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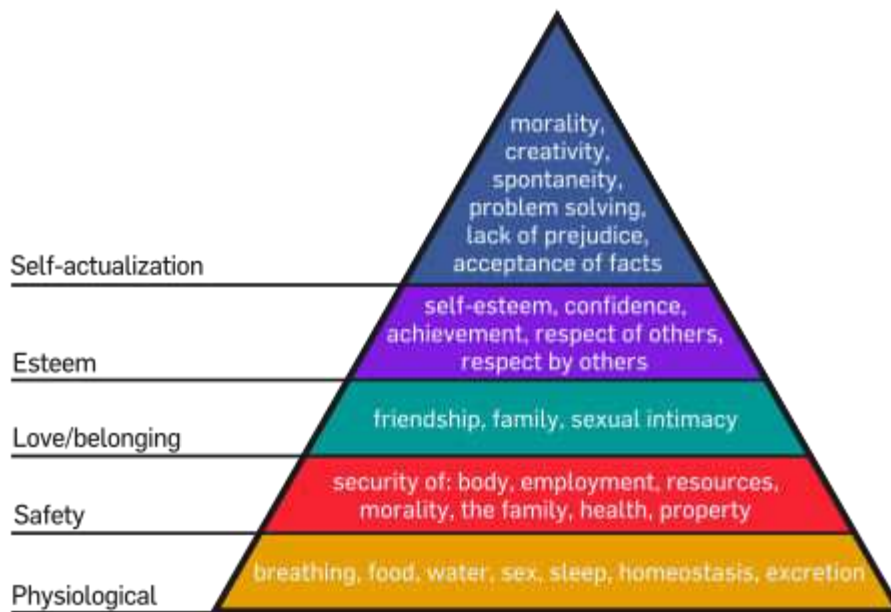
Independent

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Nain's Hierarchy of Needs: An Alternative to Maslow's & ERG's Hierarchy of Needs¹.

Maslow Hierarchy of Needs



Maslow



ERG

Introduction

Maslow has given an iron cast hierarchy of needs. ERG Theory has done the same but instead of giving five basic needs/ wants, it has categorised them into 'so called' simpler format of three basic needs ie. existence, relatedness & growth needs. Both these theories propound that the men first aim to satisfy lower (&/ more basic) need (as given in their hierarchy model) and then aim to satisfy a higher need. This generalization is wrong due to many reasons, which are enunciated herein-under.

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Flaws in Maslow & ERG model(s):

Firstly, there can be no iron cast common hierarchy of needs for all. If it were so, all people of world might have been behaviourally similar. It is a known fact that all people are not behaviourally similar. Thus, hierarchy of needs is different from person to person.

Secondly, the said models assume that certain needs are most basic and, thus, all aim to fulfil them first. It is true that some needs may be basic. But, what is basic for one, may be not basic for another. Eg. Some people may even prefer work (for self-esteem) over and above his family (ie. belonging need) but some don't.

Thirdly, Maslow/ &ERG model(s) are very idealist and are not applicable to a large section of society. Maslow & ERG model(s) presume that all people/ individuals are rationally thinking having a societal notion of needs. The Maslow/ &ERG model(s) are based on society's view of hierarchy of needs which is expected to be followed by individuals. But, many, don't subscribe to this hierarchy. These non-subscribers may be called deviants. But, they form a large segment of society.

Fourthly, Maslow/ &ERG model(s) don't take into account the fact that even for the same individual, the hierarchy of needs changes from time to time. For eg. An individual might earlier be compromising on his belonging needs/existential needs for fulfilling his self-growth needs. But, with passage of time, he might give belonging needs (eg. need for a family) more emphasis over and above self-growth needs.

Fifthly, Maslow/ &ERG model(s) presume that the inclination for a higher level need (eg self-growth) may be activated only and only when the so called lower/& basic needs are fulfilled. This is always not true. Eg. a person after fulfilling safety/existential needs may skip other needs such as belonging & relatedness, and straight away aim & work towards the need of growth/ self-actualization.

