

**INTRINSIC MOTIVATION AT UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN BRITISH
COLUMBIA'S INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT: A
PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR IT MANAGERS**

by

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B.Com, University of Northern British Columbia, 2011

PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

April 2013

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Abstract

The University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) is a public educational institute serving over 3,000 students; it has over 600 faculty and staff members. The UNBC Information Technology (IT) department is one of the largest departments on campus. In this paper, I aim to discuss some practical and managerial approaches to motivating the IT department's employees intrinsically, thereby producing superior results.

This paper qualitatively reviews past literature on intrinsic motivation and its theories. Utilizing both previous literature and my own experience working in the UNBC IT department, I propose a number of different solutions. Then an action plan is created to implement all the propositions in UNBC IT department settings.

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, this paper, and indeed my entire MBA program, would not have been possible without the understanding of my son Jared. He not only understood my time commitment to the program but also tried to “help” me with my assignments in his own unique ways. Thank you, Jared, for being the most amazing, supportive, and understanding boy I have ever known.

I also want to thank all the friends, family members, and colleagues who have helped me during this program. In addition, I must thank my supervisor, Dr. Rick Tallman, for his support. I am sure that without his guidance, this project would not be what it is today.

I am very thankful to the entire MBA program at UNBC and all the faculty and staff members who have helped my classmates and me throughout our journey. The experiences in our classrooms have been very rewarding, and all of my faculty members will be remembered fondly. I would like to thank each and every one of my classmates; you all made this program an enriching and entertaining experience. I have made friends for life, and I will not ever forget the time we have spent together. Last but not least, I want to thank all my group members in the program. As frustrating as I was to you all at times, I hope you enjoyed working with me as much as I enjoyed working with you.

Chapter 1

Introduction

With ever-increasing demands for efficiency, productivity, and saving money, public-sector employers must compete with their counterparts in the private sector to recruit and retain qualified employees. While technological change can improve efficiency and productivity, a motivated workforce is a crucial element in any organization. Regardless of the employment sector, the workforce must be motivated to meet all demands such as being more efficient and innovative. These demands are more visible in the public sector because of the taxpayer's involvement and the necessity for the government's accountability to the public. The main focus of this paper is on how to intrinsically motivate the University of Northern British Columbia's (UNBC's) Information Technology department's employees.

This study is important because the UNBC IT department needs to change its clients' perception of it. This perception is generated by clients' interactions with IT department employees. It has been my observation that IT employees' attitudes towards work are often negative; this negativity affects their performance. It is my belief that the root cause of this negative attitude towards work is the lack of intrinsic motivation. By learning how to intrinsically motivate IT employees, managers can change employees' attitudes and consequently improve their performance.

Chapter 2

Context

The IT department at UNBC is the largest department on campus, employing over 45 full-time and part-time employees, including three managers and one Chief Information Officer (CIO). One of the inherent challenges of motivating employees of such a large department is the diversity of those employees. The IT employees at UNBC come from different cultural and educational backgrounds. Their educational backgrounds range from a high-school diploma to a graduate degree. While there have been many different discussions about how to motivate employees within the department, there has not been a study on how to specifically motivate IT employees at UNBC.

Another challenging factor in motivating IT employees intrinsically at UNBC is the division of the department due to the services it provides to the university community. The IT department has three distinct groups within the department. Groups are classified as follows:

1. Administrative and enterprise systems group,
2. Infrastructure services group, and
3. Client services group.

2.1 - Administrative and enterprise systems group

Under the direction of the administrative and enterprise systems manager, this group consists of eleven full-time employees. Their educational backgrounds range from a college diploma to a university degree; many also have industry-leading information-

technology certifications. The group's age composition varies; it includes employees in mid-career and employees who are preparing for retirement. These employees are trained to be computer programmers and technical analysts. Their work day consists of sitting in front of a computer and writing code to improve the university's applications, such as the student registration system, payroll system, and Blackboard system. Attention to detail is a key for this group to build, test, implement, and maintain new and existing systems.

The manager of this group must understand what motivates each employee of the team. The manager needs to understand that developers have different needs from systems administrators or helpdesk technicians and are therefore motivated in different ways. Many of his team members have been programming for a long time. Whether they are working on maintenance of a database or building a new application, the employees are not doing so for free nor because they are intrinsically motivated to perform the work. They should be motivated to program because of the challenge rather than the reward itself. However, the fact is that money is a motivating factor for many. The challenge is as follows: if comparable pay to private-sector employees doing the same type of work were offered to these developers, how would the managers keep them motivated to stay within the organization and keep producing results?

2.2 – Infrastructure services group

The infrastructure services group consists of fifteen full-time employees and is led by a full-time manager. The educational backgrounds of the group members range from a technical college diploma to an undergraduate degree in computer science; many employees have industry-leading certifications. This group is responsible for

implementing, managing, and maintaining the university's server and telecommunication infrastructure, including the wireless Internet.

As with the previous group, this group's perception of what motivates them is difficult. The perception of this group is that a direct salary increase will motivate the members to work harder and produce superior results.

The manager of this group manages the employees who are considered to be the backbone of the university's information-technology systems. With fifteen full-time employees, this group is the second-largest group within the University. With so many employees within the group, it creates unique challenges for the manager. A single method of motivation will not work for this group because of the educational and cultural backgrounds of the members. As a result, the manager must know what motivates each of the employees and then formulate individual motivational tools. It may seem a lot of work, but once the process is in place, it could be very easy to maintain and manage.

This group works to resolve endless user problems with email, network access, and intrusion detection and prevention; it also installs phones and provides new cell phones. It can sometimes seem like a thankless job because the employees are not directly interacting with the clients they are serving. If all goes well, no one within the university should be impacted or notice that anything is wrong. However, if something goes wrong, everyone notices their work, and blame falls on this group.

This group has three sub-groups: systems administrators, network administrators, and telecommunications administrators. Regardless of the titles, their work requires creative problem-solving skills, and very little of what they do is routine. Financial reward is nice, but it really does not inspire the best work. The manager of this group

must motivate creativity and out-of-the-box thinking to produce the best results. Intrinsic motivation is the key.

2.3 – Client services group

The client services group is made up of front-line employees who are interacting with the users of the information-technology services. These users tend to be faculty, staff, and students. With 16 full-time employees, this is the largest unionized group of employees at the University of Northern British Columbia. Their educational backgrounds include high-school diplomas and college degrees. The age range of this group is also diverse; the members are anywhere from 19 to 65 years old. The diversity of the employees causes interpersonal issues within the group. In their turn, these issues create roadblocks to productivity.

To complicate matters, this group also contains the president of the unionized employees, the chief shop steward, and the sergeant at arms. Therefore, on any given day, the president of the union and the shop steward must fulfill their union obligations, thereby negatively impacting the operational work. This group runs the information-technology helpdesk and also supplies and maintains the university's audio-visual equipment.

The perception of entitlement is an issue in this group's performance. Attitude towards work is also an issue for this group, and attitude tends to affect performance. On their part, employees must learn how to work together to overcome the inherent issues that come with a diverse workforce.

Members of management have diverse philosophical backgrounds, leading to different approaches towards motivating employees. One of the managers and the Chief Information Officer (CIO) come from the private sector, where profit is the main goal. However, leadership characteristics required to motivate employees to increase the bottom line in the private sector are not necessarily applicable in a public-sector environment such as UNBC. The other two managers are from within UNBC and have been working at different capacities throughout their tenure, a fact that shapes their individual views on motivation. If all managers are not applying the same tools to motivate all employees within the department, they may create friction and thus dissatisfaction, which, in turn, will not motivate employees.

Based on the discussion above about different groups within the UNBC IT department, I would propose:

Proposition 1: There is no one motivational tool that will motivate every group of employees, and as such, each group's managers must use the intrinsic motivational tools appropriate for his/her team members.

Chapter 3

Literature review and proposition development

3.1 Accepted wisdom

Accepted wisdom recognizes that work motivation is an energizing force that directs and sustains the efforts of employees in organizations (Bright, 2009). Regardless of the leadership orientation of public organization leaders (transformational, ethical, and so on), one of their greatest challenges is to find ways to identify this energizing force in each individual employee on the team and release the force so that employees can achieve their critical organizational missions. One way of releasing this energy is to provide employees with the kinds of opportunities they desire. The more desirable the opportunity, the greater the likelihood that an employee will be motivated towards accomplishing organizational goals (Bright). There is a lot of evidence that people will be most creative when they are primarily intrinsically motivated, rather than extrinsically motivated by expected evaluation, surveillance, competitions with peers, dictates from superiors, or the promise of rewards (Bright). Intrinsic motivation is the motivation to work on something because it is interesting, involving, exciting, satisfying, or personally challenging (Amabile, 1997).

The intrinsic-motivation principle of creativity applies not only to scientific creativity but to business creativity as well (Amabile, 1997). Amabile also argues that financial success is often closely tied to a passion for the work itself. To some extent, intrinsic motivation resides in a person's own personality and personal belief system. Some workers are more strongly driven than others by the enjoyment and sense of

challenge in their work (Amabile). Although intrinsic motivation does depend in part on the individual's personality, a person's social environment can have a significant effect on the level of that individual's intrinsic motivation and in turn have an equally significant effect on that person's creativity (Amabile).

