



# Psychological Theories to Motivate Employees



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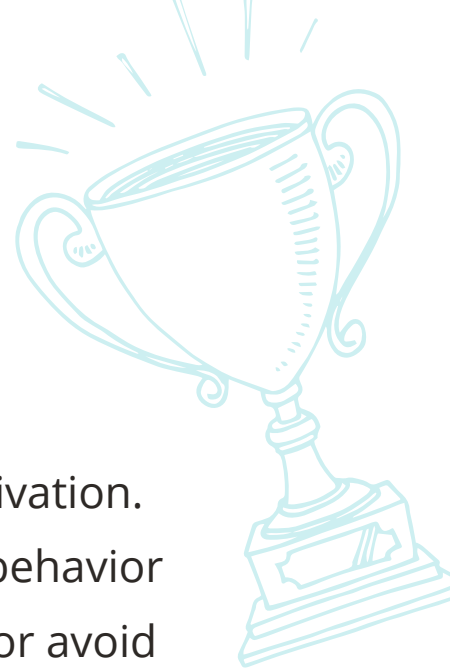


# The Motivation Basics

Let's start with two basic types of motivation and how each can be utilized in the workplace

# Extrinsic vs. Intrinsic

There are two commonly known types of motivation. **Extrinsic motivation** is when we engage in a behavior or activity because we want to earn a reward or avoid punishment. **Intrinsic motivation** is when we engage in a behavior because we find it rewarding or enjoyable.



## Extrinsic Motivation at Work

*Working for reasons besides the joy of the work.*

- Offer competitive bonuses and perks
- Customize incentives to each individual
- Give yearly awards for outstanding performance

## Intrinsic Motivation at Work

*Doing work because you enjoy it or it is satisfying.*

- Remind people how tasks fit into the overall mission
- Invest in personal and professional development
- Recognize and show appreciation frequently



Extrinsic and intrinsic motivation both have their place at work. Start with extrinsic motivators, then take time to help your employees develop intrinsic motivation. It is more sustainable and effective in the long run.

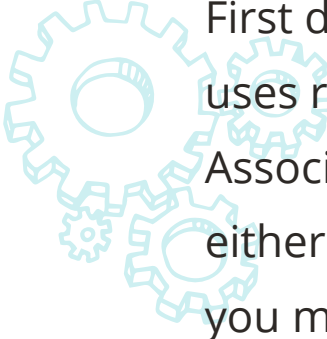


A background image of three business professionals in an office setting, overlaid with a semi-transparent teal filter. A man in a white shirt and tie stands in the background, looking down. A woman in a dark blazer leans over a desk, pointing at a laptop. A man with a beard and white shirt sits at the desk, looking at the laptop. The overall tone is professional and collaborative.

# Operant Conditioning

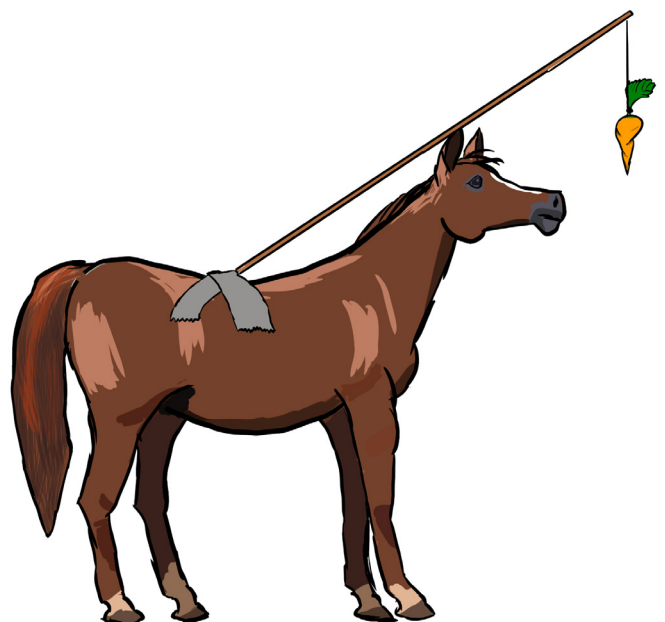
Motivating employees with fear as described in B. F. Skinner's theory, plus how it relates to horses