Sixthly, Maslow/ &ERG model(s) are not completely accurate, especially when applied as premises of theories of motivation for employees, in an organizational perspective. The reason for that is that though needs based model may help in setting goals for an individual but needs cannot be a sole driving force devoid of other circumstances. Examples:

- (1) if found that a employee may have some need of self-esteem and for the same reason he may be offered a higher post in lieu of achieving next work target/goal. But, this strategy ignores the fact that he may be happy with present job portfolio. This strategy also ignores the fact that the job profile offered may require undertaking work which he does not like.
- (2) if found that a employee may have some need of association is there and for the same reason he may be offered a post requiring more association in lieu of achieving next work target/goal. But, this strategy ignores the fact that the job offered may be requiring him to meet and associate with more strangers but he likes association of known people only.

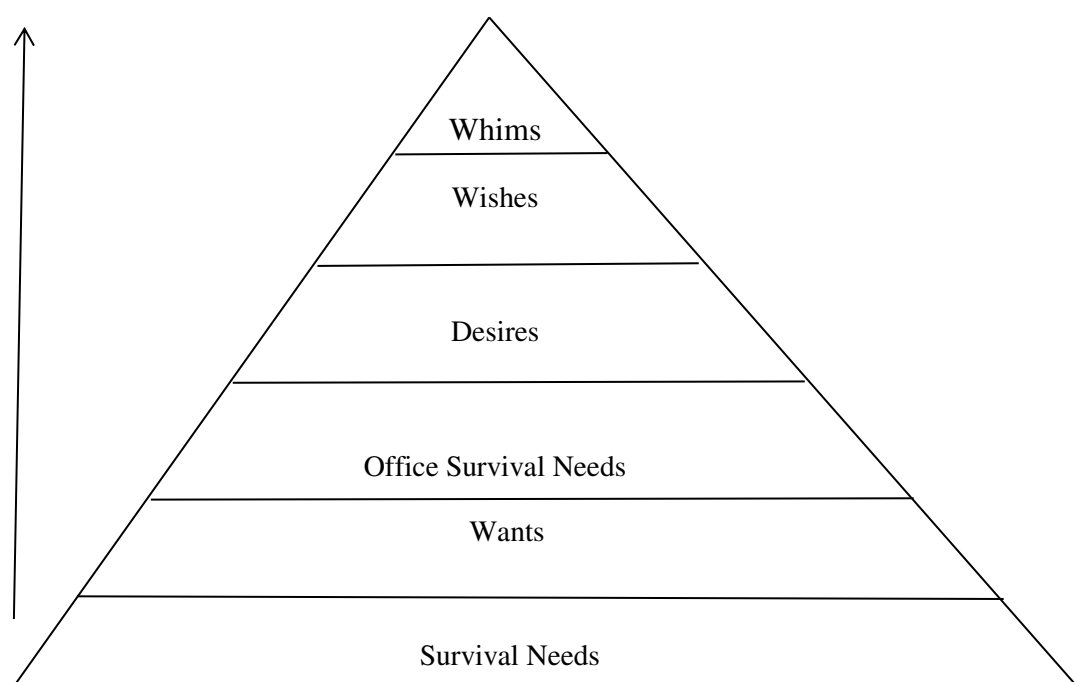
(3) if found that a employee may have some need of power is there and for the same reason he may be offered a post having more power in lieu of achieving next work target/goal. But, this strategy ignores the fact that the employee may not be enthused by the offer because he knows that present power is with limited responsibility and job profile offered is more powerful on paper but tremendous responsibility.

Seventhly, Maslow/ &ERG model(s) are not completely accurate in an organizational perspective for the additional reason that even if the company has started fulfilling more needs of the employees, the same may not be enough to motivate the employees to worker harder/better. For example, assuming a company has taken a decision to fulfil the employees' basic need for food by offering them packed lunch daily(at company's cost) but this may not necessarily mean that this act of the company will, by itself, make the employees start working harder/better.

Eighthly, Maslow/ &ERG model(s) are not completely accurate in an organizational perspective for the additional reason that these models do not take into account the differences between the needs, wants, desires, wishes, etc. and their respective values. For eg. a person may desire/wish for self-esteem but has no need for self-growth. The said models don't account for this scenario and don't provide a path /& a solution when such a situation occurs.