Amabile (1997) believes that workers act in the best interest of their employers for many different reasons. Money is sometimes the motivation, but often, workers genuinely care about what they do (Amabile). Amabile also argues that for intrinsic-motivation theory to be useful, firms must have some control over it. Without this control, organizations will not be able to monitor the progress of the motivational tools that are being used. Even with much evidence of significant monetary incentives backfiring, firms still spend considerable resources on seeking ways to motivate employees. This could create financial trouble, especially in not-for-profit or government agencies.

3.2 Definition of intrinsic motivation

There are many different definitions of "intrinsic motivation," but a basic one might be: "... a person is intrinsically motivated to perform some task if there is no apparent reward for the performance except the activity itself and the feeling of satisfaction or enjoyment which is derived from doing the activity. Alternatively, one is extrinsically motivated to perform the task if he does it primarily for some external reward" (Broedling, 1977). Therefore, job orientation is based on one's personal value system, with intrinsically oriented people being more interested in job content (the nature of the job) and extrinsically oriented people being more interested in job context (those factors outside the job) (Broedling). Broedling states that intrinsically motivated people

tend to reject stability and routine and thus have more initiative. This idea is related to Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Herzberg's two-factor theory. The need to grow is seen as an underlying intrinsic factor, while deficiency arising from a job is an extrinsic factor. If Herzberg's theory is valid, intrinsic factors become the main source of satisfaction and motivation, while extrinsic factors are the main source of dissatisfaction.

Ryan and Deci (2000) define intrinsic motivation as the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequences. They also explain that when intrinsically motivated, a person is moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than because of external prods, pressures, or rewards. Although in one sense, intrinsic motivation exists within individuals, in another sense, intrinsic motivation exists in the relation between individuals and activities. People are intrinsically motivated for some activities and not others, and not everyone is intrinsically motivated for any particular task. Ryan and Deci's approach to understanding intrinsic motivation focuses primarily on psychological needs: namely, the innate needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness.

The idea of the situational characteristic of motivation implies that a person's motivation is subject to change depending on the circumstances (Broedling, 1977). Based on the situation, the determining factor in employees' intrinsic or extrinsic motivation depends on the type of rewards available to them. Intrinsic reward is awarded to the employee by himself or herself. On the contrary, extrinsic motivation is awarded by the organization. Another aspect of the situational characteristic is job content, which explains how much of the job is intrinsically interesting to the individual performing it. Based on Porter and Lawler's (1967) distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic rewards,

Pritchard and Peters (1974) hypothesized that intrinsic job satisfaction should be more closely related to actual work content than extrinsic satisfaction (Broedling). They measured intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction using the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire, which had intrinsic and extrinsic subscales. Not only was their hypothesis supported, but it also was found that intrinsic satisfaction was predicated better on the actual job duties than on the employees' interest in performing their job duties (Broedling). Employees will also be in no position to receive intrinsic rewards or develop intrinsic satisfaction if they do not perceive themselves as controlling their own work. This problem could be linked to the supervisor's leadership style. If the supervisor is asking for employee participation and allows employees to exercise control over their work, they will be intrinsically motivated.

3.3 Self-determination theory (SDT) and intrinsic motivation

Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory provides a well-established theoretical framework to understand an individual's motivation in public and nonprofit organization settings (Park & Word, 2012). According to Park and Word, SDT suggests intrinsic motivation can be either crowded in or crowded out by some specific organizational conditions and social-environmental factors such as rewards, disciplines, work environment, culture, and organizational communication. This would imply that the UNBC IT department's managers can intrinsically motivate their team members using specific organizational conditions and social-environmental factors. SDT theory also suggests that certain external factors such as project deadlines or performance evaluations can facilitate or undermine the effects of intrinsic motivation on individuals or organizational outcome. Based on this understanding, UNBC IT department managers

can induce intrinsic motivation through certain external factors such as organizing team lunches or team movie nights. Intrinsic motivation can be done at an individual level instead of as a team as well. This type of practice will intrinsically motivate employees because it will take care of employees' need for belongingness.

Self-determination theory is an approach to human motivation and personality that uses traditional empirical methods while employing an organismic metatheory that highlights the importance of humans' evolved inner resources for personality development and behavioral self-regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Ryan and Deci point out that the self-regulation arena is the investigation of people's inherent growth tendencies and innate psychological needs, which are the basis for their self-motivation and personality integration, as well as for the conditions that foster those positive processes. Central to this theory is the distinction between autonomous motivation and controlled motivation. Autonomy involves acting with a sense of volition and having the experience of choice (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Gagné and Deci posit that autonomy means endorsing one's actions at the highest level of reflection. Intrinsic motivation is an example of autonomous motivation. When people engage in an activity because they find it interesting, they are doing the activity wholly volitionally. In contrast, being controlled involves acting with a sense of pressure, a sense of having to engage in the actions. The use of extrinsic rewards is found to induce controlled motivation (Gagné & Deci). Gagné and Deci mention that self-determination theory postulates that autonomous and controlled motivations differ in terms of both their underlying regulatory processes and their accompanying experiences, and it further suggests that behaviors can be characterized in terms of the degree to which they are

autonomous versus controlled. Autonomous motivation and controlled motivation are both intentional, and together they stand in contrast to amotivation, which involves a lack of intention and motivation.

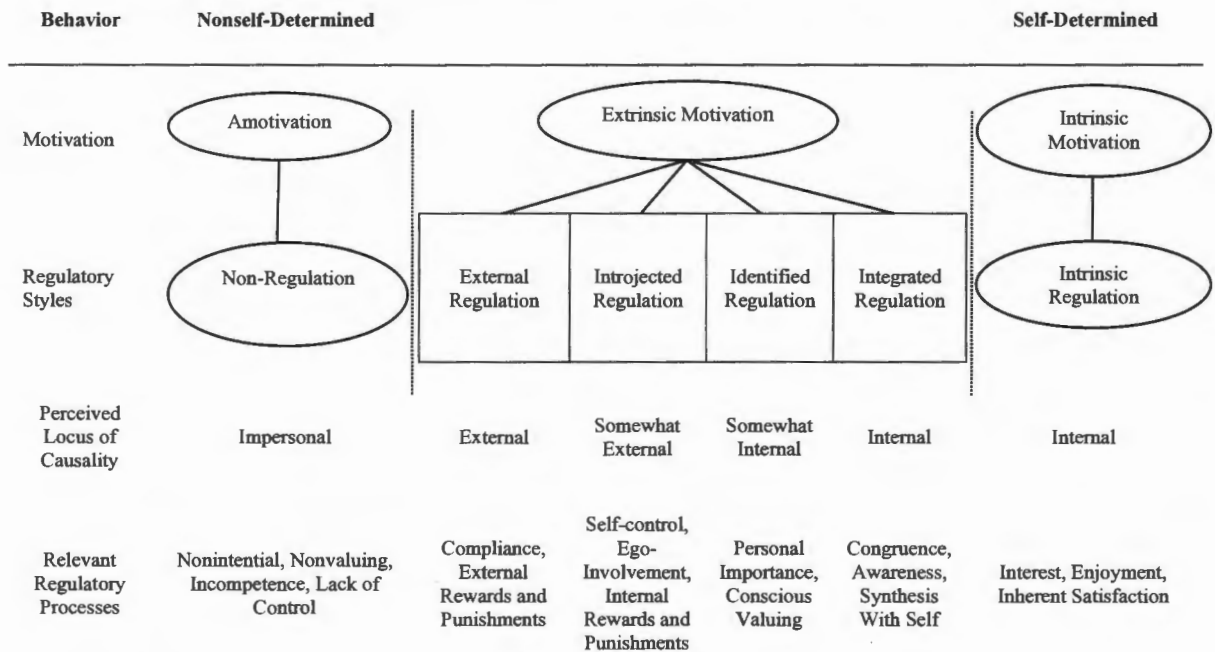
SDT focuses on “the degree to which human behaviors are volitional or self-determined – the degree to which people endorse their actions at the highest level of reflection and engage in the actions with a full sense of choice” (Park & Word, 2012).

Park and Word, based on the SDT, identify three different categories of work motivation:

1. Amotivation (inability or unwillingness to participate in normal social situations),
2. Extrinsic motivation, and
3. Intrinsic motivation.

The diagram below describes SDT theory. It is adapted from Ryan & Deci (2000, p. 72):

Figure 1: The Self-Determination Continuum Showing Types of Motivation with Their Regulatory Styles, Loci of Causality, and Corresponding Processes



In the figure above, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation are viewed as a continuum. On the very left hand side, there is amotivation, where employees become disengaged, and their perceived locus of causality is impersonal. In the middle of the continuum, there exists extrinsic motivation. Employees in this area of the continuum believe that their locus of causality is at least somewhat external and thus constitutes non-autonomous motivation. The next spot on the continuum within extrinsic motivation is “autonomous motivation,” where employees believe that their locus of causality is at least somewhat internal. The next category is “intrinsic motivation,” where employees are very engaged, and they believe that their locus of causality is internal.

