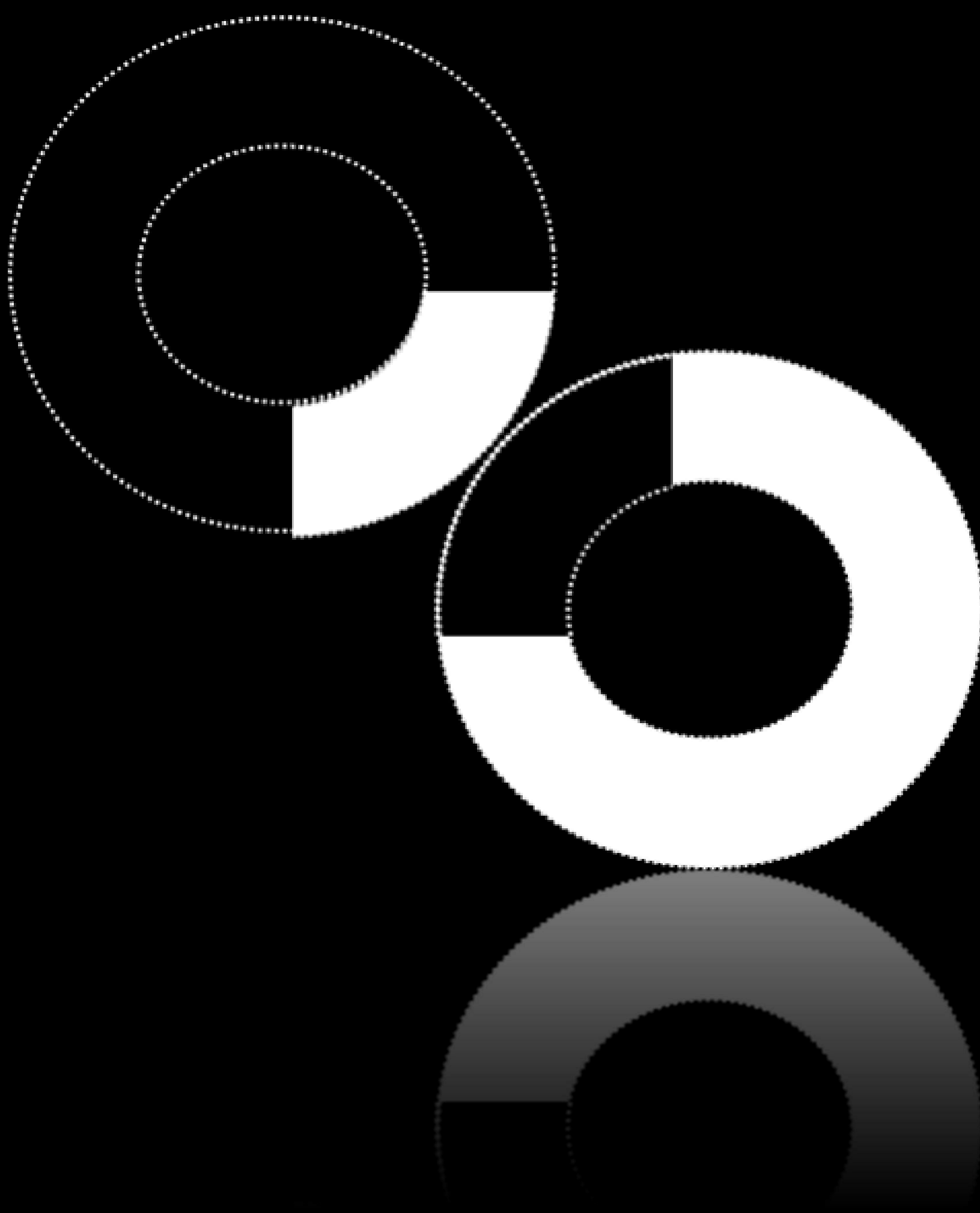


THE RESEARCH

The Miss. The Zero-One. The Moon



#Happiness In The Workplace

#HAPPINESS IN THE WORKPLACE

Human beings are ‘Divinely Discontent’. Our expectations are never static. No matter how much our lives improve, our expectations simply adjust. This is our hedonic treadmill. Does this imply we will never find true happiness? What is the purpose of this life we are living?

