

# Motivation and performance of staff in an aviation security environment

## Introduction

As the aviation industry re-shapes due to the impact of COVID 19, it is critical the performance of the aviation security workforce remains at a level where it provides mitigation through deterrence, detection and denial of acts of unlawful interference. Additionally, staff must be able to play their part in supporting a robust security culture within their organisation.

This document aims to provide food for thought on the context and background behind performance and motivation, and how this links to a robust organisational security culture.

It explores the theoretical approach of factors which can affect motivation, performance and job design and how

they may apply in the current situation and the context of SeMS and security culture.

**This guidance is broken down into 5 sections:**

1. The link between motivation and performance
2. Factors affecting motivation
3. Making sense of people's actions
4. Using job design to get the best out of people
5. The impact of human factors on security culture

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## 1. The link between motivation and performance

Intrinsic (internally driven) motivation is a key aptitude desirable from our workforce – with their roles critical to aviation security, periods of low motivation can have a direct impact on performance. This is because motivation forms a corner stone of what drives performance, with the additional factors of the individual's capability and their working environment/accountability for the task.

*Performance = Motivation + Capability  
(Knowledge/Skill/Proficiency) + Accountability  
(Structure/Process/Policies)*

(based on Anderson and Butzin)

Bearing the above in mind, let's look at what factors can affect the motivation of individuals. There is no 'one size fits all' and there will be a natural variable between individuals.

## 2. Factors affecting motivation

There are several theories available that shed light on the background of what motivates individuals, including two that are familiar to many of us – Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (below), and Herzberg’s ‘two factor theory’ (right). These and other theories share common elements – they lay foundation to the concept that it is more difficult for individuals to fully capitalise on their intrinsic motivation to perform well, whilst more basic factors that affect their working environment are not fully met. Consider that this will extend beyond their immediate security responsibilities and into the wider realm of their ability to support the security culture of the organisation. There are common elements, such as job security, working conditions and pay that feature as factors that can drive job dissatisfaction and feature in the low rungs of Maslow’s hierarchy – in the context of providing safety and security.

The current situation of uncertainty creates the conditions where basic needs have changed, are no longer being met or where there is uncertainty over their future, including but not limited to:

- Not sleeping well (potentially due to worry) which can create higher fatigue levels and impact concentration;
- Illness of self or loved ones and general concerns over wellbeing;
- Economic and financial concerns;
- Dealing with uncertainty about roles and restructuring, which can create anxiety;
- Routines might be disrupted both at home and work including periods of furlough or changes to tasks;
- The impact of wearing PPE at work.



### MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS



Security staff at all levels are not immune to the impact of change and due to the scale of COVID 19 and its presence in almost all parts of life (private and at work), resilience of our workforces will be impacted. However, our systems can be built around accounting for the ‘human factor’ and must be flexible enough to dynamically move with the current situation, which presents us with rapid change, which can impact on our ability to perform.

<https://www.vecteezy.com/free-vector/flat>

### 3. Local Rationality principle – doing what makes sense at the time

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We all take actions within the context of the moment and what makes sense to us, whether that is a security operative on a checkpoint or a senior manager making strategic decisions. Our own performance is linked to this – taking reasonable actions linked to our knowledge and understanding of the situation, and our focus at that particular moment in time. This ‘local rationality principle’ makes it more difficult for humans to take actions that do not make sense to us – in particular if we are missing the context, understanding and knowledge that might give sense to the action. At the current time where large scale organisation and process changes are occurring over a protracted period of time, it is really important to acknowledge that our ability to make sense at the time may have changed, which can impact performance.