As described by Park and Word (2012), within self-directed theory, intrinsic motivation is seen as “the motivational instantiation of the proactive, growth-oriented nature of human beings which is the basis for learning and development.” It is further

described by Cho and Perry (2011) as follows: “individuals are intrinsically motivated when they seek enjoyment, interest, satisfaction of curiosity, self-expression, or personal challenge in the work. Individuals are extrinsically motivated when they engage in the work in order to obtain some goal that is apart from the work itself” (Cho & Perry, 2011). Based on this understanding, I believe that in the UNBC IT department, intrinsically motivated employees are more likely to pursue enjoyment, interest, satisfaction of curiosity, self-expression, or personal challenge in the work that they do. Based on the above, I would propose the following:

Proposition 2: Managers should offer work assignments that create enjoyment for employees.

In self-determination theory, basic psychological-need satisfaction is assumed to be the underlying motivational mechanism that energizes and directs people’s behavior (Broeck, Vansteenkiste, Witte, Soenens, & Lens, 2010). Judging by Broeck et al. (2010)’s description, one might conclude that for any employee, psychological-need satisfaction is essential nourishment for the employee’s optimal work performance. According to Ryan & Deci (2000), in self-directed theory, three basic needs are distinguished:

1. Autonomy,
2. Competence, and
3. Relatedness.

These needs energize employees’ behavior and thus create intrinsic motivation.

3.3.1 Autonomy

Need for autonomy represents an individual's inherent desire to feel volitional and to experience a sense of choice and psychological freedom in carrying out an activity (Broeck, Vansteenkiste, Witte, Soenens, & Lens, 2010). According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, the word "volition" means the power of choosing or determining: in other words, "will." In a work setting, this means that managers give employees the freedom and choice to do their work.

Autonomy is the freedom of the individual's choice. Autonomy is believed to be high when an individual feels that he or she is engaging in an assignment or work because he or she chooses to do so, not because he or she feels pressured by others or external factors. The locus of causality is within the individual. Broeck et al. (2010) refer autonomy to the subjective experience of psychological freedom and choice during activity engagement and define autonomy as task characteristic (Broeck, Vansteenkiste, Witte, Soenens, & Lens, 2010). Therefore, in the UNBC IT department, each employee interprets his or her motivation in terms of his or her experience through a work assignment. I would explain that employees will be intrinsically motivated if their subjective experience from a work activity (such as installing a new operating system or helping a client with password reset) is positive. As well, if the freedom and choice regarding how they are installing the operating system or resetting the password for the client is high, employees are more likely to enjoy doing those tasks, thus increasing their intrinsic motivation. However, the opposite could also be true. If the freedom of choice is not present, and they are just doing routine tasks in which they follow predefined

procedures of installing operating systems or resetting passwords, they will not be intrinsically motivated.

Freedom and choice will be present only if a manager sees the value in them and creates an environment where employees can access them. This will take care of employees' psychological need for autonomy and thus motivate them intrinsically. My proposition for UNBC IT managers would be:

Proposition 3: Managers should offer choices to the employees as to the types of work assignments they want to complete. They should give employees the freedom and choice to determine the procedures to be followed to achieve the desired goal.

Broeck et al. (2010) further explain that although autonomy as a task characteristic is likely to contribute to feelings of psychological freedom, people may also experience autonomy satisfaction when they depend on others and even when they follow others' requests. Employees might, for instance, follow up a request from their supervisors (and thus fail to be independent) but nonetheless act willingly because their supervisors provided them a meaningful rationale for doing so (Broeck, Vansteenkiste, Witte, Soenens, & Lens). Sometimes, managers of the UNBC IT department may require employees to do certain tasks that do not necessarily offer freedom and choice to the employees. However, if managers can make clear the connection between the work assignment and the meaningfulness of their task, the employees will be more likely to perform that task willingly and thus not interfere with their psychological need for autonomy.

Ideally, UNBC IT department managers would want all employees to work because they enjoy what they do. In reality, however, many employees work to receive financial gain or pay the bills. Taking care of their psychological need for autonomy is one of the tools managers could use to intrinsically motivate IT employees at UNBC. My proposition for UNBC IT managers would be:

Proposition 4: Help employees see the meaningfulness of their work to the UNBC community or other impacts when freedom and choice are not visible.

3.3.2 Competence

An individual's inherent desire to feel effective in interacting with the environment is defined as the need for competence (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Deriving from Ryan and Deci's original description, Broeck et al. (2010) state that competence is prominent in the propensity to explore and manipulate the environment and to engage in challenging tasks to test and extend one's skills. It is believed that the psychological need for competence satisfaction allows individuals to adapt to complex and changing environments, whereas competence frustration is likely to result in helplessness and a lack of motivation (Deci & Ryan).

It is my understanding that competence is the self-belief in one's ability to perform well at an activity or task. This is the innate drive to engage in new challenges and experiences in order to get good at something. Competence satisfaction is an affective experience of effectiveness that results from mastering a task (Broeck, Vansteenkiste, Witte, Soenens, & Lens, 2010). I also believe that in order for one to be intrinsically motivated, perceived competence is the important concept rather than the

objective performance of an activity by an individual or an employee. In the UNBC IT department, there are employees who strive to be better and engage themselves in new and challenging work assignments where they feel that they are competent to perform the tasks. In order to be intrinsically motivated, employees need to feel that they are responsible for the desired outcomes of the work they perform.

However, managers must also be aware that if employees feel that they do not have the required competence or that they have done well on a work assignment by chance rather than their own competence, the results will undermine managers' efforts to intrinsically motivate IT employees. Managers need to make employees feel competent through mechanisms such as training that allows employees to be intrinsically motivated.

My proposition to UNBC IT managers looking to intrinsically motivate IT employees would be:

Proposition 5: Offer employees challenging work assignments while still ensuring that they feel competent to perform the tasks and achieve the desired outcome.

3.3.3 Relatedness

Relatedness is the basic human need to feel connected to others. The need for relatedness, as defined by Broeck et al. (2010), is the inherent propensity to feel connected to others: that is, to be a member of a group, to love and care and be loved and cared for. The need for relatedness is satisfied when people experience a sense of communion and develop close and intimate relationships with others (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

When UNBC IT employees are in groups, their motivation to perform a given work activity increases based on the new value system they acquire by joining that group. This occurs as long as they do not feel coerced and have a sense of competence. It is assumed that individuals have a natural tendency to integrate themselves into the social matrix and benefit from being cared for. Therefore, UNBC IT employees should naturally internalize and integrate the values of the social groups around them or the group to which they belong.

In a UNBC IT department setting, there are three distinct groups of employees. Each employee belonging to these groups has different needs that are being met by being in the groups. For example, employees belonging to the administrative and enterprise systems group have a higher need to relate to someone creative in development of new programs. They can relate to their fellow developers based on this need to “discuss creative solutions” rather than fellow systems administrators from the infrastructure services group, who are usually following the routine tasks of systems management. The reason for this is that developers build applications, while systems administrators maintain the server systems that are being used to run those applications. Developers can relate their work more to that of other developers than they can to that of systems administrators. Similarly, employees belonging to the client services group can only relate their work to that of others within their group. They will engage in work behavior such as going for coffee as a group when they do not necessarily need a coffee break or avoid work to engage in side conversations because that is acceptable behavior within the group to which they belong. IT employees would not display many of these behaviors if

they were not in groups and were instead working alone. My proposition for UNBC IT managers would be:

Proposition 6: Make employees feel as if they belong to a supportive social group where they can relate to the work they perform.

3.4 Public-sector motivation theory and the importance of the theory

The theory of public-sector motivation allows us to understand why public-sector employees join the public sector and not the private sector. One of the widely accepted definitions of public-sector motivation is “an individual’s predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations” (Moynihan & Pandey, 2007). Public-sector motivation is not only important for motivational purpose but also for productivity, improved management practices, accountability, and trust in government, making it one of the major topics of investigation in public administration as well. As stated in the introduction, in the public sector, motivation (and thus having an efficient workforce) is critical because of the role of the taxpayers’ money.

This theory of public-sector motivation links the pursuit of the public interest with administrative behavior. Moynihan and Pandey (2007) argue that individuals with a high sense of public interest are more likely to select public-sector careers. If people join an organization with such a belief, they are more likely to display a higher level of commitment (Moynihan & Pandey). They will believe that their jobs are important, which in turn will lead them to work harder and be high performers. They will enjoy a high level of job satisfaction and be less likely to leave the job (Moynihan & Pandey). It is, however, my observation that employees do not necessarily join the UNBC IT

department because they want to serve the public interest. Rather, they do so for the monetary gain.

If the commitment level of employees is raised, their sense of public interest will increase. They will also believe that their jobs are important, which in turn will lead them to work harder and produce superior results. Employees are more likely to be in organizations that are consistent with their own values or needs. The public sector has often been expected to employ individuals with motives that are grounded primarily or uniquely in that which public organizations can provide (Wright, 2001). This is not necessarily an instrument for managers to intrinsically motivate employees, but I believe understanding why employees join the UNBC IT department and linking these reasons to a higher purpose will help employees to be intrinsically motivated. My proposition for managers would be:

Proposition 7: Help employees understand why they are working at the UNBC IT department to raise their commitment.

3.5 Goal-setting theory

Locke and Latham (1990) have proposed that specific and difficult yet attainable goals, along with feedback, motivate employees and lead to high performance more than do vague goals (Locke & Latham). A goal may be defined as what the individual is consciously trying to do (Lunenburg, 2011). It is my understanding that goals affect behavior and thus change attitudes to work and performance. This change could be both positive and negative. Lunenburg also states that goals mobilize energy, lead to higher effort, and increase persistent effort. Goals are believed to be the primary standard for self-satisfaction in regards to performance.

