



Hospitality Employee Psychology

Proven Brain Theories Hotel
Managers Can Use Every Day

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Hospitality-Employee Psychology:

Proven Brain Theories Hotel Managers Can Use Every Day

As a hotel manager, anticipating your employees' behavior will help you make informed decisions that'll build a happier, more engaged, and more productive hospitality team.

For example, do you know how your staff would respond to:

- Encouragement?
- Self-expression?
- Observation?
- Recognition?
- Groupthink?
- Autonomy?

If you're not sure, it's okay.

This eBook will run you through four psychological theories every hospitality manager should understand, including:

1. The Hawthorne Effect: for a *productive* hospitality team.
2. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: for an *engaged* team.
3. Herzberg's Theory: for *motivated* people.
4. Groupthink: for *honest* employees.

It's a quick, enlightening read that will change the way you work *for the better*.

Ready?

Let's jump in:



How to Drive Hotel Workers to Peak Productivity (According to Science)

The place: Hawthorn, Illinois. **The year:** 1924.

The story: The head of Hawthorne Works, an electrical factory just outside of Chicago, commissioned a study. He wanted to see what, if any, effect light levels had on his workers' productivity.

Little did he know that the study's findings would completely change the way people understood productivity.

During the study, productivity improved, only to fall off again when the study was over. The researchers also tested other variables, like varying break-time lengths and altering the location and cleanliness of workstations. Again, productivity improved during the studies, and steadily waned after they were over.

This led the researchers to theorize that the employees at Hawthorne Works weren't affected by the experimental changes as much as they were by the attention brought on by the experiments themselves.

So, basically, lighting conditions had no impact on the workers. The knowledge that they were being watched, however, was what made all the difference.

And so, the Hawthorne Effect was born. It was *officially* coined by Henry Landsberger, who was analyzing the Hawthorne Works experiments in 1950.

Today, the Hawthorne Effect is attributed to individuals who change their behavior because they know they're being observed.

The Takeaway for Hospitality Managers?

If you want your employees to care more and, in turn, work harder, let them know you're paying attention.

That doesn't mean you should micromanage your workers. In fact, micromanagement will likely demotivate your employees' and kill morale. You should provide consistent feedback about their specific failures and successes.

Doing so relays your care and attentiveness, factors that will push your team to make a habit out of doing more in less time.

Provide positive and negative feedback randomly throughout the day. Do so:

- In person, on the phone, or in an email.
- After observing interactions with guests.
- In group meetings and one-on-one talks.

Whether it's a quick, in-passing comment or a sit-down conversation, the point is to let your people know they're being:

1. Observed, and
2. Held accountable.

That knowledge alone can make a world of difference.



REVEALED: Drivers That'll Motivate Your Hotel Employees to Give Their All

Before we talk about employee drivers, let's take a step back and focus on the more general *human* drivers.

What motivates *people*? That's the question psychologist Abraham Maslow asked back in the early 1940s. He wanted to understand what propelled people through life.

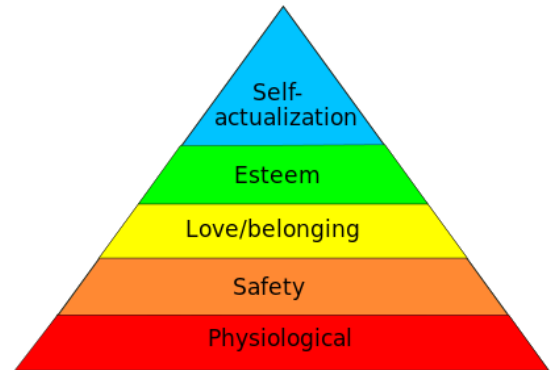
The theory he came up with remains one of the most accepted and well-known frameworks in human psychology. It applies to everyone: you, your best friend, your dentist, and yes, even your hotel employees.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

According to Maslow, people are driven to achieve the following specific needs (starting at the base with “physiological” and moving up from there). A person can only move upward if they have achieved the preceding need.

Here's the breakdown:

1. **Physiological:** air, food, water, shelter, sleep.
2. **Safety:** order, law, and stability.
3. **Love and Belonging:** friendship, intimacy, affection, and love.
4. **Esteem:** self-respect, independence, achievement, and status.
5. **Self-Actualization:** incredibly complex matters, such as being truly self-fulfilled and realizing one's own personal potential.