Factors to take into account include but are not limited to:

- Changes to established operational protocols where staff may not understand the context and background leading to change, or the simple number of changes becoming difficult to rationalise;
- Mixed messages from different sources (internal and external), creating confusion over the right course of action;
- The (security) culture of the organisation changing, or being impacted by internal or external pressures, including a perceived greater focus on public health than security in the current situation;
- Recognising that actions might not make sense or seem logical in hindsight but that at the time they may have reflected the knowledge and understanding of the member of staff. There should therefore be careful consideration whether the situation could re-occur if the original context is still present for other staff members. For example, staff may have returned from a furlough period that means they have not conducted their function for some time, and may take some time to perform to the same standard as before their period of furlough. Whilst this ‘warm up period’ makes sense in the local context, it will potentially create a period of lowered performance.

If you would like to find out more about the local rationality principle, the following link provides additional context – Eurocontrol’s [Skybrary](#).

### 4. Using job design to get the best out of people

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The make-up, or ‘job design’ of the roles our staff conduct, and the environment they conduct these in can positively or negatively influence their motivation. If these factors can be taken into account when shaping or re-shaping job roles, this can prevent unintended negative consequences and empower staff to perform to the best of their ability.

#### **a) Work design theory**

We recognise that during this time many entities will be looking inwards at their own structures and roles. When restructuring impacts on the make-up of job roles we would recommend that job design principles are taken into account, as these can proactively support motivation and performance of staff.

For example Hackman and Oldham outlined 5 key pillars that contributed positively to staff motivation and satisfaction on performance:

- **Skill variety:** The extent to which a job requires different activities and therefore skills – variety can increase motivation. This would for example apply to a security officer rotating through different tasks within a team on the checkpoint.
- **Task significance:** The perceived importance of a job for the lives or work of other people within or outside of the organisation – a high task significance increases work motivation. In an aviation security context this relates to understanding the impact of their role – at all levels.
- **Autonomy:** The degree of freedom, independence and discretion in scheduling work and determining work procedures - autonomy can increase work motivation. In aviation security, this can relate to decision making processes and escalation processes.
- **Task feedback:** The information employees receive about performance and the extent to which they can see the impact of their work - feedback is important for work motivation. Feedback from supervisors/managers is a critical element of ensuring performance is at the required standard in aviation security, and in particular at a time where large numbers of staff have been absent from the operation from extended periods of time.
- **Task identity:** The degree to which a job is done as a whole from the beginning to the end with visible results instead of making only part of a product or service – a high task identity increases work motivation.



<http://www.whatishumanresource.com/job-design>

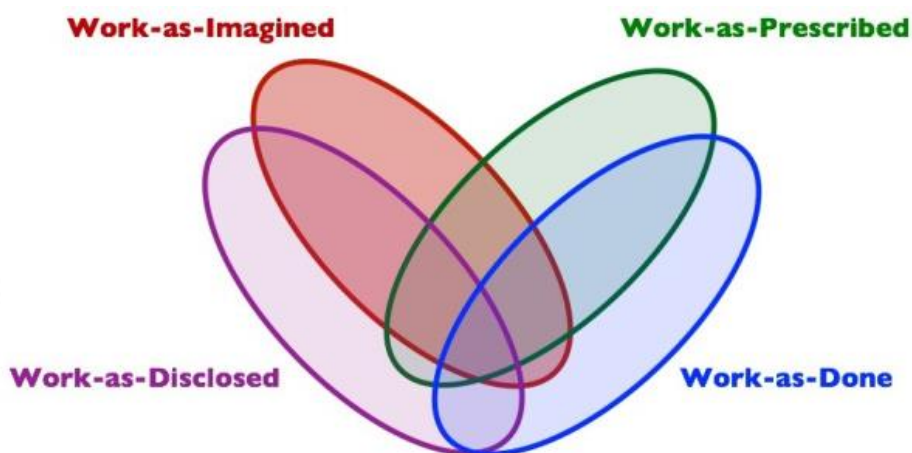
Clearly these aspects have to be balanced with efficiency and effectiveness concerns. Consulting with staff undertaking the roles and understanding how they see and perceive their context (the local rationality principle) can help make changes to job roles that will allow an understanding of the background.