Poets, writers, thinkers, scientists, economists and religious leaders attempt to answer these complex questions in their own ways. For a rational economic man, happiness is achieved by maximum satisfaction of wants. A spiritual guru will propose that true meaning is found in absolute devotion to the divine.

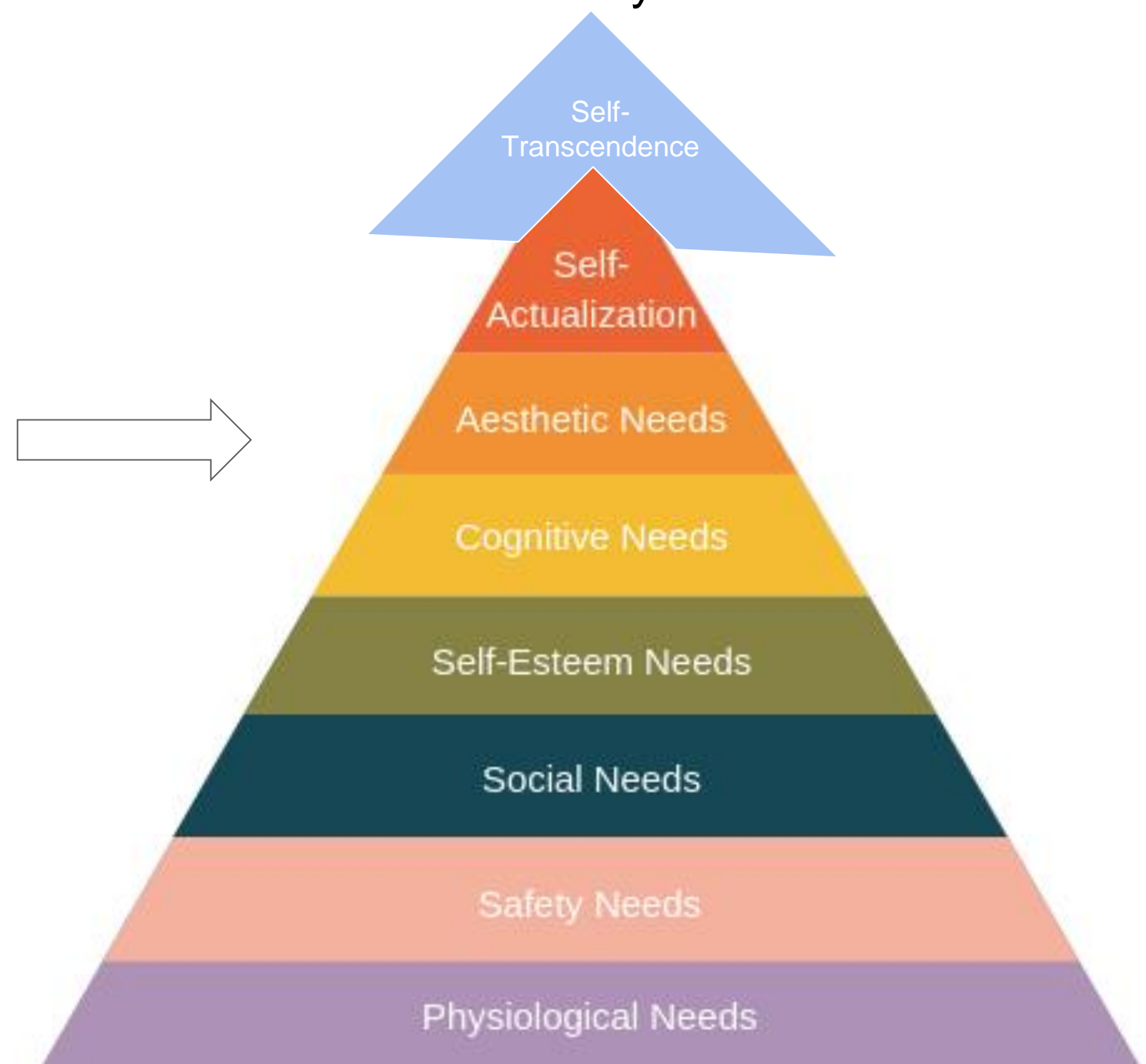


Abraham Maslow, a 34-year-old, young developmental psychologist started his career to understand the meaning of life. He wanted to find what made the lives of people (including himself) purposeful in our modern society. Especially when money and fame seemed to be eclipsing inner authentic aspirations.

