

## **Working for Less – To Make a Difference**

The Not for Profit sector is an enormous contributor to the wellbeing of New Zealanders and our environment. It offers diverse career avenues for making a contribution to the community whilst also developing skills, critical to our sense of identity and meaning-making. Societal values are changing it seems, and many people are considering working for less in order to feel that they can make a difference in a world that needs them.

Generally speaking the working conditions and pay offered by Not-For-Profits are less attractive than the corporate sector, therefore the intrinsic benefits of making a difference and being of service, need to compensate. Many of us know that fulfilling an altruistic desire will bring rewards far more satisfying than getting a healthy paycheque for doing something less personally gratifying or meaningful. Yet most have financial commitments and a standard of living that could not be sustained without continuation of a higher income. This trap is something many people hope to gradually work their way out of.

According to The Office of Community and Voluntary Sectors we have more than 97,000 non-profit organisations contributing 2.6% to our GDP. Non-profits in New Zealand have over 105,000 paid employees, but only 10% employ paid staff (the other 90% rely entirely on volunteers). Reliance on the good will of staff and volunteers is critical to the NFP organisation's sustained contribution. This reliance places a heavy burden on managers to manage the diverse motivations and psychological and social needs present in their people.

Researchers and theorists Young et al (1993) identified 6 motivation/satisfaction categories of people working in the community or NFP sectors.

These are:

1. Knowledge – Learning and developing new skills
2. Career enhancement - Expanding one's career prospects through specific experience
3. Value – expressive – i.e. Making a difference related to set of personal values

4. Social –adjustive - Desire for acceptance where affiliation is important
5. Esteem enhancement – Growth and self-actualisation needs
6. Ego-defensive – To escape personal inadequacies by aligning with supportive environments

Being aligned with an organisation whose mission matters will affirm and endorse an individual's identity and provide them the motivation to perform well. However, in my experience, employee loyalty will last only as long as the organisation lives up to its values and expressed principles. Anything that brings doubt to that will stimulate a rationale for leaving.

Like any employment relationship, employee motivation dwindles when there is a conflict between what is required of the job, an employee's sense of who they are, and how effective they believe the organisation delivers to its mission. At this time disgruntled employees will tell you that their contribution is not valued and that, for the money, it just isn't worth it!

However, there is sufficient evidence to tell us that the motivators that drive people to 'make a difference' will not be satisfied unless their core values and basic needs for identity alignment are met. Less can be more when congruence is found.

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