# Using Extrinsic Motivation



First described by B. F. Skinner, operant conditioning uses rewards and punishments to influence behavior. Associations are made between certain behaviors and either negative or positive consequences. For example, you may have a horse that is reluctant to move, so you dangle a carrot in front of it as motivation. If the horse stops at any point, you hit it with a stick. The two pieces of motivation in this scenario are a **reward** for moving forward and a **punishment** for failing to do so. The latter is specifically tied to fear - The horse doesn't want the pain of being hit with the stick, so it continues on.

If employees are being motivated only by rewards (carrots) and punished when they do something wrong (hit with a stick), they will only be extrinsically motivated. The task will get done, but not if the reward or incentive is removed.



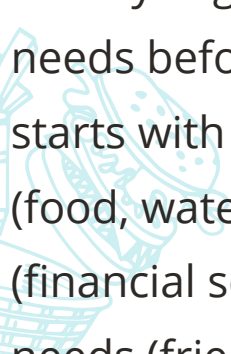


A woman with curly hair and glasses, wearing a blue shirt and a plaid apron, is holding a small potted plant in a greenhouse. She is looking up at the plant. In the background, there are many other potted plants hanging from the ceiling. Another person is visible in the lower right, working on a plant.

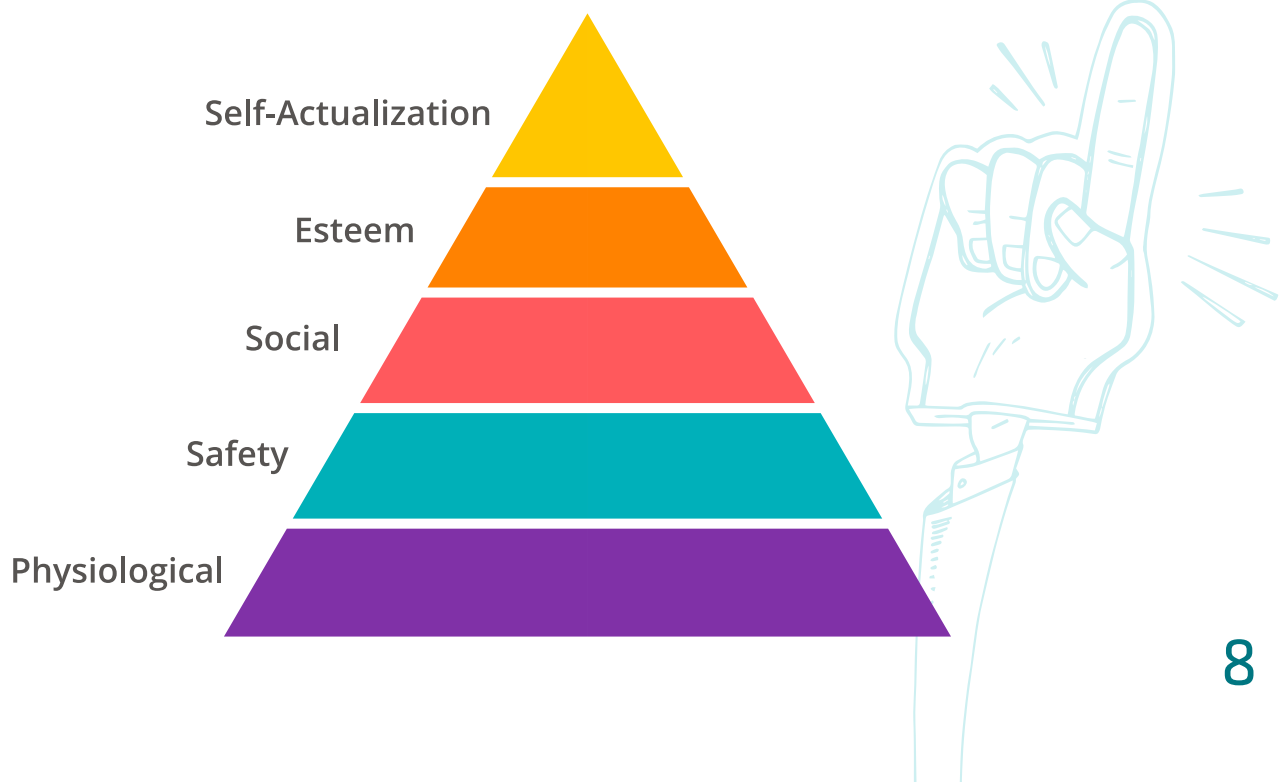
