# UWI Policy Briefs: *Employee Engagement*

Introduction

The UWI *Strategic Plan 2012-17* contains an HR Perspective entitled "Employee Engagement & Development. The sub-theme "Culture of Employee Engagement" has the following goal:

Create an organisational environment that promotes personal growth and development for employees and positive cognitive, emotional, and behavioural states directed toward optimum organisational outcomes.

Employee Engagement (EE) is a term used in the literature with its associated body of research and knowledge. The UWI goal utilizes a prominent definition of EE: *"Employee engagement can be defined as a positive cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state directed toward positive organizational outcomes"* (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). The relationship could be expressed logically as:

Cognitive   Emotional   Behavioral
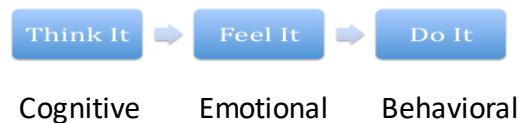
Why is EE important? Sustained worker productivity and quality of output directly depend on the level of engagement. Research reveals that--compared with disengaged staff--engaged employees (Shuck & Wollard, 2010):

- *Average 27% less physical absenteeism than their peers*
- *Save an average of 86.5 million days per year in lost productivity (USA)*
- *Are 87% less likely to leave an organization (5 times less likely that employees who are not engaged)*
- *Are 57% more likely to be involved in discretionary efforts*
- *Work 20% harder than those who are not engaged*
- *Score between 12% and 34% higher in customer satisfaction ratings*
- *Disengaged employees cost the US Economy between $250-300 Billion annually in lost productivity*

A 2001 Gallup poll attempted to measure the amount of EE in US firms and estimated it to be slightly above a quarter as depicted in Figure 1. If rates are that high in a first world country, can they be any better in developing states? If they are that poor in the private sector, can they be any better in a bureaucratic organization?
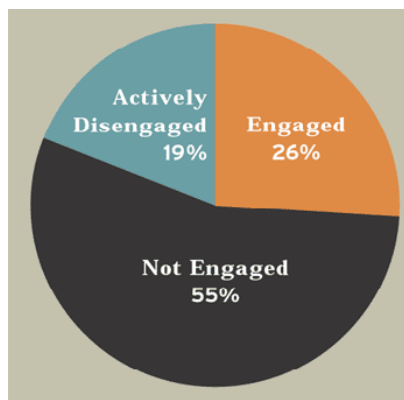

Figure 1: US worker engagement levels.   Source: Gallup Business Journal (2001)

In April 2011, UWI conducted a university-wide *Employee Engagement Survey*, and over a year later the results have not been made public, but they should provide an approximation of the state of EE regionally. The purpose of this policy brief is to explore what is known about EE and its implications for the UWI policy.

Literature Review

To provide a conceptual framework for the range of possible levels of engagement the Table 1 was developed when a review of literature revealed no consistent or standard continuum of engagement. The *Gallup* classification in the Figure 1 may be an oversimplification.

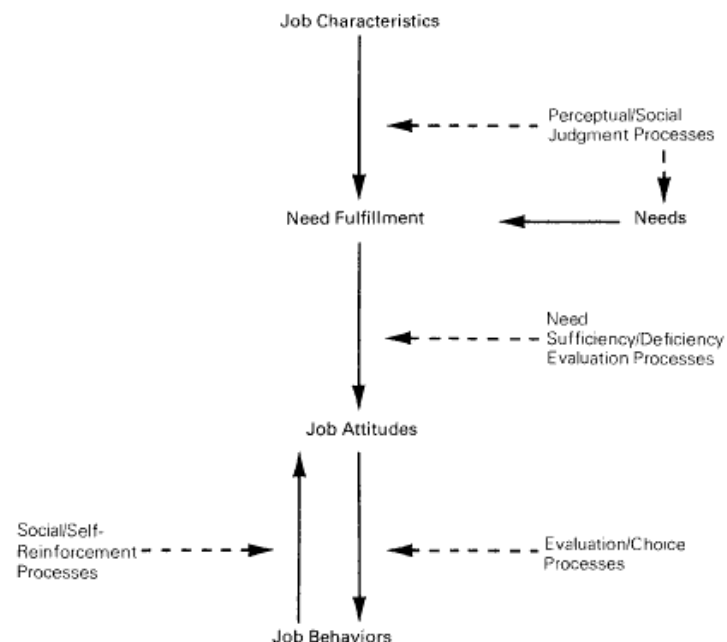Table 1. *Five Levels* of *Employee Engagement*