Maslow argued that human actions arise from an innate desire to fulfill a spectrum of needs ranging from the very basic (security, warmth, food, rest) to the complex (self-esteem, altruism).

He categorized the human experience of happiness into two broad aspects- Material and Psychological/Spiritual. He further identified five universal categories of human needs, the fulfillment of which ultimates in the experience of happiness.

Though the theory was first elaborated in 1943 in Maslow's paper- "A Theory of Human Motivation" published in the Psychological Review, Maslow spent his life refining and expanding the theory based on the concept of a hierarchy of needs over several decades (1943, 1962, 1987). During these decades he took in some of the criticism he faced toward his approach and adapted it in his later work. He expanded the 5-stage model to an 8-stage model- also known as the New Maslow's Pyramid.



The hierarchy is not set in stone and offers more of a blueprint to assess the direction of our life. It is important to note that Maslow had profoundly realised that unlike video games, human beings cannot just “level up” from one state to another. Self-development is a process, we are always becoming, meaning we are constantly shaping, changing, learning and growing.

The 8 stage model included three other needs of human experience:

Cognitive needs: Knowledge and understanding, curiosity, exploration.

Aesthetic needs: Appreciation and search for beauty, balance, form, etc.



Transcendence needs: Mystical experiences with nature, service to others, the pursuit of science, religious faith)

It is associated with the feeling of being a part of something bigger and to develop joint strategies as humans. It is what inspires people to fight climate change, hunger or poverty.

Maslow’s theory has been applied to various sectors of the economy keeping its core values intact. There are two prominent reasons for its widespread acceptance and applicability.

First, it is simple, orderly, intuitively sensible, cognitively appealing and offers order out of chaos. It strongly appeals to the human desire to organise some form of structure from a complex abstract.

The second being the inherent optimism it carries. Instead of focusing on psychopathology and what goes wrong with people, he formulated a more positive account of human behaviour which focused on what goes right. He was interested in human potential, and how we fulfil that potential.

The Miss

(The Need / Current State / Background)

After all these decades of advancement in the cognitive sciences, does the theory hold practical relevance in the workplace?

The simple answer to this pressing question lies at the heart of the theory- **Human experience**. People engage, work, interact, impact and get influenced throughout our complex economic system. And as long as workplaces involve human experience; the theory will hold a profound relevance simply because it not only revolves around human experience but also encompasses the profound structural truth of these experiences.

Moreover, what differentiates and awards value to the theory is its aim to strike a balance between the over-ardent spirituals and extreme materialists. In our society, we are often perplexed between being spiritually elevated and accumulating material wealth. The theory continues to guide individuals, leaders, organizations and governments in arranging their priorities.

The shrines of our vastly productive economies- **Workplaces**- broadly include two categories of people- A. **Leaders & Decision-makers** and B. **Membership**. And the theory holds interesting applications to both.

The Zero-One

(The Data / Trends / Insights)

People as Decision-Makers

Maslow observed that almost all economic activities were- unfairly and bizarrely-focused on honouring customer needs at the bottom of the pyramid. Entrepreneurs, capitalists and governments seemed utterly uninterested in fulfilling the essential spiritual appetites that were defined at the top of the pyramid.

Today, a wide number of industry leaders, entrepreneurs, marketers and product developers take insights from the theory to understand what consumers truly value. It can be actively used to devise ways to deliver more value, whether functional (saving time, reducing cost) or emotional (reducing anxiety, providing entertainment).

In an extensive study conducted by Bain & Co in collaboration with Research Now, based on Maslow’s model, drawing conclusions from the survey of 10,000 people about 50 companies identifying 30 elements that hold high value to consumers. Similar to Maslow’s theory of needs, the Value pyramid is a heuristic model—practical rather than theoretically perfect.



The relevance of elements varies according to industry, culture, and demographics. For example, throughout history, self-actualization has been out of reach for most consumers, who were focused on survival (even if they found fulfilment through spiritual or worldly pursuits). But anything that saved time, reduced effort, or reduced cost was prized.

