

3 Layers of Motivation (Updated for 2018)

Description

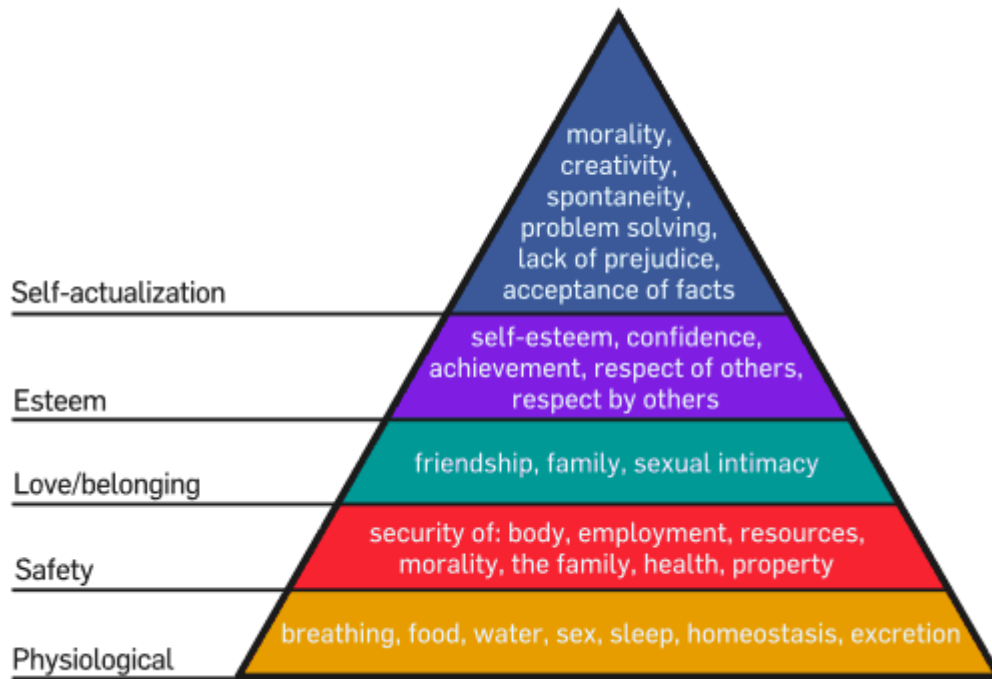
The more I consider motivation, the more I realise it is one of those things we in gamification use as a catch-all. It's a bit like how we treat the term "game mechanics" and, well, gamification!

Generally speaking, you will hear the terms intrinsic and extrinsic when motivation is spoken about. You will hear Deci & Ryan, Dan Pink, Maslow and more spoken about. However, when it comes down to it our argument is always the same. Intrinsic motivation is always better than extrinsic rewards. At times you will also hear a further comment that a balance of extrinsic rewards and intrinsic motivation will yield the best results.

I myself bang on about [RAMP](#); relatedness, autonomy, mastery and purpose. I talk about supporting these motivators with well planned and thought out extrinsic rewards and nudges. However, it seems to me that motivation has several layers and we only seem to speak about one or two of them. There is a more fundamental and base level of motivation that we all seem to ignore. I have spoken about it before [here](#), but I wanted to make my case more clearly!

Base

Let's think about your job for a moment. Most go to work for one reason, to earn money. Money leads to security. It provides you shelter, it keeps your family safe, it provides food for you all. Before money and jobs and the like, this was all much more primal. You secured your family by physically protecting them. You hunted for food and you built shelters. Now, this is all handled for most by getting money. We don't need to hunt or build huts for ourselves, we buy all of those things. If we extrapolate that and take a look at Maslow's hierarchy of needs again, we see the most base motivations for humans are physiological needs and safety/security.



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Having just shown that in this day and age, money is what provides the majority of security (including food) for most, it stands to reason that money is actually now one of our most base needs. I am not talking about being rich – rather having enough to guarantee physiological needs and safety.