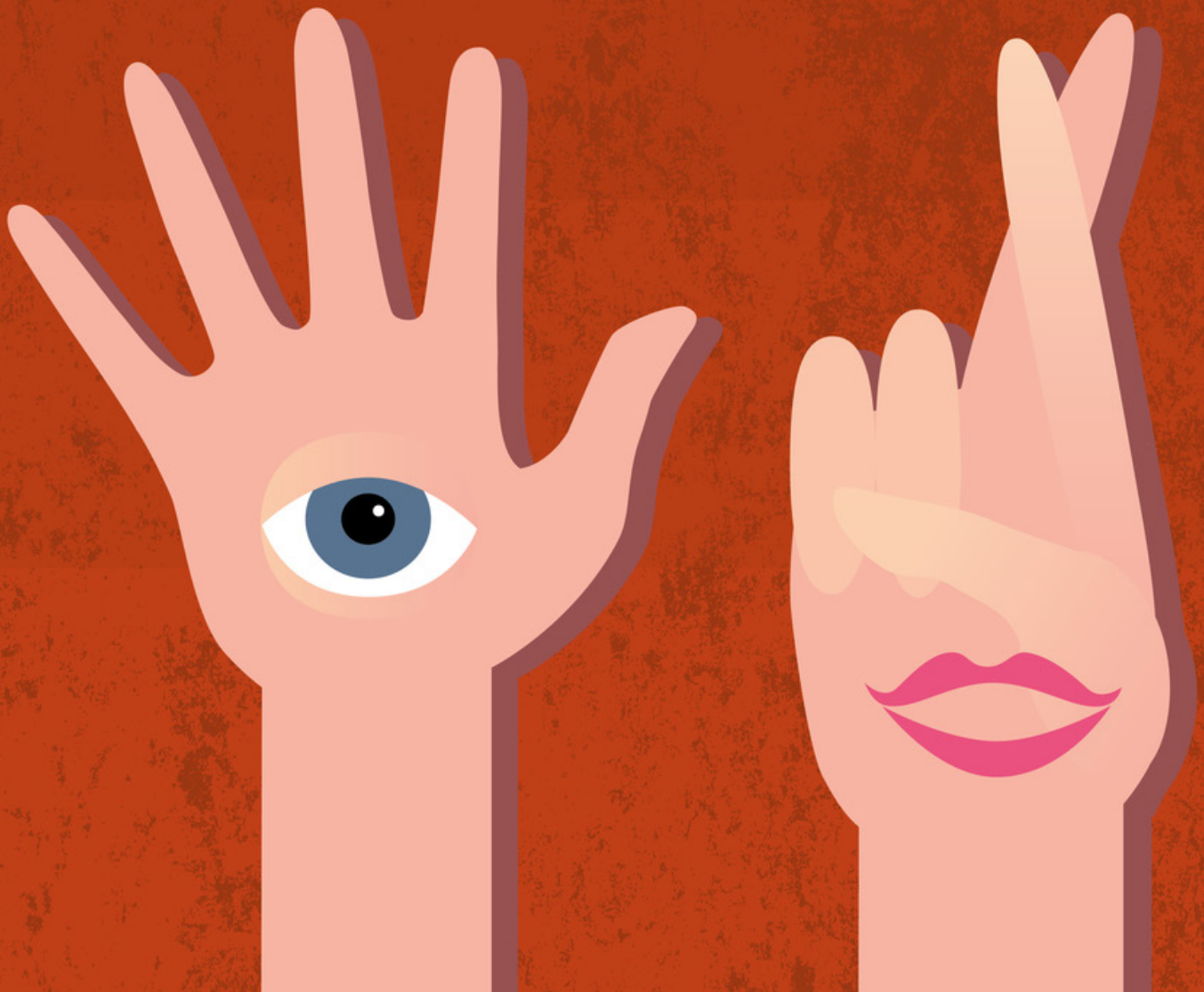
The Takeaway for Hospitality Managers?

Maslow's Hierarchy applies to everyone on the planet. So if you're a hotel manager looking for ways to motivate your workers, appealing to their hierarchical needs would be a surefire way to capture and hold their attention.

For example, when it comes to your employees':

1. **Physiological needs:** you can pay a fair salary and provide regular breaks, easily accessible restrooms, and free snacks in the breakroom.
2. **Safety needs:** you can invest in insurance coverage for your team. Providing employees with consistent feedback and recognition also gives them the job security they crave.
3. **Love and Belonging needs:** you can subsidize bar crawls, pizza parties, sports leagues, and any other outing you like. It all expedites team bonding.
4. **Esteem needs:** you can encourage praise and recognition by sending out congratulatory emails and hanging up “Employee of the Month” plaques that'll boost morale, build confidence, and inspire excellence.
5. **Self-Actualization needs:** you can give top-performers the opportunity to lead others in the form of mentorship roles.