However, I am not suggesting that goal setting alone will intrinsically motivate UNBC IT employees. I believe that goal setting is a critical instrument that could be used in conjunction with other intrinsic motivational tools such as competence building (self-directed theory) to intrinsically motivate IT employees at UNBC.

Goal-setting theory has high internal and external validity, and goals are believed to have effectiveness even when they come from different sources. As further explained by Locke and Latham (1990), goals can be assigned by others, jointly set through participation, or self-set. If goals are set by individuals, then individuals have higher self-regulation in reaching those goals.

In a UNBC IT department context, goals are often being set by individual employees, and they are not necessarily fitting with the organization's overall mission or vision. Even though the managers are aware of this, there is no willingness to correct these individual goals to align with the organization's mission and vision. Setting goals will motivate employees to develop strategies that will enable them to perform at the level they feel is necessary to accomplish those goals. Accomplishing goals can then lead to the psychological need satisfaction of competence (competence in setting goals for themselves) and thus intrinsically motivate the employees. Alternatively, if goals are not achieved or there are barriers to achieving goals, that could lead to frustration and lower motivation among employees.

Goal setting is broadly related to motivation of employees or individuals, but I believe that goal setting in the UNBC IT department is a crucial tool for managers to let employees be autonomous and feel competent, as stated in the self-determination theory section. Goals could enhance interest through perceived competence. Goals represent

concrete standards for performance evaluation, and the successful attainment of such standards can enhance competence performance (Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1994). Thus, enhanced competence performance could also take care of the psychological need for the competence of UNBC IT employees. My proposition for UNBC IT managers would be:

Proposition 8: Set goals that are specific, difficult but attainable, and accepted by employees.

3.6 Self-efficacy and information cues

Self-efficacy is not a theory by itself but an important concept in social learning theory presented by Marilyn E. Gist. Self-efficacy refers to one's belief in one's capability to perform a specific task (Gist, 1987). Gist (1987) further explains that self-efficacy arises from the gradual acquisition of complex cognitive, social, linguistic, and/or physical skills through experience. Individuals appear to weigh, integrate, and evaluate information about their capabilities; they then regulate their choice and efforts accordingly (Gist, 1987). Even though this concept is closely related to the psychological need of competence in the self-determination theory, I believe that self-efficacy is a very important concept to understand in motivating UNBC IT employees. Employees with high levels of self-efficacy are more likely be intrinsically motivated than those with low levels of self-efficacy.

Albert Bandura (1982) identifies four information cues that influence self-efficacy. IT managers of UNBC could look for these cues in employees and adjust their techniques to intrinsically motivate those employees. This concept could also be used in conjunction with other theories such as goal-setting theory to create an intrinsic motivational effect on employees. The four cues are (Bandura, 1982):

1. Enactive mastery,
2. Vicarious experience,
3. Verbal persuasion, and
4. Emotional arousal.

3.6.1 Enactive mastery

As defined by Bandura and explained by Gist (1987), enactive mastery is repeated performance accomplishments; it has been shown to enhance self-efficacy more than other kinds of cues (Gist). Mastery is facilitated when gradual accomplishments build the skills, coping abilities, and exposure needed for task performance (Gist). Enactive mastery could be utilized as a motivational tool by UNBC IT managers to motivate their employees intrinsically through self-efficacy. I believe that employees who have been with the IT department for a long period of time will be motivated intrinsically if they are given the opportunity to gradually build up skills and knowledge through formal training. This could also take care of employees' psychological need of competence. If they gain more skills, they will feel competent to do their work and perform better.

Gist (1987) further states that individuals may not expose themselves to opportunities for enactive mastery in some circumstances, possibly because of fear or incapacity. In the UNBC IT department context, managers should link the necessity of training to gain new skills and abilities in terms of work requirements rather than identifying employee shortcomings in the performances of their tasks. If employees are told by managers that they need to go to training because they are unable to perform their tasks, it will negatively impact the process and thus decrease self-efficacy. My proposition for UNBC IT managers would be:

Proposition 9: Allow IT employees to build skills and abilities throughout their careers at UNBC.

3.6.2 Vicarious experience

The next cue of self-efficacy is vicarious experience, which is slightly less influential but could be useful when enactive mastery is not possible (Gist, 1987). Vicarious experience is also identified as “modeling” by Bandura (1982). Modeling is more effective when the models succeed after overcoming difficulties than it is when they exhibit initially facile performance (Gist, 1987). Gist (1987) further states that the effects of vicarious experience are enhanced when the modeled behavior produces clear results or consequences and when there is a similarity between the subject and the model in terms of age, capability, and other personal characteristics. This concept is very important and could be used in a UNBC IT department context to increase self-efficacy and thus intrinsically motivate employees. As stated earlier in the paper, demographic differences within the IT department are quite significant; employees range from those who are just starting their careers to those who are planning retirement, and they have many different educational backgrounds. If an IT employee has the opportunity to observe and celebrate a peer’s success at a task, that could strengthen belief in the employee’s own ability. The employee could observe that a desired result is achievable through training and persuasion.

Managers should also be aware of the negative impact that may be created inadvertently through this type of celebration. It is speculated that some IT employees may feel overwhelmed and intimidated if they are part of such a celebration. My proposition for UNBC IT managers would be:

Proposition 10: Celebrate individuals' successes as a group.

3.6.3 Verbal persuasion

Verbal persuasion is aimed at convincing an individual of his or her capability to perform a task (Bandura, 1982). Individuals are led to believe they can successfully accomplish a task or behavior through the use of suggestions, exhortation, or self-instructions. Managers of UNBC IT could utilize verbal persuasion in increasing self-efficacy. Managers of each group could offer verbal persuasion through suggestions, exhortation, or self-instructions to their team members. My proposition for the managers would be:

Proposition 11: Offer positive encouragement to employees.

3.6.4 Emotional arousal

As described by Gist (1987), an individual's perception of his or her psychological state may be used in assessing performance capability. Thus, an individual in an aroused state (e.g., high visceral anxiety while giving a presentation) may interpret the arousal as debilitating fear and feel excessively vulnerable to failure (Gist). Gist further states that in these anxiety-producing situations, modeling yields higher self-efficacy and performance than psychological desensitization. UNBC IT managers could enhance perceived self-efficacy in their team members by diminishing emotional arousals such as stress or fear because they are associated with decreased performance. Decreased performance is often attributed to reduced success and other work-avoidance behavior. A certain level of emotional stimulation can create an energizing feeling that can contribute to strong employee performance. My proposition would be:

Proposition 12: Help employees cope (develop coping mechanism) with situations creating stress, fear, and anxiety.

3.7 Cognitive-evaluation theory and intrinsic motivation

Cognitive evaluation theory specifies factors in social contexts that cause variability in intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). It is proposed that expected rewards would lead to a larger decrease in intrinsic motivation than unexpected rewards would (Deci, Cascio, & Krusell, 1975). Deci et al. also state that if a person expects a reward while he or she is performing the activity, then it is very possible that he or she perceives that he or she is doing the activity for the reward. On the other hand, if the individual performing the activity does not expect to receive any rewards, it is less likely that he or she realizes that the reason he or she is doing the activity is to get the extrinsic reward.

In a UNBC IT department context, many employees perform their daily duties expecting that their perception of their own hard work will bring them extrinsic rewards such as status, recognition, and financial gains. They do not realize that they are relying on external loci of causality to make them do their daily tasks. There are also employees within the IT department who like their work and perform it without the desire to gain status or recognition. As a result, these employees are intrinsically motivated. My proposal to IT managers at UNBC is:

Proposition 13: Link the individual employee's performance with UNBC's organizational mission and vision.

Cognitive evaluation theory is considered a sub-theory of self-determination theory and also argues that interpersonal events and structures (e.g., rewards,

communications, feedback) that conduce towards feelings of competence during an action can enhance intrinsic motivation for that action because they allow satisfaction of the basic psychological need for competence (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Ryan and Deci further state that optimal challenges, feedback, and freedom from demeaning evaluations are all predicted to facilitate intrinsic motivation. It is my observation that many employees in the UNBC IT department take on projects that are not necessarily complementary to their competencies. As a result, the outcome of the project is less successful than expected. My proposition for UNBC IT managers is:

Proposition 14: Assign projects to the right employees so that they can use their skills and abilities to be successful.