Thus, because of these flaws, the following Nain model is being proposed to give a better framework of needs and a better model for motivation, especially for employees from an organizational perspective.

Nain Model of Hierarchy of Needs from Organizational Perspective



The terms used in abovementioned diagram are not be confused with the economic definitions of want, need or desire. The same, for the purpose of explaining the said diagram, are defined hereinbelow.

Definitions

Survival Needs: Includes the bare needs for survival of any person i.e food, clothing, and shelter. The economic costs of these needs may, however, differ from person to person because the quality/& quantity of food, clothing, and shelter needed differs from person to person.

Wants: These needs are those needs which though traditionally were mere desires &/ wishes but have now, with passage of time and change in needs and change in lifestyle, become essentials for life. Eg. Requirement of AC/ Air Conditioner is now an essential want from many. They can also be construed to be survival needs in the broadest sense of the term.

Office Survival Needs: Includes the bare needs for a person to do productive work in an office environment. A person will not be ever happy at work without the fulfilment of these needs. Eg. for a person doing a research job will necessarily require all the basic research tools.

Desires: This term refers to needs which though not absolute essential and mandatory for happiness (at work&/home) but still add to the value of life. The person can live without suffering without satisfaction of them. But, they if fulfilled will make the person more happy. Eg. many people do drive to the office and have no qualms about it, however, they might feel more happy if their company provides a driver.

Wishes: This term refers to needs which are not required on a daily basis, and even if not provided at all, if (1) survival needs; (2) wants; (3) office survival needs; (4) desires are met the employee/ person will still be happy. These needs/ wishes are desires which even the employee/ person thinks himself, at present, that he does not deserve to be fulfilled either regularly or at all. Eg. a middle class belonging employee may wish for a foreign trip funded by his company every year but he himself thinks that he does not deserve it unless he works harder/ better.

Whims :This term refers to wishes which a person desires only in times of wild flights of thought. Eg. a low-level manager may, in times of wild flights of thought, think of being made directly a Board member of his company for his above-average work.

Theory behind the Nain Model of Hierarchy of Needs from Organizational Perspective

Hierarchy of Needs does differ from person to person. But, at the very least, we can classify the heads of the different type of needs/wants into headings such as the heads of desires, wants, wishes. Though, it is a fact that a thing which is a desire for somebody, may be a want for another. However, we do know the individuals try to fulfil: *first*, the survival needs, then the wants, then the official survival needs, then the desires (whatever they might be), then the wishes (whatever they might be), and finally then the whims(whatever they might be). More importance should be given to lower needs, as provided in the Nain model. Directly targeting higher desires/wishes of employees/ individuals, skipping the lower needs, will be less beneficial and also impractical.

The aim of this Model is to have a tailor made framework of needs for each individual avoiding some generalizations done by the Maslow &/ ERG model.

Now, how do we arrive at the precise needs/wants which can be categorised in the headings of survival needs, wants, desires, wishes, etc.?

The said objective can be achieved by interviewing that individual or that employee, as the case may be. The result may be better if the interviewer is trained in psychology. Then, additionally, the people, or the team mates, as the case may be, who are involved in often dealing with that individual or that employee, can also be interviewed in order to find that what are the survival needs, wants, desires, wishes, etc of that individual or that employee. Further, informal talks, meetings, gatherings being organised for knowing the personal self of the employees can also tell a lot about their survival needs, wants, desires, wishes, etc of that individual or that employee.

Conclusion:

Maslow & / ERG theories of Need are not completely accurate. There is a need for better alternative models, especially from an organizational point of view. The author has tried to provide one alternative model. It may/ may not be the best alternative. The aim is not to overshadow Maslow/ ERG theories but to only provide some thoughts, ideas, models, etc. so that the on-going process of further intellectual development is assisted. Any comments/suggestions /views/thoughts in this regard may be shared via email. The author's email addresses are: bhavya_nain@yahoo.com; bhavyanain@gmail.com.