ICON	LEVEL	TITLE	DESCRIPTION
	1	**Ownership Engagement**	Employee goes beyond what is required and takes ownership as if they have shares or behave the way the owner would in a given situation; passionate, innovative, self-starting, a champion, a leader in their area
	2	**Positive Engagement**	Employee fully meets most or all performance standards and shows strong positive emotions and commitment towards the job/enterprise
	3	**Fragmented Engagement**	Employee is doing well in some areas of their job but not in others; mixed emotions and motivations
	4	**Passive Engagement**	Employee is "working-to-rule," just doing enough to get their paycheck, does not care about the customer or outcomes, sees the job as a way to pay the bills; does not like to come to work; will leave if offered a little more money somewhere else
	5	**Negative Engagement**	Actively acting out anger or unhappiness; disruptive, undermining, maybe engaging in outright sabotage

Source: (Gedeon, 2011)

Perhaps, the EE survey designers/analysts could link the results to this taxonomy so each level of UWI would know where it stands (on a scale of 0-5) with respect to EE levels. Of course, the task then becomes to move the average ever upward towards "Ownership Engagement."

What causes EE to increase and what kills it? There are many theoretical perspectives that have answers for this question. Historically, EE surveys used to be called "Employee Satisfaction" surveys (ESS). The assumption is that a satisfied employee is a productive (or engaged) employee. Figure 2 diagrams the "Needs-Satisfaction" model (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977), which makes the following assumption-linkages: an employee's needs are supposedly satisfied by some type of job characteristics to some degree, and as satisfaction increases, job motivation will also increase, which will translate into increased productivity.

Need-Satisfaction Models

Job Characteristics

Perceptual/Social
Judgment Processes

Need Fulfillment   Needs

Need
Sufficiency/Deficiency
Evaluation Processes

Job Attitudes

Social/Self-
Reinforcement   Evaluation/Choice
Processes   Processes

Job Behaviors

Figure. A need-satisfaction model of jobs, needs, attitudes, and behaviors.

Figure 2: Needs-Satisfaction Job Model   Source: Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977

Bowling (2007) questioned whether *a happy worker is automatically a productive worker*. All the employees' needs could be met in a 'country club' type environment but would that necessarily motivate higher levels of productivity? His research revealed that, "...the satisfaction–performance relationship was partially eliminated after controlling for either general personality traits (e.g., *Five Factor Model* traits and core self-evaluations) or for work locus-of-control and was almost completely eliminated after controlling for organization-based self-esteem" (p. 167). He therefore concluded, "Organisational efforts to improve employee performance by exclusively targeting job satisfaction are unlikely to be effective" (p. 180). In other words, personality and other factors played a significant role in performance.

Performance on the individual level is a function of both motivation and ability (skills), given the resources and supportive environment necessary to perform the tasks. A skilled employee who is not motivated will

have weak performance just as an employee who is highly motivated, yet has inadequate skills. Much of the emphasis of ESS has been on the motivational side to the exclusion of the competency and systems components of performance. The following is a list of motivational theories in chronological order that have been applied to improve job satisfaction (See the Appendix for brief descriptions of each). Because of the complexity of human behavior and the amount of variables in operation, science still does not have a unified theory of satisfaction.