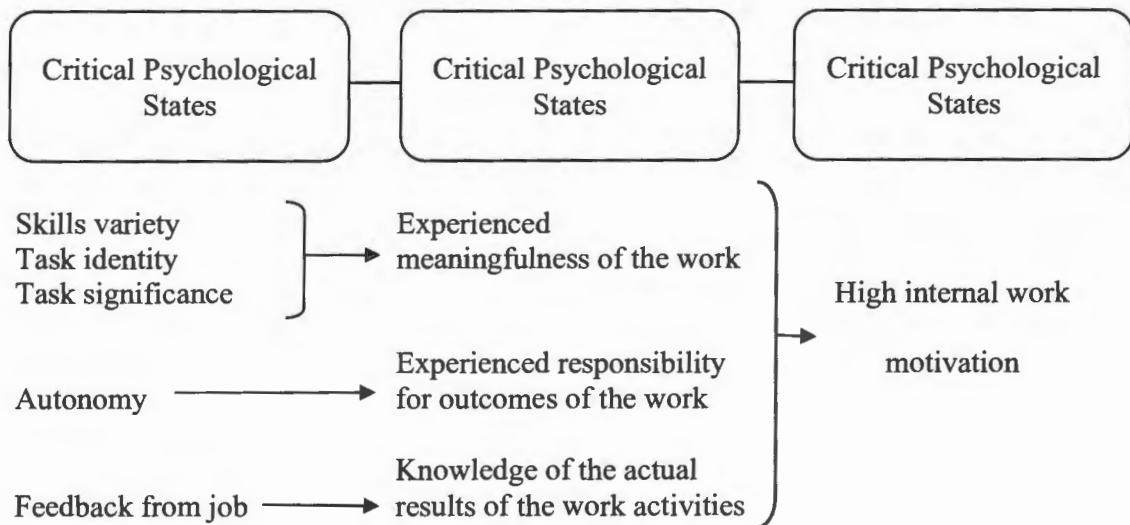
Deci et al. (1975) further explain that it is possible that when the individual gets an unexpected reward, that individual may regard himself or herself as having actually worked for the reward. As a result, Deci et al. believe that expected and unexpected rewards could lower intrinsic motivation, but the unexpected reward would decrease it the least and would be less likely to do so (Deci, Cascio, & Krusell, 1975). Undeserved status recognition or compliments are given to many employees by managers in the UNBC IT department. The individual who is receiving the undeserved recognition or compliment attributes such recognitions to the behavior that has led to receiving that recognition from the manager. However, peers view the recognition as unfair, and as a result, they display a detachment from the work, as they believe their work will not be recognized. My proposition to UNBC IT managers is:

Proposition 15: Offer fair recognition, and link it to performance.

3.8 Job design and intrinsic motivation

Hackman and Oldham (1980) have developed a job characteristic model that identifies the three psychological states of employees: experienced meaningfulness of the work, experienced responsibility for the outcomes of the work, and knowledge of the results of the work activities. The model postulates that an individual experiences positive effects to the extent that he or she learns (knowledge of results) that he/she personally (experienced responsibility) has performed well on a task that he/she cares about (meaningfulness) (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Positive effects provide reinforcement to those individuals who experience them, and they serve as an intrinsic incentive for employees to continue to try to perform well and not just give up if they are unsuccessful at first. The figure below is the job characteristic model of work motivation; it is adapted from Hackman and Oldham's (1976) paper.

Figure 2: The job characteristic model (adapted from Hackman and Oldham (1976), p. 256)



The model above suggests five core job characteristics that foster three critical psychological states and lead to higher internal work motivation in employees. The first

three core job characteristics are skill variety, task identity, and task significance. *Skill variety* refers to the degree to which a job requires the use of a multitude of skills employees have gained through formal and informal training and through their work experience. *Task identity* refers to the extent to which a task requires that an employee will perform it from beginning to the end (for example, purchasing a new computer, installing software, and setting it up for the end user). *Task significance* is the level of impact an IT job has over the lives of other people. Tasks that fulfill these three criteria contribute substantially to an IT employee's perception of his or her work as meaningful, important and valuable (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). If managers design jobs where IT employees could relate to these three psychological states, the employees will be intrinsically motivated. My proposition to the managers would be:

Proposition 16: Redesign some of the jobs so that they offer skill variety, employees can identify themselves with the tasks, and these tasks are of greater significance to the UNBC community.

The fourth job characteristic is autonomy, which is related to the idea in self-directed theory of the psychological need for autonomy. In self-directed theory, described by Broeck et al. (2010), need for autonomy represents individuals' inherent desire to feel volitional and to experience a sense of choice and psychological freedom in carrying out an activity. This is the freedom of an individual's choice in performing a task. In the job characteristic model, autonomy is the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the individual in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

The fifth characteristic is the “feedback from the job,” which is the degree to which carrying out the work activities required by the job results in the individual obtaining direct and clear information about the effectiveness of his or her performance (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). This means that employees seek feedback about their performance from the managers. Job feedback appears to have the strongest relationship with overall job satisfaction (Fried & Ferris, 1987).

Chapter 4

Proposed action plan for UNBC IT managers

In previous chapters, I have discussed the setting of the UNBC IT department, definitions of intrinsic motivation, and different motivational theories, then put forward propositions. Although understanding is the key to motivating a workforce, theories are still broad and open to misinterpretation. In this chapter, I aim to translate the previously discussed propositions into a practical action plan for the UNBC IT department's managers.

4.1 Use different intrinsic motivational tools for different groups of employees

As discussed earlier in the paper, in the UNBC IT department, there are three distinct groups of employees, and not all employees will be intrinsically motivated by the same motivational tools. As a result, my proposition is: *"There is no one motivational tool that will motivate every group of employees, and as such, each group's managers must use the intrinsic motivational tools appropriate for his/her team members."* UNBC IT managers should take the following actions to relate to the employees and use their competencies to intrinsically motivate them:

4.1.1 Get to know your employees/team members (relatedness)

The UNBC IT department is divided into three core groups, and each group has a limited number of employees. This gives each group's manager a unique opportunity to get to know the employees of his or her team. Without knowing their team members individually, managers will not be able to use the proper motivational tools to

intrinsically motivate them. Getting to know employees also means that managers will put aside time to sit down and meet with those employees regularly, thus creating a trusting and mutually respectful working relationship. According to the self-directed theory, if an employee's physiological need of *relatedness* is taken care of, that creates an intrinsic motivational effect. As a result, if managers get to know their employees, it will create an effect on employees where they can relate to their managers and eventually to the IT department, peers, and UNBC in general.

When managers get to know employees, they also demonstrate to those employees that the managers care about them. This is an issue within the UNBC IT department; managers either seem not to know their employees or tend to draw conclusions based on assumptions or what they hear from others. Employees who feel they are truly part of a caring team are more motivated to do good work and stay with the job for a longer time. The necessity for managers to become familiar with employees could be a time-consuming process and seems tedious in nature, but if it is done properly, the UNBC IT department will benefit from a work team made up of members who are intrinsically motivated and produce superior results.

4.1.2 Identify and harness individuals' unique talents (competence)

Managers may also identify and harness individuals' unique talents (competence) within their teams if they get to know the employees. This concept comes from the psychological need of *competence* from the self-directed theory. At the university, there has been a lot of time spent on training managers on how to discipline employees or advise them on the improvement of poor performance. The IT department's managers could spend more time focusing on how to discover each person's unique talents

(competence), which will in turn make the department more efficient. If competence is identified, managers could then use those competencies to assign tasks that better suit an individual's psychological needs. It will also create a motivated workforce working for a purpose towards a larger goal.

However, getting to know employees should not be used as an excuse to discipline an employee. This will create less participation from the employees and thus reduce the effectiveness of this action.

4.2 Offer exciting work assignments to employees when possible

It is not possible to offer exciting work assignments to everyone every day in the UNBC IT department. However, one of the ways managers can intrinsically motivate their employees is by offering interesting, meaningful work that provides opportunities for personal growth and creativity (Frank, 2004). In the UNBC IT department, because of diverse employee backgrounds, employees' personal beliefs as to what constitutes interesting and meaningful work matters. As a result, my proposition is: *"Managers should offer work assignments that create enjoyment for employees."*

4.2.1 Break the departmental silos

As stated earlier in the paper, the UNBC IT department's groups are separated and create silos. As an exciting work assignment, managers could assign interested employees to work with different groups. In other words, employees could be offered the chance to work on projects that break the departmental silos. For examples, employees from the administrative and enterprise systems group could work on a computer-deployment project managed by the client services group. This would allow everyone to work together, and employees could see it as an opportunity to learn new skills.

4.2.3 Allow employees to be creative

In the information-technology world, a problem could have a large number of solutions. In the UNBC IT department, it is my observation that many employees are used to routine troubleshooting or problem solving. However, if the employees are given the opportunity to come up with solutions that challenge the norms, that opportunity will allow employees to be creative and thus intrinsically motivate employees, as suggested by Frank (2004). For example, a systems administrator could come up with a solution or a process that eliminates a lengthy wait for IT clients to get their computers set up, an activity that is done by the client services group. As part of the process, the systems administrator could suggest that the client services group use a tool called "Symantec Ghost" when setting up a new computer. This allows the systems administrator to be creative and thus intrinsically motivates him or her.

4.3 Offer employees freedom and choice

Deriving from the psychological need of autonomy as described in the self-directed theory and my personal observation, my proposition is: *"Managers should offer choices to the employees as to the types of work assignments they want to complete. They should give employees the freedom and choice to determine the procedures to be followed to achieve the desired goal."* Action plan to implement the proposition above is described below.

4.3.1 Maintain a list of projects and disperse the information to the employees

Often, employees of the IT department do not know what projects are on the go. This not only creates a disengaged workforce but also an environment where employees do not have proper directions. As a result, I suggest that managers compile a list of

projects that are happening in the UNBC IT department and provide employees with that list. This information will allow employees to think about what kind of projects they are willing to participate in and will also allow managers to execute the next step in the action plan.