# Hierarchy of Needs

How Abraham Maslow's theory relates to the workplace and can motivate employees from within

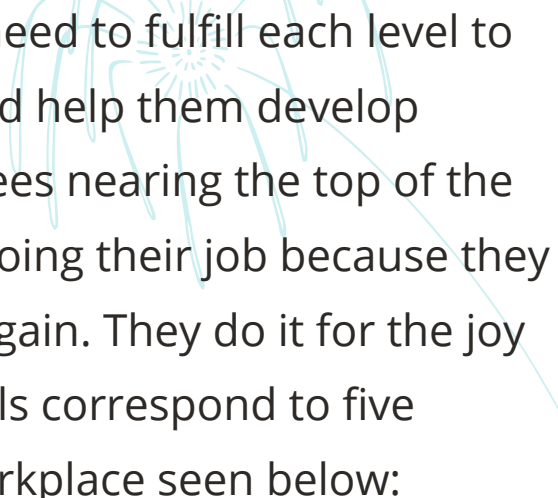
# Using Intrinsic Motivation



Abraham Maslow introduced a Hierarchy of Needs Theory suggesting people are motivated to fulfill basic needs before moving on to more advanced needs. It starts with **physiological** needs which are vital to live (food, water, shelter). Second, people want to **feel safe** (financial security, good health). Next are the **social** needs (friendships, social groups, relationships). Then, we move into **esteem** (feeling appreciated, respected, and accomplished). Finally, the peak of the hierarchy is **self-actualization**. Here we strive to reach our full potential. We're concerned more about growth than the opinions of others or accolades.







When it comes to work, we need to fulfill each level to truly motivate employees and help them develop intrinsic motivation. Employees nearing the top of the pyramid are no longer just doing their job because they have to or for the monetary gain. They do it for the joy of the job itself. The five levels correspond to five different elements of the workplace seen below:

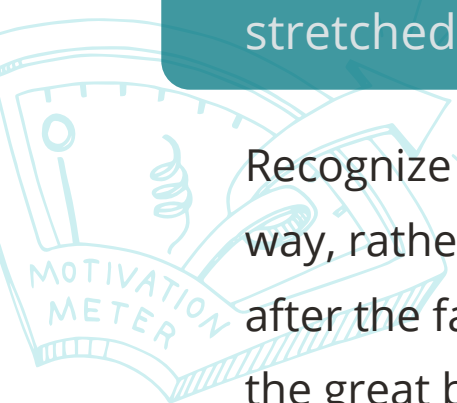
**Physiological = Compensation & benefits.** Is the pay fair? Do I have access to a healthcare plan?