> 1954 - *Hierarchy of Needs* - Maslow
> 1957 - *Needs-Satisfaction Model* - Argyris
> 1959 - *Motivation-Hygiene Theory* - Herzberg
> 1963 - *Equity Theory* - Adams
> 1968 - *Expectancy Theory* - Porter & Lawler
> 1969 - *ERG Theory* - Alderfer
> 1975 - *Acquired Needs Theory* - McClelland
> 1976 - *Range of Affect Theory* - Locke
> 1980 - *Job Characteristics Model* - Hackman & Oldham
> 1983 - *Dispositional Theory* - Pulakos & Schmitt
> 1997 - *Core Self-evaluations Model* - Judge
> 2003 - *Importance-Satisfaction* (I-S model) - Yang

Therefore, one way to solve this problem of the "Satisfaction > Motivation" linkage is to focus more on the theories of *motivation* and what causes it instead of focusing exclusively on *satisfaction* (hoping that it is a driver). Closely related to motivation is a related construct of employee "engagement" as a variable that impacts performance, which appears promising. "Current research has suggested that organizations working to increase **engagement** and **commitment** among their employees positively influence productivity, turnover, profit generation, and ultimately create competitive market advantage. While many organizations believe cultivating engagement and commitment are promising strategies, research on exactly how to develop an engaged, committed workforce is remarkably undeveloped" (Shuck & Rocco, 2011).

There are several definitions of EE which involve the construct of "satisfaction:" "Employee engagement refers to the individual's *involvement* and ***satisfaction*** with as well as *enthusiasm* for work" (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002, p. 269); "*a positive cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state directed toward positive organizational outcomes*" (Shuck & Wollard, 2010).

Satisfaction is an emotional state, EE goes beyond emotion to involve thinking and action which is a more comprehensive theory, but it integrates all three areas. In summary, the *3E Model of Engagement* (Shuck & Wollard, 2010) is: Think it > Feel it > Do it! Satisfaction theories just say, "feel it."

The Individual Process Model of Engagement (Figure 3) represents engagement as the person and their environment. "External Characteristics" are what others can see and include life conditions (demographical information, health, family, etc.) and behavior. "Internal Characteristics" are cognitive and affective states that are eventually expressed through decisions and behavior.

Kahn's (1990) seminal grounded theory of employee engagement and disengagement posited that engagement is the concurrent expression of one's preferred self and the promotion of connections to others. Disengagement is the withdrawal of one's self and of one's preferred behaviors, promoting a lack of connectedness, emotional absence, and passive behavior. The choice to express or withdraw one's authentic self is the emotional, social, and physical act of employee engagement. Humans become drawn into their work, physically and emotionally, in ways that display how they experience work. "Self-expression

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underlies what researchers refer to as creativity, the use of personal voice, emotional expression, authenticity, non-defensive communication, playfulness, and ethical behavior" (Kahn, 1990, p. 700). Workers chose to "express and employ their [authentic] selves…or withdraw and defend their [authentic] selves at work" (Kahn, 1990, p. 692).

Hiring the right person is important because of the need to align personality traits, needs, interests, goals, and competencies to the job and workplace, but once they are in the system, besides competency development, management really only has control of the work environment, which is comprised of two major areas:

1. **"Tangible Elements"** such as coworkers, supervisors, policies, procedures, access to resources, job descriptions, communication
2. **"Intangible Elements"** such as level of challenge, trust, collaboration, culture, perception of recognition, support, civility, authenticity and these can be seen to emerge from interactions of the Tangibles and perceptions of the individual
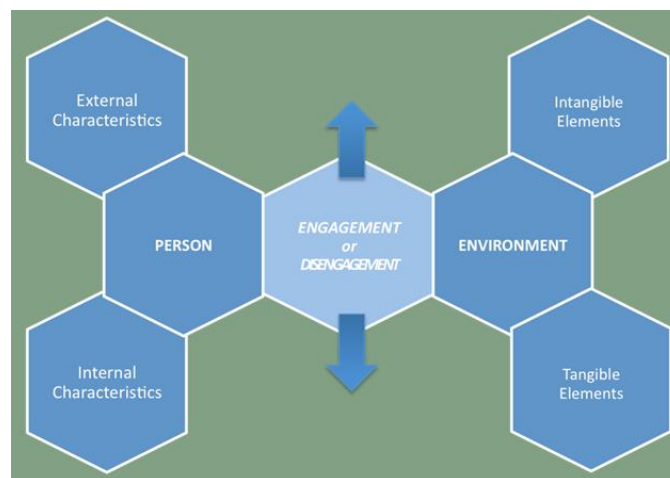