4.3.2 Let employees choose the projects they feel they can complete (autonomy: freedom and choice)

Very often, IT employees are given projects with which they do not feel comfortable. As a result, employees withdraw themselves from the projects and do the projects only because managers tell them to do so. They are also given team projects where they cannot relate to other team members. For example, a Windows operating system upgrade project needed team members from each group to work together to successfully complete the project. However, because team members were not given an option to be in the group but rather “asked” to be in the group, no one could relate to each other. While this was not a disaster, because employees could not relate to each other, they were unable to complete the project efficiently.

The actions stated above also get back to the psychological need of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. If an IT employee is given the freedom and choice to choose a project where he or she can relate to his or her project team members and utilize his or her competencies, it will create an intrinsic motivational effect among employees.

4.4 Link meaningfulness of work with impact on UNBC

It is not always possible to offer only the tasks employees like in an organizational setting. As a result, managers of UNBC IT must assign tasks at their discretion to employees to make organizational goals possible. Based on my

understanding of the psychological need of autonomy and the perceived experience of autonomy from the self-directed theory, I propose that managers “*help employees see the meaningfulness of their work to the UNBC community or other impacts when freedom and choice are not visible.*” To make this proposition a reality, my action plan includes the following:

4.4.1 Offer a meaningful rationale when assigning a task (experience of autonomy satisfaction)

As stated by Broeck et al. (2010) employees can experience autonomy satisfaction when they depend on others and even when they follow others’ requests. I thus suggest that managers rationalize their requests by considering either employees’ personal growth or employees’ competence. For example, if the team members of the Windows operating system upgrade project were given some reason for why they were chosen to be in the group (maybe because of their competencies), the project may have had a more efficient outcome.

4.4.2 Make employees part of the decision-making process

Participation in decision making strengthens employees’ commitment to those decisions, as well as their sense of fairness in the process (Durant, Kramer, Perry, Mesch, & Paarlberg, 2006). UNBC IT department employees should be part of the managerial decision-making process. If employees are involved in the decision-making process, they will be motivated to do the work. This type of involvement could also take care of their psychological need of competence by allowing employees to see that they are capable of making decisions that are impacting UNBC as an organization.

4.5 Give employees challenging work assignments that utilize skills and abilities

All the IT employees at UNBC have the self-belief that they possess the skills and abilities to perform their IT duties at UNBC very well. This self-belief is the *competence* in the UNBC IT department context, and I am deriving this concept from the self-directed theory's description of the human psychological need of competence, as described earlier. My proposition for the managers is thus that they *"offer employees challenging work assignments while still ensuring that they feel competent to perform the tasks and achieve the desired outcome."* Based on this proposition, my suggested action plan is described below.

4.5.1 Allow employees to do work in which they are competent

If a competency inventory that would display all IT competencies of all employees were developed, it would cover a significant number of areas of information technology. This inventory could be compiled during the "get to know your employees/team members" phase. This list could then be used to offer tasks that utilized employees' individual competencies. For example, some audiovisual technicians from the client services group have the competency (through formal training) to install fiber-optic cables for the audiovisual services they provide. However, fiber installation is also required for servers and networks that are managed by the infrastructure services group, but this group does not have the competency to install the cables. If managers know that an audiovisual technician is capable and competent to do fiber-optic cable installation, then managers will be able to assign the task to those technicians. This will allow the audiovisual technicians to utilize their competencies and thus intrinsically motivate them.

This will also allow managers to break the departmental silos, as identified earlier in the action plan 4.2.1. This type of action also meets employees' psychological need to do what they are competent at, as stated in self-directed theory.

4.5.2 Share the vision of the IT department but let employees choose how they can contribute to that vision

In the UNBC IT department, employees are faced with a complex and dynamic environment of technology. As per Deci and Ryan's (2002) explanation, I understand that if IT employees' psychological need of competence is satisfied, they will be more likely to adapt to this complex and dynamic environment of technology. For this action plan to be effective, I suggest managers set the overall vision for the IT department, but instead of telling employees (detrimental to autonomy: independence, choice), let the employees decide (choice) how they can be part of the vision or what they can do to make the vision a reality. This task of "choosing" is challenging, but at the same time, employees could find a way to take care of their psychological need of competence.

However, managers must also be aware of *competence frustration*. Competence frustration occurs when an employee feels that he or she does not possess the required competence. It could also be triggered by an employee when he or she feels that he or she has done well on a work assignment by chance rather than his or her own competence. Competence frustration will undermine the effort to motivate employees intrinsically, as stated by Broeck et al. (2010).

4.6 Create a social atmosphere that makes employees feel as if they belong

As stated in the literature review, employees of UNBC IT naturally integrate the values of the social groups around them or the groups they belong to. Deriving from the explanations in the relatedness (3.3.3) section of the paper, my proposition for the managers is: *“Make employees feel as if they belong to a supportive social group where they can relate to the work they perform.”* To achieve this, managers are advised to complete the following tasks.

4.6.1 Build team spirit by creating a mission statement

With all the restrictions and bureaucracy at UNBC, managers could still try to create a distinct corporate identity for UNBC IT team members. To create a strong corporate identity, managers must create a mission statement. It will provide a focus for all employees within the department, giving them something towards which to strive. If an individual displays behavior that does not conform to the mission, other employees can hold them responsible for their actions. While creating the mission statement, managers and employees should focus on their uniqueness and strengths in the context of the rest of the university. This type of exercise by managers at UNBC IT will create an environment where employees can relate to each other and have a sense of belongingness. Such an environment increases organizational commitment, and employees will be more likely to take on actions, intrinsically, that are good for the group. This in turn takes care of employees' psychological need of relatedness.

4.6.2 Create opportunities for team members to meet and bond

Managers are currently practicing techniques to create an environment that fosters a sense of relatedness and belonging. For instance, they are hosting Christmas get-togethers to create such an environment. However, this type of event should be more frequent than once a year. They could create opportunities for everyone to have lunch together, celebrate the birthdays of their fellow peers, or hold training sessions in which everyone is involved. This type of activity will create intimate involvement with others, which is associated with relatedness and intrinsic motivation, as stated by Reis et al. (2000).

4.7 Link reasons to work at UNBC IT department with employees' commitment

According to public-sector motivation (PSM) theory, employees seek and join public-sector employment to serve a higher purpose. However, in the UNBC IT department context, that purpose is lost amidst the desire for monetary gain. My proposition for managers is that they *"help employees understand why they are working at the UNBC IT department to raise their commitment."* I am suggesting following an action plan to raise employee commitment through promotion of a higher purpose.

4.7.1 Discuss why employees choose UNBC for employment

During the process of getting to "know your employees/team members," managers could ask employees the reason they have chosen to join UNBC. Employees might mention financial reasons; if so, managers could show them that if they were motivated purely by financial reasons, they would have been better off finding

employment in the public sector. They could then counsel employees to consider that they may have chosen UNBC for employment because they want to serve the public interest. This realization by the employee could then motivate him/her intrinsically.

4.7.2 Remind employees of the higher purpose

As human beings, we forget many things. Employees could also forget the reasons, as discovered in section 4.7.1. As a result, managers should always look for any deviation from the intended behavior, and if the reason for the deviation is that employees are forgetting their purpose, then managers should remind them of the higher purpose. Some examples of key indications that employees are forgetting their purpose of serving the public interest could be as follows:

- Talking about financial gain.
- Making excuses to not do the work.
- Spending time gossiping.

When the above trends emerge in an employee, along with many others, managers should remind them of the public interest. At the same time, however, managers should also make sure that this type of discussion is not seen as discipline by the employees. If employees perceive this as discipline, they may withdraw themselves from participating in this type of conversation.

4.8 Set goals that are specific, difficult but attainable, and accepted by employees

Lunenburg (2011) explains that goals have a pervasive influence on employee behavior and performance in organizations and management practices. Although I do not

believe goal setting alone could intrinsically motivate employees, I suggest that UNBC IT managers use goal setting exercise as part of their overall intrinsic motivational tool. Many organizations are using tools such as management by objectives (MBO), management information systems (MIS), benchmarking, and business intelligences (BI) systems as part of their specific goal-development process. Managers in different organizations also widely accept goal setting as a means to improve and sustain performance (Lunenburg, 2011). My proposition for UNBC IT managers is: *“Set goals that are specific, difficult but attainable, and accepted by employees.”* Under the right conditions, goal setting can be a powerful technique, and as such, my action plan includes the following suggestions (suggestions are adapted from Lunenburg (2011) and applied in a UNBC IT department context).

4.8.1 Be specific when setting goals

Instead of setting vague goals such as “work harder” or “do your best,” which do not offer any target, managers of UNBC IT should offer specific goals such as “install 10 computers.” Specific goals are often quantifiable, and IT employees will know what to reach for. This will also allow them to measure their own progress against the specific goals. Research indicates that specific goals help bring about other desirable organizational goals such as a reduction in absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover (Locke & Latham, 2006). Specific goals can be set by the manager to create an intrinsic motivational effect if the manager can give a meaningful rationale. Alternatively, employees could set their own specific goals, and that could also create an intrinsic motivational effect by taking care of their psychological need of competence.

4.8.2 Set difficult but attainable goals

Goals must also be difficult to attain because employees of the IT department need challenges where they can utilize their competencies. This is related to employees' psychological need of competence, as stated in the self-directed theory. Resetting a user's password, for example, is a relatively simple task for client services group members, but a goal to write a programming script that will automatically let users know when their passwords expire is difficult but attainable for this group. This goal will also allow employees to utilize their competencies. Managers should find a way to link it with employees' self-efficacy.

