

Motivational Equilibrium

Achieving Balance Between
Workplace Motivation & Leadership

Hesston L. Johnson





Motivational Equilibrium introduces leaders to employee motivation and commitment by examining workplace factors. Motivational Equilibrium is based in research and observation with a comprehensive approach on how to improve employee motivation and commitment, retention and performance. Find effective motivational leadership in this journey.

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By Hesston L. Johnson

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EPUB ISBN: 978-1-64438-995-9

MOBI ISBN: 978-1-64438-996-6

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Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida.

Printed in the United States of America.

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Printed on acid-free paper.

BookLocker.com, Inc.
2019

First Edition

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Dr. Hesston L. Johnson is the author of *The Optimized Leader*, multiple leadership articles and *Behind the Scenes of Healthcare - Motivation and Commitment of Healthcare employees*.

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For more information, services and updates, visit www.HesstonJohnson.com.

Dr. Hesston L. Johnson

Dedication

There are so many great people in my life that have constantly been in my corner and cheered me on through challenges and goals.

I dedicate this book to my greatest supporters, my family.

My father, Larry Johnson

My mother, Janet Johnson

My sister, Misti Johnson-Eslinger

My brother, Laramie Johnson

Dr. Hesston L. Johnson

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Introduction – The Missing Links

When we think of leadership and management, we naturally think about the management of people, schedules, performance, hiring, firing, and running a business. Though these items are part of leadership and management, they are all superficial. Without strategic training, knowledge, and insight, leaders fall into performing this list like a job description that is conducted in a manner that is situational, reactionary, and present. In other words, these leaders and managers functionally operate day-to-day with little energy expended to developing the future and enhancing their leadership skills. As a leader myself, not only do I see this every day, but I was also this type of manager. I had no mentor, I had a boss that managed in the same way – functionally, present, and situational rather than forward and future thinking.

What's missing from this list is the linkage of motivation factors, job attachment, organizational commitment, leadership alignment, and leader-follower alignment. Essentially, going deeper into the human element is what transforms managers into leaders and builds successful careers. That journey, diving deeper into the human element, is what this book provides.

First, this book examines and expands upon employee motivation factors. This includes job attachment, motivation factor types, employee commitment, and leadership interactions. Second, this book provides a model of categorization of motivation types. Third, this book presents an analysis of a motivation factor study on point-of-contact employees in customer service roles. Fourth, this book provides an approach to develop motivational equilibrium in the workplace.

Lastly, this book closes with approaches to maintaining balance and equilibrium.

Chapter One – Job Attachment

What leadership characteristics are necessary to motivate someone to a state of attachment to his or her career? What motivates someone to a level of attachment to his or her job, employer, or relationships? Simply, settings where leaders provide a warm, consistent environment while holding high personal expectations of themselves and providing employees with resources and coaching supports emotional job attachment. Through supporting job attachment, leaders build loyalty, inclusion, and motivation to reach higher levels of achievement.¹⁰¹ Conversely, if you have experienced a leader that demonstrated little to no effort to developing you as an employee and doesn't provide a warm, stable, and predictable environment, you have likely felt lower levels of emotional attachment and personal connection to your position, manager, and career. It is for these differences, as well as understanding employee motivation and leadership practices, that I provide an extensive opening of this book on job attachment. As we move through the coming pages and chapters, a framework will be established in how to view the interacting components of employee motivation and how to improve your understanding and knowledge to become a better informed and more effective leader. Through this book you will discover tools, behaviors, and approaches to build more effective teams through workplace motivation and leadership.

Job Attachment

Attachment Theory was born in 1969 as a model to describe the attachment of infants and children with caregivers and parents.¹⁰² In the past few decades, this theoretical model has evolved and migrated into

business and leadership, expanding upon the seminal construct.¹⁰² There are three job attachment types: *avoidant attachment*, *anxious attachment*, and *secure attachment*.¹⁰³ Anxious attachment refers to the extent to which an individual worries that others will not be available when needed, leading to anxiously seeking support and assistance.¹⁰³ Avoidant attachment refers to the extent to which an individual does not trust another's intent and motivations, leading to the defensively striving to maintain skill, behavioral, and emotional independence.¹⁰³ Secure attachment represents the level of confidence that those needed (peers, leaders) in times of need will be responsive, present, and supportive.¹⁰³ Secure attachment supports confidence, optimism, stability, and decreased job stress.¹⁰³

Job attachment, on the most basic level, is the interactions between two levels: self and others.¹⁰² The interaction is supported by the self-worth and perception one holds that they will receive needed and necessary support to perform the duties and expectations demanded of them. Returning to the opening of this chapter, how are you, as a leader, providing supportive behaviors to create a level of job attachment? How are you decreasing workplace stressors so that employees seek out opportunities for secure attachment behaviors? Job attachment is directly correlated with employee productivity, ethical decision-making, negotiation behaviors, and creativity in problem solving.¹⁰⁴⁻¹⁰⁷ When these employee needs are not fulfilled, employees enter a state of increased stress, burnout, and turnover.¹⁰⁸⁻¹¹⁰ In other words, turnover and performance are directly impacted in settings where there is anxiety in an absence of needed support, diminished trust, lost confidence, and role stability.