Figure 3: *The Individual Process Model of Engagement*   Source: Shuck & Wollard, 2010

Gilbert's model of *Behavior Engineering* (1978) outlined below in Table 2, classify Tangible and Intangible factors in terms of the individual versus the environment. Note the themes of "Information-Instrumentation-Motivation" are common to both. Gilbert posits that all six boxes must be addressed to create maximum employee performance. These should certainly be attempted to be measured in EE surveys (as in Table 3).

Table 2: *Gilbert's Behavior Engineering Model* (1978) (Modified by Chevalier, 2003 & Gedeon, 2011*)

AREA	INFORMATION	INSTRUMENTATION	MOTIVATION
ENVIRONMENT	*What job information is required for HP?** ▪ The individual knows what is expected of them (what, when, how much, how well, priorities) ▪ Performance feedback ▪ Guidance about their performance and development (from Performance Management System)?	*What resources and environment is required for HP?* ▪ The right facilities, equipment, tools, materials, information, and time ▪ Physical environments are organized, safe, secure, & clean ▪ Supervision and management systems are supportive ▪ Processes and procedures are clearly defined	*What system-based incentives are required to motivate for HP?* ▪ Positively motivating financial and non-financial incentives ▪ Clear consequences for poor performance ▪ Jobs are designed/enriched to fulfill employee needs ▪ Career development and advancement opportunities ▪ Supportive workplace culture
INDIVIDUAL	*What employee-embodied information is required for HP and how can it be enhanced/utilized?* ▪ Employee has the necessary skills, knowledge, and experience needed to perform as expected ▪ Employee is properly placed to use their competencies ▪ Employees are cross trained to understand the process and each other's roles better	*What employee-embodied characteristics are required for HP?* ▪ Employee has the aptitude, physical, and emotional ability to perform the job and learn new skills when required ▪ Is performance scheduled for times when people are at their best?	*Are employee motives aligned with the job and incentive systems?* ▪ Employee motives are aligned to work and institutional mission ▪ Employee desires to perform the required tasks ▪ Incentives are necessary and sufficient to motivate the employee ▪ Candidates are recruited to match the realities of the job

Note: the italicized questions (Gedeon) generate the components of each box. "HP" is high performance.

Performance can therefore be summarized by the following formula:

Performance = Ability + Motivation + Supportive System/Culture/Conditions

The importance of good systems cannot be understated: "If you pit a good performer against a bad system, the system will win almost every time" (Rummler & Brache in Chevalier, 2007). The concentration of organizational problems--contrary to popular opinion--do not have to do with people, but dysfunctional systems, as illustrated in Figure 4. Yet, few organizations have any department that ensures that systems are relevant, efficient, effective, designed for current realities and provide the easiest way for the customer to conduct a transaction (online, or one-trip, one-stop-shop, no runarounds).

Organizational Performance Factors (85%)

Individual Performance Factors (15%)

Figure 4: Sources of organizational performance problems.   Source: Hartt, 2012.

Having only the first two components (Ability and Motivation) of the "Performance" equation are necessary but not sufficient. Part of the "Supportive System" is management treatment of staff. Shun-Hsing Chen (2006, p. 497) found that, "As organisations focus on customer relationship management, they should not forget that employees are also internal customers. Organisations have satisfied their customers only if they have also satisfied their employees." This has implications for a university that wants to be known for being both "customer-driven" and "student-centered." Staff with low motivation rates or even hostile attitudes created by toxic management, supervisory practices, and dysfunctional systems will undermine this effort.