Managers should also not set goals that are too difficult for employees to attain. Although the IT employees of UNBC will work hard to reach challenging goals, they will only do so when they believe goals are within their capabilities or can be achieved using their competencies. As goals become too difficult, performance suffers because organization members reject the goals as unreasonable and unattainable. This is also related to self-efficacy theory. Employees of the IT department need to believe that they are capable of attaining the set goals.

4.8.3 Employees have to accept goals (gain commitment)

Managers of the IT department must make sure when they are setting goals to which employees are committed. Assigning goals to employees will not result in higher commitment. A powerful method of obtaining acceptance is to allow organization members to participate in the goal-setting process (Lunenburg, 2011). As stated previously, it is believed that participation in decision making increases employees' commitment. Lunenburg further mentions that participation helps organization members

better understand the goals, ensure that the goals are not unreasonable, and achieve the goals. Factors of both competence (psychological need from self-directed theory) and self-efficacy could assist employees in gaining commitment if they are part of the process of setting goals and thus are intrinsically motivating employees towards achieving those goals.

4.8.4 Set deadlines

All goals set for the IT employees must also have deadlines for completion. Deadlines serve as a control mechanism and increase the motivational impact of goals. However, if deadlines are too tight, quality of work may suffer as well. Managers must balance between deadlines and quality of work. Managers could allow employees to set deadlines as well, which will create a higher level of commitment and thus cause an intrinsic motivational effect.

4.8.5 Provide feedback and link it with the goals

Providing feedback is very important when IT employees are performing a task at UNBC. Feedback will assist UNBC IT employees in two ways towards the attainment of their goals. First, it will help them to realize how well (or not) they are doing and second, they will be able adjust as needed while working towards the goal. For example, if an application developer is building a new program that exceeds the expectations of the manager, the manager's feedback in regards to that will help employee realize that his work is producing better results. Alternatively, if the program deadline is approaching but the employee is behind the schedule, the manager's feedback in that regard will allow the employee to adjust to the schedule.

However, while offering feedback, managers must remember the negative effects of feedback on intrinsic motivation. In the above example, to intrinsically motivate the employee, the manager must first allow the employee to set his own goal, then his own timeline based on his or her competencies and self-efficacy. Only if the manager can link his feedback with employees' goals and competence will it create an intrinsic motivational effect. As stated earlier, managers should also be aware of the effect of self-efficacy when offering feedback. Managers of IT must not inject any doubts into an employee's mind even if he or she is approaching the deadlines. The injection of doubt will create less engagement from the employee and thus reduce the effect of intrinsic motivation.

4.9 Offer and encourage training (link it with employees' competence and skill variety)

Based on the discussion on the self-efficacy cue "enactive mastery," which is defined as repeated performance accomplishments, my proposition for IT managers is that they "*allow IT employees to build skills and abilities throughout their careers at UNBC.*" Enactive mastery (for example: training) is not an intrinsic motivational tool by itself but could be used in conjunction with other tools to intrinsically motivate UNBC IT employees. The action plan to accomplish this is described below.

4.9.1 Allow employees to come up with their own training needs

Instead of managers telling the employees, IT managers of UNBC should allow employees to plan their own training needs as part of a more comprehensive career discussion. This will create commitment on the part of employees, and higher

commitment means that employees are more likely to complete the training to gain new skills and competencies. This will play a role in intrinsically motivating employees.

However, managers must be careful in controlling the training needs with the organizational mission and vision. Training needs of individuals must meet individuals' goals, and these in their turn must fit with UNBC's goals. For example, an IT employee from the administrative and enterprise systems group may want to learn how to bake. That may be the right training need for the employee from the personal-growth point of view, but it is not aligned with UNBC's goals. As a result, training needs should be linked with organizational goals and needs.

4.9.2 Link training with competence and skill variety

If managers allow employees to come up with their own training needs, then the task is to link the training employees are seeking with their gaining of competence and skills through their work. If properly matched, IT employees of UNBC will gain skill variety, which is part of the critical psychological state of employees experiencing meaningfulness of their work. This will also address employees' psychological need of competence and will allow them to be positive about their self-efficacy. Combining all these different tools will allow managers to intrinsically motivate employees at UNBC IT.

4.10 Celebrate success

As part of the self-efficacy cue, vicarious experience indicates that employees could gain knowledge through some means other than their direct experience. UNBC IT employees cannot directly experience all possible events or training opportunities within the information-technology world for themselves. As a result, if an employee finished a

certain professional-development track or attended a conference, those events might be celebrated as a group. This celebration will allow others to either work towards self-efficacy or induce them to gain their own competencies through events such as training or attending conferences. My proposition for the managers to induce such behavior among employees is “*celebrate individuals’ successes as a group.*” My action plan suggests the following:

- Plan the celebration.
- Have a clear purpose for the celebration.

4.11 Be persuasive

Managers need to be persuasive in helping employees to reach their goals. My proposition, based on my understanding of the self-efficacy cue “verbal persuasion,” is that managers “*be persuasive and suggest employees do their best.*” However, I have mentioned previously that simply stating, “Do your best,” is not specific enough. In this context, “do your best” means employees should not give up on goals until they accomplish them. My action plan includes the following:

- Mentor and coach employees, or have someone else do the mentoring or coaching.
- Encourage employees to try things as a means of learning and development.
- Remove fear of failure by not criticizing.
- Be persuasive based on the goals assigned or set earlier. This will allow employees to take care of their psychological needs.
- Link persuasion with employees’ competence. Otherwise, employees may withdraw themselves from the process.

4.12 Help employees cope (develop coping mechanism) with situations creating stress, fear, and anxiety

As described as part of the self-efficacy cue “emotional arousal,” it is believed that employees’ performance capability is dependent upon employees’ own perception of their psychological state of mind. If used in conjunction with other motivational methods, this could induce an intrinsic motivational effect on employees. My proposition is that managers “*help employees cope (develop coping mechanism) with situations creating stress, fear, and anxiety.*” My action plan to eliminate these situations are:

- Identify what the stressors for the employees are.
- Eliminate the stressors through alternatives.
- If elimination is not possible, then try to replace them.
- Help employees develop mechanisms to cope with stress, fear, and anxiety.

4.13 Link performance with UNBC’s mission and vision

As stated by Ryan and Deci (2000) in the cognitive evaluation theory, expected rewards should lead to a larger decrease in intrinsic motivation than unexpected rewards. As a result, my proposition for UNBC IT managers is, that instead of linking the performance with rewards, they “*link the individual employee’s performance with UNBC’s organizational mission and vision.*” Linking performance with UNBC’s mission and vision will allow employees to take care of their psychological need for competence and relatedness as well, which will in turn intrinsically motivate the employee. My action plan includes:

- Discuss employees' performance with them.
- Set clear goals and explain their importance to the higher purpose of serving the public interest.
- Link individual competencies with performance.

4.14 Assign work assignments to the right employee

Based on the psychological need of competency and my understanding of self-efficacy, managers of UNBC IT should assign tasks that are the right fit for the employee's competencies. Often, project work is assigned to employees based on seniority at UNBC. This automatic assignment of work based on seniority could create negative effects on both the employee who is getting it and on the employee who is not getting it but has the required competency. As a result, my proposal is that managers *"assign projects to the right employees so that they can use their skills and abilities to be successful."* The action plan will include the following.

4.14.1 Know employees' competencies

As part of the "get to know your employees/team members" exercise mentioned earlier, managers could also find out each employee's competencies. From that list, they could assign a project that utilizes the individual's competencies. This will allow employees to be intrinsically motivated because this will take care of their psychological need for competence.

4.14.2 Assign tasks based on competencies and not seniority list

Employees who are getting tasks based on their places on the seniority list and not competencies will try their best to perform the task. However, if they fail, that will

negatively impact their self-efficacy, and their psychological need of competence will not be met. On the other hand employees who are not getting the task even though they have the required competence will withdraw from the task and will most likely not participate willingly in any future endeavors. This will occur because their psychological need to explore their competence will not be exercised.

4.15 Link performance with recognition

Deci et al. state that when an individual gets an unexpected reward, that individual may attribute the reward to actual working for rewards. In UNBC IT context, rewards could be as simple as a manager's compliment or recognition of the hard work. My proposal here for managers is that they *"offer fair recognition, and link it to performance."* The action plan includes the following:

4.15.1 Implement performance appraisal

Currently, the UNBC IT department does not have any mechanisms for performance appraisal, and as such, offering rewards based on performance is not on any manager's radar. My advice is to implement a robust performance-appraisal system for at least the IT employees. Once the system is in place, rewards should be tied to behavior and performance. However, offering monetary rewards to any employees is not an option at UNBC. As a result, creative ways to reward employees can be utilized by the managers. For examples, employees could be given recognition for a job well done or going above and beyond a customer's expectations.

4.15.2 Offer rewards that are positively valent to the IT team members

Rewards for employees could be in the form of tangible incentives such as promotions, bonuses, or challenging assignments. Though everyone in the department thinks money is the only motivating factor, it is not. In a public organization such as UNBC, offering money is not an option. As a result, managers must understand what motivates their employees and match employees' desires with rewards managers are able to provide. The IT managers may not be able to offer the desired rewards, but the simple fact that they know the employees and have tried to offer rewards will initiate behavioral changes in employees.