Employees that are securely attached (perceives support will be provided in times of need or distress) are least likely to put off work,

have difficulty in completing tasks, and have fear of rejection from peers and leaders.¹¹¹ Having securely attached employees significantly increases performance and output while enabling a culture of inclusion, teamwork, and shared values. Employees with anxious attachment hold elevated levels of fear of rejection as a result of poor performance (as opposed to being supported by leaders or peers). Those with avoidant attachment (lacking trust in peers and leaders) tend to avoid social and workplace interactions, contributing to cultural withdrawal and decreased engagement in the workplace.¹¹¹

With such influence on internalized employee perceived environments, attachment styles – driven by leaders and peers – has the capacity to significantly influence work-related attitudes, outcomes, and behaviors. The environment the leader creates is exceedingly powerful in this context. From the leader perspective, active presence can enhance secure attachment when support is provided and role challenges are met with the perceptions that employees and peers naturally need support. From the peer-to-peer perspective, a supportive culture results in increased secured attachment. To reflect, what type of support do your followers truly perceive to receive from you as a leader? Are you supporting your team as much as they support one another or is your team supporting one another autonomously without your input, involvement, and/or knowledge?

The objective is to reduce anxiety and worries that others, including the leader, will not be available for individual performance needs. Additionally, motives and intent should be transparent to build trust. Employees should not reach a level of defense performance where they strive to maintain skills and emotional independence. Rather, leaders should develop settings and cultures where subordinates know, without question, that they will be supported in times of need.

Attachment States and Contributions

Attachment states occur when employees build the perception of their environment, employer, leader, and peers. When states of attachment are established, predictability of behavior and behavioral exchanges develop. Ideally, leaders seek secure attachment motivators to obtain felt security through an environment that is predictable and supportive to mitigate workplace stressors and improve employee engagement and performance. States of attachment also support employee autonomy and exploration of their environment (cultural participation, growth, development).¹⁰² As outlined, attachment is based in experiences that influence an employee's generalized perceptions, emotions, and behavioral interactions with others in the environment and organization.¹⁰⁷ It is important to note that attachment states and types are, to some extent, fluid, and situational. Variables in the environment among peers and leaders may directly influence attachment by presence or absence. Further, more sustainable attachment states are associated with the employer, viewed independently as an organization. As I will outline in Chapter 2, organizations hold a significant influence on employee motivation, developing cultural integration among employees and subculture development. These behaviors within the organization positively influence cultural participation (active participation in relationships and cultural norms) and development, driving organizational dependency on subcultures.

When considering dyadic relationships, leader-follower relationships emerge as a contributor to attachment states. The roles of a supportive leader builds trust and secure attachment while follower

expectations and behaviors towards leaders share similar characteristics to the dynamics of seeking support. Followers without consistent support from leaders become pre-occupied with their own needs of attachment.¹⁰² Needs may be stress-, task-, or skill-related and emotional support needs related. When consistent support is absent, employees will distance themselves from leaders (avoidant attachment) with the subsequent consequences of being counterproductive in their role.¹⁰² Additionally, avoidant attachment employees lack trust in leaders, may be unsure of peers, and question organizational objectives and direction. Table 1.1 outlines attachment as a construct with contributors and outcomes. Tables 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 outline the characteristics of each job attachment state.

Table 1.1. Job Attachment Theory

Attachment Type	Contributors	Outcomes
Job Attachment Theory: The theoretical construct to describe distinct relational perspectives in organizational behavior.	Leader enablement of consistent environment, mentoring behaviors, supportive behaviors in times of need for employees, warm environment, predictability, inclusion, achievement, care, and concern for one's growth.	Positive factors and contributors: Follower productivity, ethical decision-making, negotiation behaviors, creativity, problem solving, and worker autonomy. Negative factors and contributors: Decreased autonomy, increased burnout, increased stress, and increased turnover.

Table 1.2. Anxious attachment

Attachment Type	Contributors	Outcomes
Anxious Attachment: The extent to which an individual worries that others will not be available when needed.	Shaped by experiences with unreliable support structures; past experiences where peers and leaders intermittently or consistently failed at providing technical and emotional support.	A predictor of heightened arousal, low levels of emotional regulation, and hypersensitivity to social and emotional clues from others. Cultural participation and integration is emotionally and behaviorally unstable.