Comprehensive Employee Engagement Measurement Framework

There are many schemes to classify the topics, areas, attributes, dimensions, components, or domains of the job used in ESS. Given the latest findings in the literature, the hierarchical structure in Table 3 is proposed to provide an overall conceptual map of the engagement territory. Survey items can be updated or generated using the "Survey Objectives" and "Attributes" column questions as a checklist.

Table 3: *Employee Engagement Dimensions and Objectives*

#	Dimension Area	Attributes	Survey Objectives
1	Organizational Context	The organization as a whole, its mission, vision (direction), values, products/services, history	▪ How does the employee perceive the organization that they work for? ▪ How does the employee perceive the products and services the organization produces? ▪ How much is it aligned with employee's personal values?
2	Leadership/ Management	The organizational leadership and management	▪ How well is the leadership/management team leading the organization to fulfill both its strategic and operational goals?

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3	Culture	The norms, values, beliefs, attitudes, and practices, methods of communication, recognition	▪ How well does organizational culture enable the employee to perform well and feel accepted?
4	Development & Growth	Coaching, mentoring, career development, training, education, seminars, conventions, counseling, promotion, etc.	▪ What are the opportunities for immediate and long-term development and growth? ▪ Examples: Achievement, power, affiliation
5	General Working Conditions	Compensation, benefits, financial & non-financial incentives, pay increases, promotion, working hours, safety, HR practices, policies, performance management/appraisals, regulations, non-work activities (sports day)	▪ Do the general working conditions meet staff needs? ▪ Are there any working conditions that distract or de-motivate them from doing their job?
6	Supervision	Support of the direct superior via setting expectations, direction, priorities, coaching, feedback, recognition, fosters engagement	▪ Does the direct supervisor provide a supportive work environment and relationship?
7	Immediate Job Support	Materials, information, equipment, tools, money, time, coworkers/team, and other support; environment is safe, clean, secure, & organized	▪ Are all the things that staff need to perform their job consistently available?
8	Process	Which process(es) does the job find their home in; degree of process, outcomes, and customer awareness	▪ To what extent do staff understand the bigger (process) picture? ▪ To what extent do they go beyond the requirements of the job to ensure better outcomes?
9	Job	Duties, responsibilities, knowledge of procedures, performance standards & feedback, scheduling of work vs. employee readiness, opportunities for OJT learning, skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, experienced meaningfulness-engaging, experienced responsibility for outcomes, authenticity, level of challenge, motivation, motives, right position, mastery	▪ To what extent does the job match their talents, capacity, and skills? ▪ To what extent are they committed and passionate about their work? ▪ To what extent do they feel challenged?
10	Employee - Living Conditions	Living situation, family, residence, lifestyle, religion, distance from work, general health, etc.	▪ How does the job and working conditions align with work/life balance or quality-of-life?
11	Employee - Cognitive	Aptitude, education, knowledge, skills, experience behavior, and ability to learn	▪ To what extent does the job match their talents, capacity, and skills?
12	Employee - Emotional/ Personality	Motivation, commitment, attitudes, traits, emotional ability, adaptability, self-esteem, locus of control, and generalized self-efficacy.	▪ To what extent are they committed and passionate about their work?

		BIG-5 (OCEAN): openness (S v. N), conscientiousness (J vs.P), extraversion (E vs. I), agreeableness, and neuroticism (emotional stability)	
13	Employee - Physical	Age, gender, race, capacity, health	▪ Do they have the physical capacity to execute their job?

Source: Gedeon, 2011

Benefits of Employee Engagement

Many of the problems and decisions facing the UWI (enumerated below) are addressed when EE improvement strategies are executed. They touch on almost every aspect of the organization.