Supercharging your team's engagement levels comes down to understanding their drivers. Luckily, Abraham Maslow has done all the heavy research.



A Quick Tip for Hotel Managers Seeking Honest Employee Feedback

Desk clerks, porters, concierges, waiters, and housekeepers: these are the people who keep your hotel running like a well-oiled engine.

As a manager, it's your job to not only support and develop these people, but also to "mine" each individual for valuable information that'll make your processes smarter and smoother.

In an effort to make collecting this info more efficient, most managers simply hold team meetings. This way, they figure, they can gather feedback while *collectively* brainstorming...

Good idea, *right?*

WRONG. And here's why:

Because Groupthink.

Groupthink is a psychological wonder that occurs when several people – **driven by the need to harmonize their thoughts** – end up being dishonest about their true feelings.

It happens because (most people) don't enjoy confrontation, especially when they're at work. In fact, the urge to avoid butting heads is so strong that group members end up bending the truth, sometimes severely.

The Takeaway for Hospitality Managers?

Groupthink can wreak havoc on your team meetings, turning them into futile, uncomfortable exercises that do more harm than good.

The solution: to get sensible, genuine, real feedback, don't ask for it in team meetings.

Managers who want to have honest conversations with their employees – conversations that yield authentic feedback, legitimate ideas, and true change – need to have one-on-one meetings.

They are the only way to ensure Groupthink doesn't slink its way into the conversation, turning opinions into unrecognizable glimpses of what they once were.

With that said, you shouldn't completely divorce your staff from team meetings. They're perfectly fine if you need to make an announcement or educate your people. Just be cautious when it comes to the brainstorming bit.



What Your Hotel Employees (Probably) Love and Hate About Their Jobs

In 1959, a psychologist named Frederick Herzberg set out to better understand factors that affect workers' on-the-job attitudes.

He went about his research by asking employees what pleased and displeased them about their work. His findings, which were published in his 1959 book, *The Motivation to Work*, can be applied to just about any profession, in any industry – **including hospitality** – and they've yet to be challenged.

Here's what he discovered:

The factors that motivate and satisfy employees at work are completely different from those that dissatisfy them. By that logic, fixing *dissatisfying* on-the-job issues wouldn't necessarily have an impact on employees' satisfaction levels.

To explain the results of his study, Herzberg created the *Motivation-Hygiene Theory*, or the *Two Factor Theory*. It would go on to earn him his label as one of the great original thinkers in management and motivational theory.

So, let's break it down:

Herzberg called the factors that satisfied employees “**motivators**,” while those that had a dissatisfying effect were called “**hygiene factors**” (i.e., maintenance issues that, if present, didn't provide satisfaction, only dissatisfaction).

Motivators (LOVE)

According to Herzberg's research, the top six on-the-job “motivators” (in order) are:

1. Achievement
2. Recognition
3. Job Description
4. Level of Responsibility
5. Advancement Opportunities
6. Professional and Personal Growth

Hygiene Factors (HATE)

And the top six on-the-job “hygiene factors” (in order) are:

1. Company Policies
2. Supervision Style
3. Boss/Employee Relations
4. Work Conditions
5. Pay
6. Colleague/Employee Relations

The opposite of love is not necessarily hate.

Based on Herzberg’s theory, the opposite of on-the-job satisfaction is not necessarily dissatisfaction; it’s actually no satisfaction whatsoever.

And the opposite of dissatisfaction, accordingly, is also no satisfaction.

The Takeaway for Hospitality Managers?

Fixing what your hospitality employees hate about their work (i.e., Hygiene Factors) *won’t* necessarily make them like their jobs more. However, giving your employee more of what they love about their job (i.e., Motivators) *will* make them *more* satisfied.

So, for example, paying your hospitality employees more money won’t necessarily lead to job satisfaction. But a leader that makes steps to continuously recognize their employees’ hard work, for instance, *will* see happier, more satisfied workers.

What else can you do to bring out the best in your team members? Here are two Herzberg-approved pointers:

1. Ensure your employees are sufficiently challenged by the work they’re doing. The job should help them grow, professionally and personally, over time.
2. When employees exhibit skills that go beyond what their duties call for, give them more responsibilities or promote them. If you don’t want disengaged workers, don’t let people become bored in their roles.

At the end of the day:

Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory is just that: a *theory*.

It's not gravity. It's not a law. It's technically not 100%.

But that's okay, because the theory's most important takeaway is this: **genuine motivation will always come from within** (just look at the top six motivators).

Managers who recognize this fact and find a way to appeal to their employees' intrinsic motivators will never run low on talent.

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