Rewards are positively valent if team members of the department would prefer having them to not having them. For example, team members would like to have the flexibility of choosing when to go on coffee breaks. If managers tried to take this away and enforce scheduled coffee breaks, the loss of inflexibility would not be desirable to the employees. In this case, the positively valent reward is the flexibility of when employees go on coffee breaks.

If recognition is the reward, managers must be careful in administering such rewards. If a reward goes to an employee whom others think does not deserve it, the reward will create a toxic environment, and the overall result will be negative. It is my observation that when IT department employees think that the person who is receiving the recognition does not deserve it, an unproductive environment is created. To overcome this challenge, managers must educate employees as to why someone is getting a reward and how they can get one too. Managers should also understand the goals and purpose of the university and offer rewards to the employees who display behavior that is the

essence of the institute. For example, managers might recognize an employee who turns off his or her computer at the end of every work day in order to conserve electricity. This behavior aligns with UNBC being one of Canada's green universities.

4.15.3 Be aware of the effects of external rewards on intrinsic motivation perception

Many may view feedback and recognition as external motivation which may decrease intrinsic motivational effect. However, Deci (1971) stated that support for such prediction that external rewards decrease intrinsic motivation is not substantial. He further added that many activities, regardless of the initiating motive, become intrinsically interesting. In his paper, "*Externally Mediated Rewards and Intrinsic Motivation*," Deci stated that intrinsic motivation could be enhanced by external rewards. While feedback and recognition could be perceived as external motivators, further look into empirical research such as Deci's suggest such form of verbal reinforcement (rather than money) could increase intrinsic motivation in employees.

As public sector employer, UNBC is unable to offer monetary offers to unionized workforce. As a result, managers of IT could utilize feedback and recognitions as reinforcement to intrinsically motivate their employees because it is believed that when verbal reinforcement and positive feedback are used as the external rewards, individual's intrinsic motivation seems to increase relative to those not receiving such rewards (Deci, 1971). While I am not suggesting that managers should use feedback and recognition exclusively to intrinsically motivate employees, they should be aware of the perception that such verbal reinforcement could be seen as external motivators.

4.16 Redesign “some” of the jobs

Based on Hackman and Oldham’s (1980) job characteristic model, which identifies three psychological states of employees that could make employees highly internally work motivated and thus contributing towards being intrinsically motivated, my proposal to the managers is that they *“redesign some of the jobs so that they offer skill variety, employees can identify themselves with the tasks, and these tasks are of greater significance to the UNBC community”* As it is not possible to redesign all the functional UNBC IT jobs, I believe managers could add elements to enrich certain jobs. My action plan to do so is as follows.

4.16.1 Create job rotation for employees throughout the entire IT department

Organizations make employees rotate jobs to reduce their boredom and get them more interested in their work. The rotation also allows them to learn new skills (Ortega, 2001). However, in the UNBC IT department, only the client services group goes through job rotation. It is my recommendation that managers implement job rotation regarding all jobs within the department that do not directly impact the operation of the university. This will allow employees to learn new skills and help them see how their work impacts the UNBC community. It will also allow everyone to realize their core job characteristics of skill variety, task identity, and task significance. In turn, it will allow them to experience the meaningfulness of their work (also related to public-sector motivation theory) and thus create an effect of high internal work motivation.

4.16.2 Temporary work assignments

There are many opportunities at UNBC IT where managers could provide employees with temporary assignments. This type of work assignment could also break

the departmental silos that exist within the IT department. Employees from the integrated support services group could be assigned to create a network diagram that could be used by the infrastructure group. However, managers must remember that employees have to believe that they can do the assigned task (self-efficacy). Employees also need to have the right competencies to perform the task. If the task is arbitrarily assigned by the managers to the employees, then the outcome will not be positive, and employees will not be intrinsically motivated.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The University of Northern British Columbia is facing an unprecedented challenge due to financial constraints. The Information Technology department will face uncertainty in the near future. However, the challenges of this department can be overcome by highly motivated and productive employees who produce more results for less. While I believe that managers of the UNBC IT department face changes due to rigid corporate governance and bureaucracy, I also believe that there are many tools available to intrinsically motivate IT employees at UNBC.

All the theories are intertwined, and no one theory or action from my suggested action plan will intrinsically motivate all employees in UNBC IT. I understand some common techniques such as feedback and performance evaluation are left out. These techniques are intermittently used by UNBC IT managers. They are aware of these tools in motivating employees. As a result, those are not part of my propositions nor the action plan.

The action plans highlighted in this project show that they are not only backed by empirical research but are also practical. Motivation is an individual preference, and thus a “one size fits all” approach to employee motivation in the UNBC IT department does not work. This project suggests 16 propositions with different action plans that managers could use to motivate their employees intrinsically. All the propositions and the action plans are included in Appendix 1 as a manager’s quick reference guide.

Motivating employees intrinsically and being motivated together constitute a two-way street. Regardless of what kind of tools managers are using to motivate their

employees, if the employees are not aware of what motivation is or the purpose of the tools being used by the managers, then the motivation will most likely fail to deliver its intended result. However, given my experience working in this department, I know that some of the techniques are not easy to implement. It is easy to dismiss the potential positive outcomes of these techniques by saying, "My hands are tied." That type of behavior from the managers is not productive and is ultimately detrimental to the overall organizational goal of the university. Motivating employees requires leadership and commitment from all levels of the hierarchy. If managers adopt at least some of the techniques highlighted here, they will improve the performance and attitude of the IT employees at the University of Northern British Columbia.

Appendix 1: Reference guide for managers

#	Propositions	Action plan	Theory used
1	There is no one motivational tool that will motivate every group of employees, and as such, each group's managers must use the intrinsic motivational tools appropriate for his/her team members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Get to know your employees/team members (relatedness). - Identify and harness individuals' unique talents (competence). 	Self-directed theory and personal observation
2	Managers should offer work assignments that create enjoyment for the employees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Break the departmental silos. - Allow employees to be creative. 	Self-directed theory and personal observation
3	Managers should offer choices to the employees as to the types of work assignments they want to complete. They should give employees the freedom and choice to determine the procedures to be followed to achieve the desired goal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain a list of projects and disperse the information to the employees. - Let employees choose the projects they feel they can complete (autonomy: freedom and choice). 	Self-directed: Autonomy and experience of autonomy satisfaction
4	Help employees see the meaningfulness of their work to the UNBC community or other impacts when freedom and choice are not visible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offer meaningful rationale when assigning a task (experience of autonomy satisfaction). - Make employees part of the decision-making process. 	Self-directed: Autonomy
5	Offer employees challenging work assignments while still ensuring that they feel competent to perform the tasks and achieve the desired outcome.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allow employees to do what they are competent at. - Share the vision of the IT department but let employees choose how they can contribute to that vision 	Self-directed: Competence

6	Make employees feel as if they belong to a supportive social group where they can relate to the work they perform.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build team spirit by creating a mission statement. - Create opportunities for team members to meet and bond. 	Self-directed: Relatedness
7	Help employees understand why they are working at the UNBC IT department to raise their commitment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss why employees choose UNBC for employment. - Remind employees of the higher purpose 	Public sector motivation
8	Set goals that are specific, difficult but attainable, and accepted by employees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be specific when setting goals. - Set difficult but attainable goals. - Employees have to accept goals (gain commitment). - Set deadlines. - Provide feedback and link it with the goals. 	Goal-setting
9	Allow IT employees to build skills and abilities throughout their careers at UNBC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allow employees to come up with their own training needs. - Link training with competence and skill variety. 	Self-efficacy: Enactive mastery, Self-directed: Competence
10	Celebrate individuals' successes as a group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plan the celebration. - Have a clear purpose for the celebration. 	Self-efficacy: Vicarious experience
11	Offer encouragement to employees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mentor and coach employees or have someone else do the mentoring or coaching. - Encourage employees to try things as a means of learning and development. - Remove fear of failure by not criticizing. - Be persuasive based on the goals assigned or set earlier. This will allow employees to take care of their psychological needs. - Link persuasion with employee's competence. Otherwise employees may withdraw themselves from the process. 	Self-efficacy: Verbal persuasion

12	Help employees cope (develop coping mechanism) with situations creating stress, fear, and anxiety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify what the stressors for the employees are. - Eliminate stressors through alternatives. - If elimination is not possible, then try to replace them. - Help employees develop mechanisms to cope with stress, fear, and anxiety. 	Self-efficacy: Emotional arousal
13	Link the individual employee's performance with UNBC's organizational mission and vision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss their performances with the employees. - Set clear goals and rationalize them with the higher purpose of serving the public interest. - Link individual competencies with performance. 	Cognitive evaluation
14	Assign projects to the right employees so that they can use their skills and abilities to be successful.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Know employees' competencies. - Assign tasks based on competencies and not seniority list. 	Cognitive evaluation
15	Offer fair recognition, and link it to performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement performance appraisal. - Offer rewards that are positively valent to the IT team members. - Be aware of the effects of external rewards on intrinsic motivation. 	Cognitive evaluation
16	Redesign some of the jobs so that they offer skill variety, employees can identify themselves with the tasks, and these tasks are of greater significance to the UNBC community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create job rotation for employees throughout the entire IT department. - Temporary work assignments. 	Job characteristic model

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