1. Turnover
2. Absenteeism
3. Stress & Mental Health
4. 'Quality of Life' or Work-Life Balance
5. Commitment
6. Job performance
7. Quality
8. Customer Satisfaction
9. Creativity/Innovation
10. Working Conditions
11. Culture Change
12. Pay & Benefits
13. Incentives
14. Training Requirements
15. Hiring Decisions
16. Promotion Decisions
17. System Improvement

Implications for UWI

Some organisations use the 'improve the ratings approach.' Here each year they try to improve their scores of the EE survey annually. That is a game because it leads to half-baked, piecemeal "improvements" that are not well thought out, strategic, or systemic. Instead management must ensure:

1. Systems are updated, which is a Perspective ("Internal Operational Processes") in the *Strategic Plan* but not well understood by the average manager because of its technical nature and lack of institutional support
2. All HR 'organisational capital' (how we deploy and manage employees) processes are upgraded which is addressed in the *Strategic Plan's* "Employee Engagement & Development" Perspective

3. Leadership and management must win the trust of their staff or they will act in a "work-to-rule" manner and be very cautious and legalistic in their dealings with management; leaders must model the behaviour they want to see in staff and have management skills appropriate for their positions, as management is not just common sense; this is also being addressed in the *Strategic Plan* through training but that will not be effective until a 360-degree appraisal system is adopted to expose dysfunctional behaviour so that it can be addressed

4. Culture change, which can only come about when leadership and management change *first*

Recommendations

System, culture, and leadership change, which was a strategic theme in the previous *Strategic Plan 2007-12,* was the weakest area of achievement, as revealed in the five-year *Review* of the *Plan*. So while The UWI has strategic objectives and is aware that these things need to be addressed there is probably a lack of understanding on how to approach these tasks in a systemic and strategic manner. HR tends to see itself as a "people" department which provides an individual focus which is only 15% of the problem (Figure 4). 85% of problems are dysfunctional systems and HR staff are not trained to recognize or solve them and there is no other unit on most campuses dedicated to this task. It cannot be done by IT alone as business process reengineering requires organizational system design skills (not only IT system skills).

Given the literature, history, and capability of the UWI in addressing EE concerns, the following recommendations are tabled, in addition to the strategic initiatives already being pursued:

1. The EE Survey should be modified to include all areas outlined in Table 3 and administered at least every other year
2. Deficient areas should made known to management in general and the strategic initiative teams so they can make adjustments
3. A 360-degree appraisal system should be adopted and assertive action taken on deficiencies that surface
4. The same is true for academic end-of-course evaluations, the lecturers must be aware of their shortcomings and be directed to the appropriate training or developmental activities to address them
5. A systems improvement unit should be established that will address both campus-wide systems and support those that are more local to the departments, it would also be a partner with the *Single Virtual University System* programme to execute some of the projects, many of which are attempting to make uniform systems across the campuses, IT has a major role but cannot do this single-handedly
6. Institute a performance reporting system for departments for their routine functions (i.e., in addition to the *Operational Plan* reporting); 'achievement' reporting is not enough, they must report plan-versus-actual data to get a clear picture of what is going on

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APPENDIX

Theoretical Models of Employee Satisfaction/Motivation

Model	Author	Description
Hierarchy of Needs	Maslow (1954)	Human needs in the form of a hierarchy, ascend from the lowest to the highest, and he concluded that when one set of needs is satisfied, this kind of need ceases to be a motivator. As each of these needs are substantially satisfied, the next higher need becomes dominant. From the standpoint of motivation, the theory would say that although no need is ever fully gratified, a substantially satisfied need no longer motivates. So if you want to motivate someone, you need to understand what level of the hierarchy that person is on and focus on satisfying those needs or needs above that level.
Needs-Satisfaction Model	Argyris (1957)	The model posits that persons have basic, stable, relatively unchanging and identifiable attributes, including needs (and personality). The model also assumes that jobs have a stable, identifiable set of characteristics that are relevant to those needs of individuals. Job attitudes and, occasionally, motivation, are presumed to result from the correspondence between the needs of the individual and the characteristics of the job or the job situation. When the characteristics of the job are compatible with the person's needs, the assumption is made that the person is satisfied and, on occasion, the further argument is made that the person will be more motivated to perform the job better.
Motivation-Hygiene Theory	Herzberg (1959)	Satisfaction and dissatisfaction are driven by different factors – motivation and hygiene factors, respectively. Motivation can be seen as an inner force that drives individuals to attain personal and organizational goals (Hoskinson, Porter, & Wrench, p. 133). Motivating factors are those aspects of the job that make people want to perform, and provide people with satisfaction, for example achievement in work, recognition, promotion opportunities. These motivating factors are considered to be intrinsic to the job, or the work carried out. Hygiene factors include extrinsic aspects of the working environment such as pay, company policies, supervisory practices, and other working conditions — there presence does not guarantee motivation, but their absence erodes it.
Equity Theory	Adams (1963)	This theory extends beyond the individual self, and incorporates influence and comparison of other people's situations - for example colleagues and friends - in forming a comparative view and awareness of Equity, which commonly manifests as a sense of what is fair. When people feel fairly treated they are more likely to be motivated; when they feel unfairly treated they are highly prone to feelings of disaffection and de-motivation. Equity, and the sense of fairness which commonly underpins motivation, is dependent on the comparison a person makes between his or her reward/investment ratio with the ratio enjoyed (or suffered) by others considered to be in a similar situation.
Expectancy Theory	Porter & Lawler	Actual performance in a job is primarily determined by the effort expended, but it is also affected by the person's ability to do the job and