**Safety = Working conditions.** Am I physically safe at work? Do I have resources needed for my job?

**Social = Acceptance & involvement.** Do I feel like I belong? Am I connected to any co-workers?

**Esteem = Recognition.** Do I get credit when I should? Are my contributions and efforts valued?

**Self-Actualization = Growth.** Am I challenged and stretched? Do I have opportunities to advance?

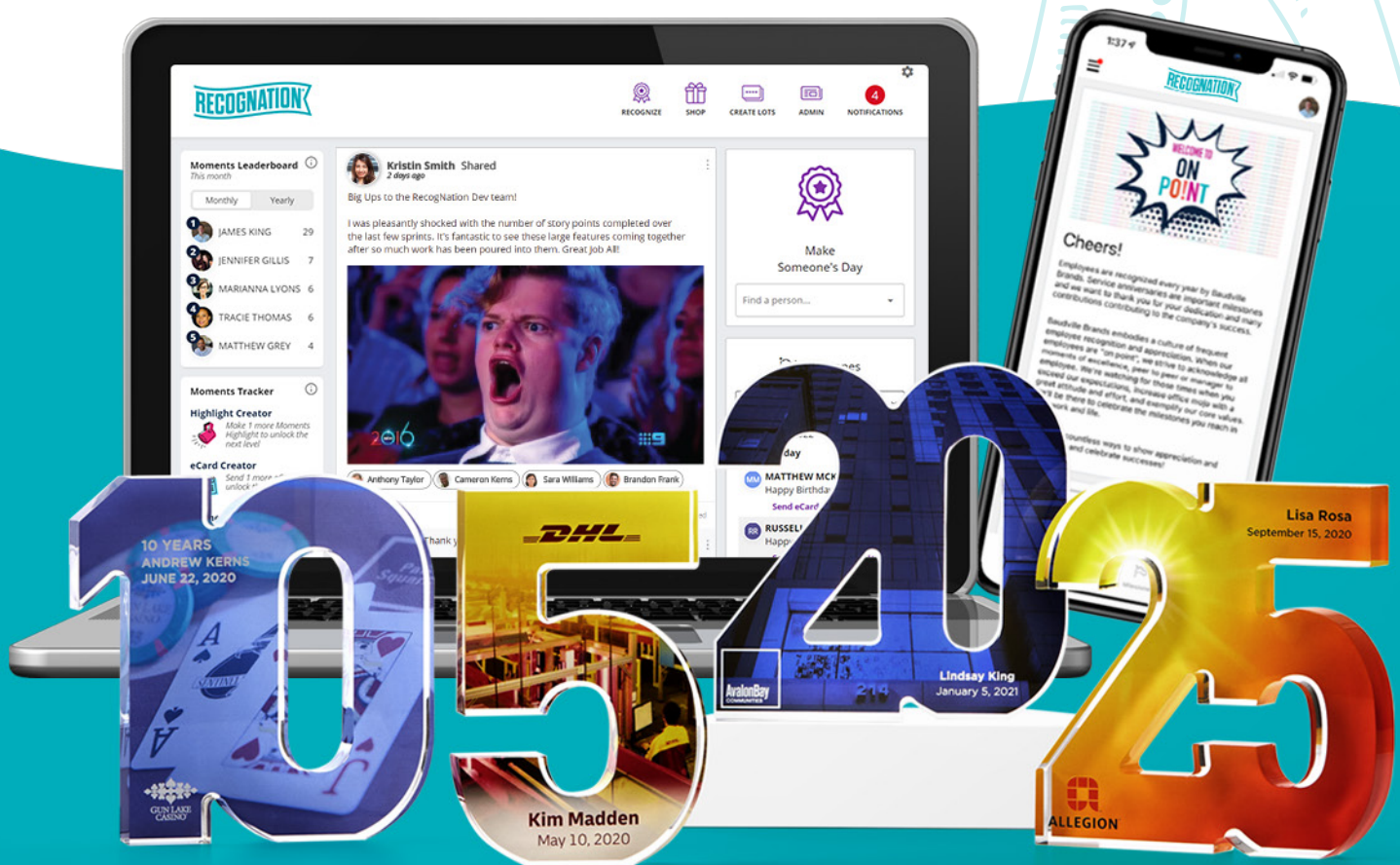


Recognize efforts and guide your employees along the way, rather than only rewarding or punishing them after the fact like in operant conditioning. On this path, the great behaviors you want to see will be amplified.

# What's Next?

We help organizations create a program with a holistic approach to recognition. We've got everything from formal service awards to a digital platform for daily engagement.

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