools, both hard and soft. There is no doubt that it is worth trying to motivate public servants. This will translate into better work results and citizens' satisfaction.

## References

- Armstrong M. (2011). Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi. Wyd V, Warszawa. Listwan T. [red] (2010). Zarządzanie kadrami. Wyd. IV, Wydawnictwo C. H. Beck. Warszawa.
- Gick A., Tarczyńska M. (1999). Motywowanie pracowników. PWE. Warszawa
- Hysa B., Grabowska B. (2014). System motywacji pracowników administracji publicznej na podstawie wybranej jednostki ZUS. Zeszyty naukowe Politechniki Śląskiej. Organizacja i zarządzanie.
- Tadeusz Oleksyn, Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi w organizacji, Wyd. III, 2014, p. 292.
- Zakrzewska-Bielawska A.[red.] (2012). Podstawy zarządzania. Wydawnictwo Oficyna. Warszawa.

---

<sup>8</sup> Beata Hysa, Bożena Grabowska, System motywacji pracowników administracji publicznej na podstawie wybranej jednostki ZUS, Zeszyty naukowe Politechniki Śląskiej, Organizacja i zarządzanie, 2014, p. 326.