	(1968)	also by individual's perception of what the required task is. So performance is the responsible factor that leads to intrinsic as well as extrinsic rewards. These rewards, along with the equity of individual leads to satisfaction. Hence, satisfaction of the individual depends upon the fairness of the reward.
ERG Theory	Alderfer (1969)	Rebuilt the hierarchy of needs of Maslow into another model named ERG i.e. *Existence–Relatedness–Growth*. According to him there are 3 groups of core needs as mentioned above. The existence group is concerned mainly with providing basic material existence. The second group is the individuals need to maintain interpersonal relationship with other members in the group. The final group is the intrinsic desire to grow and develop personally.
Acquired Needs Theory	McClelland (1975)	An individual's specific needs are acquired over time and are shaped by one's life experiences. Most of these needs can be classed as *achievement*, *affiliation*, or *power*. A person's motivation and effectiveness in certain job functions are influenced by these three needs.
Range of Affect Theory	Locke (1976)	Satisfaction is determined by a discrepancy between what one wants in a job and what one has in a job. Further, the theory states that how much one values a given facet of work (e.g. the degree of autonomy in a position) moderates how satisfied/dissatisfied one becomes when expectations are/aren't met.
Job Characteristics Model	Hackman & Oldham (1980)	There are five core job characteristics (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback) which impact three critical psychological states (experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility for outcomes, and knowledge of the actual results), in turn influencing work outcomes (job satisfaction, absenteeism, work motivation, etc.). The five core job characteristics can be combined to form a motivating potential score (MPS) for a job, which can be used as an index of how likely a job is to affect an employee's attitudes and behaviors
Dispositional Theory	Pulakos & Schmitt (1983) Staw & Ross (1985)	People have innate dispositions [personality traits] that cause them to have tendencies toward a certain level of satisfaction, regardless of one's job. This approach became a notable explanation of job satisfaction in light of evidence that job satisfaction tends to be stable over time and across careers and jobs.
Core Self-evaluations Model	Judge (1997)	The core self-evaluations concept is a higher order trait representing the fundamental evaluations that people make about themselves and their *worthiness, competence, and capability*. The core concept is indicated by four traits: self-esteem, locus of control, neuroticism, and generalized self-efficacy. The relationship between core self-evaluations and job satisfaction found that the link was mediated by perceptions of intrinsic job characteristics. For example, individuals with a positive self-regard were more likely to perceive their jobs as interesting, significant, and autonomous than individuals with negative self-regard.
Importance-Satisfaction (I-S model)	Yang (2003)	Importance satisfaction models are divided up into four quadrants representing four areas of a business. On the x-axis is the importance level as established by the client base and on the y-axis is the level of satisfaction for each attribute. To divide up the model into the four

		quadrants, the employee satisfaction median is used as the central point dividing the y-axis while the median of the importance levels is used as the central point dividing the x-axis. I-S rating = Importance x (1-Satisfaction).