Table 1.3. Avoidant attachment

Attachment Type	Contributors	Outcomes
Avoidant Attachment: The extent to which an individual does not trust the intent and motivations of those needed (peers, managers).	Shaped by neglected support in relationships; insecurity of trust in others based on ulterior motives and values; past support received that was not sufficient or beneficial in the interest of the employee.	Negative perceptions of others; deactivation of proximity seeking, discontinued, or lessened quest for support and attempts to handle distress alone. The individual withdraws from group and culture participation as it relates to technical performance and support needs.

Table 1.4. Secure attachment

Attachment Type	Contributors	Outcomes
Secure Attachment: The level of confidence that those needed (peers and leaders) in times of need will be responsive and supportive.	Shaped by reinforced confidence experienced when support is needed; past needs have been anticipated, or fully satisfied consistent with the employee needs for intrinsic motivation needs.	Secure Attachment is associated with increased levels of optimism, higher views of value of oneself and other; confidence that support will be available during distress and emotional instability.

Mentoring

Due to close relationships in workplaces, it is important to review mentoring. Mentoring holds a significant level of influence between the mentor and mentee. In many organizational settings we find protégés or high potential employees for development. In observations of job attachment and mentoring, studies indicate feedback acceptance is greater when relationships are significant and influential and secure attachment is supported by mentor behaviors. Whereas the perceived quality of feedback is viewed higher when the mentor is supportive, consistent, and available for the needs of the mentee.¹¹² When avoidant- and anxious-attached mentor-mentee relationships occur, mentees move in a behavioral direction that diminishes their willingness to be mentored in the future while viewing mentoring as less supportive and less valuable.¹¹² Imagine the costs and impact associated with a inadequate leader providing mentoring and development for the future development of the organization, team, and department.

In my career I have witnessed the selection of leaders in new roles that are technically competent, but behaviorally absent and incompetent. You can go from having a leader that is competent on both levels and be securely attached to a new leader that is not available or is not behaviorally supportive. In one leadership change you migrate from securely attached to anxious attachment or, even worse, avoidant attachment. Visionary leaders create secure attachment through consistency supported over time; task-competent managers create anxious or avoidant attachment in a single interaction. A secure base for support from leaders facilitates greater levels of proactivity in employees, supporting fulfillment of attachment needs.¹⁰²

Motivation Factors and Job Attachment

In Chapter 2, motivation factors, including triggers, intrinsic, extrinsic, supporters, detractors, activators, and mitigators, are reviewed. It is, at this point, important to understand the influence of job attachment on motivation types. The assessment of influence on attachment types is supported by my motivation factor study conducted among entry-level customer service positions as it relates to multiple domains in Chapter 3. Motivation categories in the study include intrinsic (motivation scale), extrinsic (motivation scale), positive triggers (factor impact on personal motivation), adverse triggers (factor impact scale for factor influence), attractors (factors of why individuals stay with their employer), deflators (causes for staying according to continuance commitment factors), supporters (among peers and culture) and peer triggers (motivators supporting peer dynamics). The results and analysis will be thoroughly reviewed in Chapter 3.

Table 1.5. Motivation factor influences by attachment type.

Attachment Type	Motivation and Factors Positively Influenced	Motivation and Factors Adversely Influenced
Anxious Attachment: The extent to which an individual worries that others will not be available when needed.	Workplace competition.	Control over ones role, role fulfillment, aspirations, curiosity, goal setting, variety, supervisor trust/relationships, status, problem sharing, cultural integration, personal investment, and group-sharing factors.
Avoidant Attachment: The extent to which an individual does not trust the intent and motivations of those needed.	Workplace competition.	Cooperation, aspirations, curiosity, goal-setting, supervisor quality/trust/relationships, status, personal meaning, problem sharing, emotional connection, cultural participation, personal investment, role consistency, and group-sharing factors.

Secure Attachment: The level of confidence that those needed (peers and leaders) in times of need will be responsive and supportive.	Control over ones role, goal setting, aspirations, role fulfillment, supervisor relationships, status, stay intention, problem sharing, emotional connection, cultural contribution and participation, role and skill consistency, and group-sharing factors.	Workplace competition.
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Workplace competition is noted as positively influential as the factor was insufficient in motivating employees in anxious and avoidant attachment. The factor was found to be among the lowest of motivation factors, largely assumed by the workforce skill level and aspirations measures lower than 50% ranking of motivation factors in secure attachment. Theoretically, job attachment has many benefits when secure attachment is in place and employees are confident support is routinely available. Anxious and avoidant attachment logically have many adverse influences of most motivation factors within the workplace. This makes conceptual sense in the definitive descriptions of each of the attachment types within the construct.



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