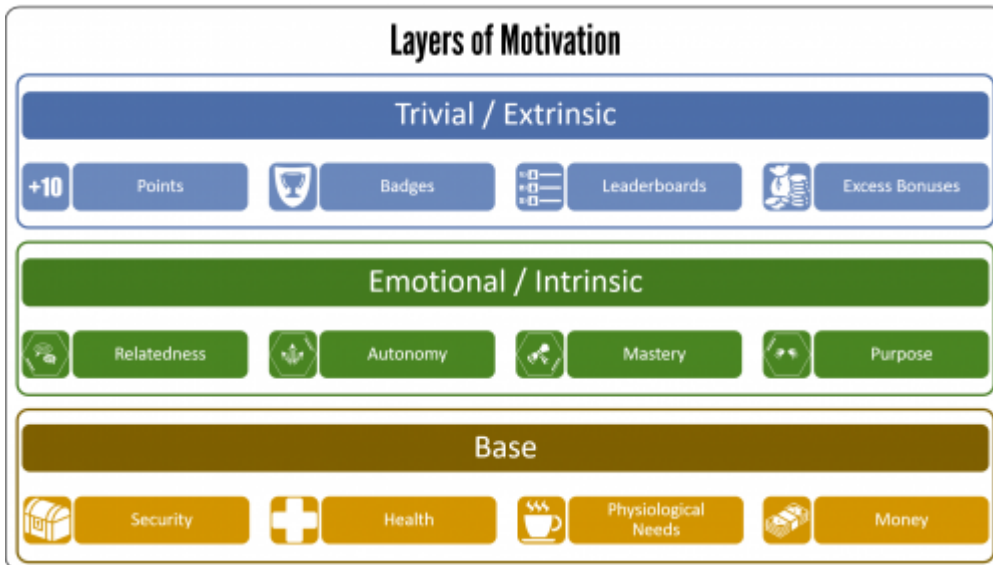
Many people enjoy their job, which is great. But even those who say “I would work here if they didn't pay me” are generally talking bollocks. You need to survive and in our world work gives you that opportunity.

Emotional/Intrinsic

Once these base needs and motivations are satisfied, then we can focus on the other more emotional motivations, which this is where [RAMP](#) starts to come in. Our need for relatedness, autonomy, mastery, purpose, status, friendship etc.

Trivial/Extrinsic

Finally, we can look at the trivial things. More money than we need to survive, bonuses and other types of extrinsic rewards. In gamification things like points, badges, leaderboards, competitions, prizes etc.



Adding Some Clarity (2018 Update)

As linear as this all seems, satisfy the bottom layer, then the middle, then use gamification, it isn't that simple. Short term [engagement](#) using extrinsic gamification can work fine, whatever the other needs may be, but it will have no sustainability. Also, what one person finds extrinsically motivating, others may find much more intrinsic.

The other key one to look at is **Money** in the *base* layer and **Excess Bonuses** being in the *trivial/extrinsic* section. Money is a base need these days, it is what helps us to guarantee security. Having more than we need is also not a terrible thing, money can't buy you happiness, but it can buy a lot of stuff that can go towards making you happy! However, there is a point where money is no longer the biggest interest. In a job you hate, you don't tend to leave because of the money, it is other factors. If you are then offered more money, it rarely makes you change your mind as the rest of the environment is the same! If you have enough money to be at least comfortable, then excess bonuses are not going to provide long-term motivation to do **good** work.

Excess bonuses can also lead to terrible behaviour, with overjustification effect being a massive issue. If you are just working for the money, quality can be affected as can decision making. Did you make the decision because it was best for the customer, or because it helped you get your bonus?

Anyway, if you are going to use my 3 Layers of Motivation, please use this image from now on ?

Using this in Gamification

The question becomes, how can we benefit from this knowledge in gamification? The answer is, by understanding what people actually need. Forget motivation for a moment, and look at base needs. If a person feels they cannot support themselves and guarantee the security and safety of their family – no amount of emotional or trivial motivation is going to actually motivate them, at least not in the way you are probably hoping it will.

This is obviously focused on Enterprise gamification. It is not the job of an advertising company using gamification to sell a product, to ensure the base needs of their target audience. This is the job of the individual and their employer. However, if their target audience does not feel they have their base needs satisfied by work or other means, it is pretty unlikely that the advertising will work on them, gamified or otherwise!

In the enterprise, be aware that if your employees are struggling financially and it is perceived that you could improve this, gamification could seriously backfire. The money you spend on that could be seen to be spent on improving the lives of the employees at a base level rather than a trivial one!

Category

1. Gamification
2. Opinion

Tags

1. dan pink
2. deci
3. enterprise
4. maslow
5. money
6. motivation
7. needs
8. ramp
9. Ryan

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