## b) Understanding job roles

When creating or restructuring job roles, it is worth considering how different roles are being approached for review. This is because there is often a difference between how work is done on the ground and how people think it is done, how it is described in operational protocols and even how staff might disclose what they do when asked to explain their work. Ombredane, Faverge and Dekker provide us with a useful model to consider here, providing 4 approaches:

*Work as done* - this is the actual activity that takes place. Work as done is the pattern of activity a person or team carries out, and may not be the same as the work that they are expected to do or how others imagine the work is done. The importance of the local rationality principle applies here; persons will do what makes sense to them in the context and the moment they are in.

*Work as imagined* - the way others imagine the work is done – this may be others within the same entity, external entities or even the public. To some extent the work as imagined will not match the work done and this is particularly relevant when creating processes, recording activity and making decisions, where it can be critical to understand the work as done, not as imagined.



<https://humanisticssystem.com/2016/12/05/the-varieties-of-human-work/>

*Work as prescribed* - the way operational protocols, processes, regulation and policies prescribe how work should be done – often the way the work is assumed should be done, safely and securely. Due to the complexity of work tasks, especially in the avsec environment, there is often more than one way to do the work (task), which complicates this aspect.

*Work as disclosed* – the way we describe, explain and write about the work, often aligned to the purpose of why the work is being disclosed. This can create difficulty as the message may be tailored to what it is believed can be understood, tolerated or is expected, and how the person disclosing the information wants the message to be received.

These four variables emphasize that in order to truly understand the work that is going on, all 4 need to be reviewed and taken into account when proposing, researching and making changes to job roles.

For more information about the varieties of work principle and job design, please go to:

<https://humanisticsystems.com/2016/12/05/the-varieties-of-human-work/>

<https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/strategy/organisational-development/job-design-factsheet>

## 5. The impact of human factors on security culture

ICAO defines security culture as *a set of norms, beliefs, values, attitudes and assumptions that are inherent in the daily operation of an organisation and are reflected by the **actions and behaviours of all entities and personnel** within the organisation. Security should be everyone's responsibility.*

All factors outlined in this document will ultimately influence the ability of our staff to contribute positively to the security culture of an organisation. Without their 'buy in' into playing their part in creating, maintaining and supporting an organisation's security culture, a potential vulnerability can be created. Our staff must be motivated properly, work in job roles and an environment that allows them

to perform to the best of their ability, and have their decision and performance understood by management.

A robust organisational security culture relies on all staff being able to support those shared norms, beliefs and values, and the impact of Covid 19 has put this under more pressure than ever before. It is therefore more critical than ever to ensure the human factor is understood within the aviation security system and taken into account.

Security Culture is a key component of SeMS, however, it does not only apply to entities who have embarked onto the SeMS journey – it applies to all entities in the aviation sector, in the same way as safety culture is fundamental across all entities.

### Without a good security culture:



CPNI

For more information on security culture, please go to:

CAA SeMS Framework: <https://www.caa.co.uk/Commercial-industry/Security/Security-management-systems/Security-Management-Systems/>

CPNI: <https://www.cpni.gov.uk/system/files/documents/98/dc/Embedding-Security-Behaviours-Using-5Es.pdf>

ICAO Security Culture resources: <https://www.icao.int/Security/Security-Culture/Pages/default.aspx>

## Additional Acknowledgements

This document includes content from the ECAC Security Handbook document 'Screener Work Motivation: Key Theories and Best Practices', as well as:

- Anderson, N. H., & Butzin, C. A. (1974). *Performance = Motivation × Ability: An integration-theoretical analysis*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 30(5), 598–604
- Dekker, S. and van Winsen, R. (2016). Human Factors and the Ethics of Explaining Failure (Chapter 5). In S. Shorrock and C. Williams (Eds.), *Human factors and ergonomics in practice: Improving system performance and human well-being in the real world*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press
- Hackman, J.R., & Oldham, G.R. (1976). *Motivation through the design of work: Test of a theory*. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 16, 250-279
- Ombredanne A. & Faverge J.-M. (1955). *L'analyse du travail*. Paris : PUF