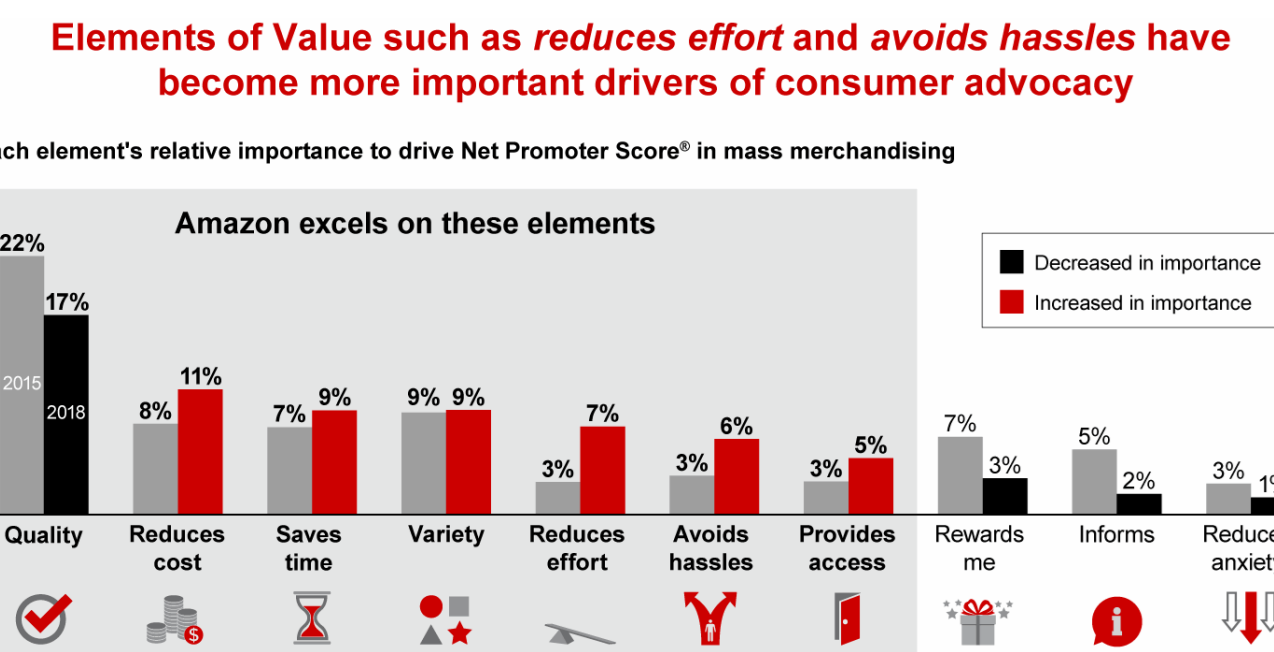


The Elements of Value Pyramid lead to better decision-making in three core areas-

- A. **Customer segmentation** based on the values they attach high priority
- B. **Identifying Industry Values** which will help set them apart from the competition and meet their customers' needs better. For example, in the Food & Beverage industry- quality, sensory appeal, aesthetic is highly valued whereas in the Brokerage industry-reducing anxiety, providing access, reducing cost and more variety are valued.
- C. **Developing new types of value** to provide. Companies can improve on the elements that form their core value. They can also judiciously add elements to expand their value proposition without overhauling their products or services. A close look into Amazon's strategies brings this idea home. Jeff Bezos has mastered the art of selling 'convenience'.

In creating Amazon Prime, in 2005, the company initially focused on delivering *reduced cost and saved time* by providing unlimited two-day shipping for a flat \$79 annual fee.

Then it expanded Prime to include streaming media (*provides access and fun/entertainment*), unlimited photo storage on Amazon servers (*reduces risk*), and other features. Each new element attracted a large group of consumers and helped raise Amazon's services far above commodity status. Consequently, Prime has penetrated nearly 40% of the U.S. retail market, and Amazon has become a juggernaut of consumer value. That allowed the company to raise Prime's annual fee to \$99 in 2015.



People as Membership

Our work not only takes up a significant part of our lives (an average person works for 96,000 hours i.e 4000 days which is approximately 10 years of his/her life at work!) but is also closely tied to our basic needs of acquiring our basic needs, dignity, self-esteem, social lives, respect and being purposeful. In the decades following the original publication of Maslow's ideas, organisations who knew that its growth fundamentally takes root in the development of its people; quickly understood the theory and incorporated it into their work-culture and organisational development plans. The initial implementation of the theory seemed pretty straightforward. Organisations provided employees with the opportunities to fulfil their universal needs, described by Maslow theory.

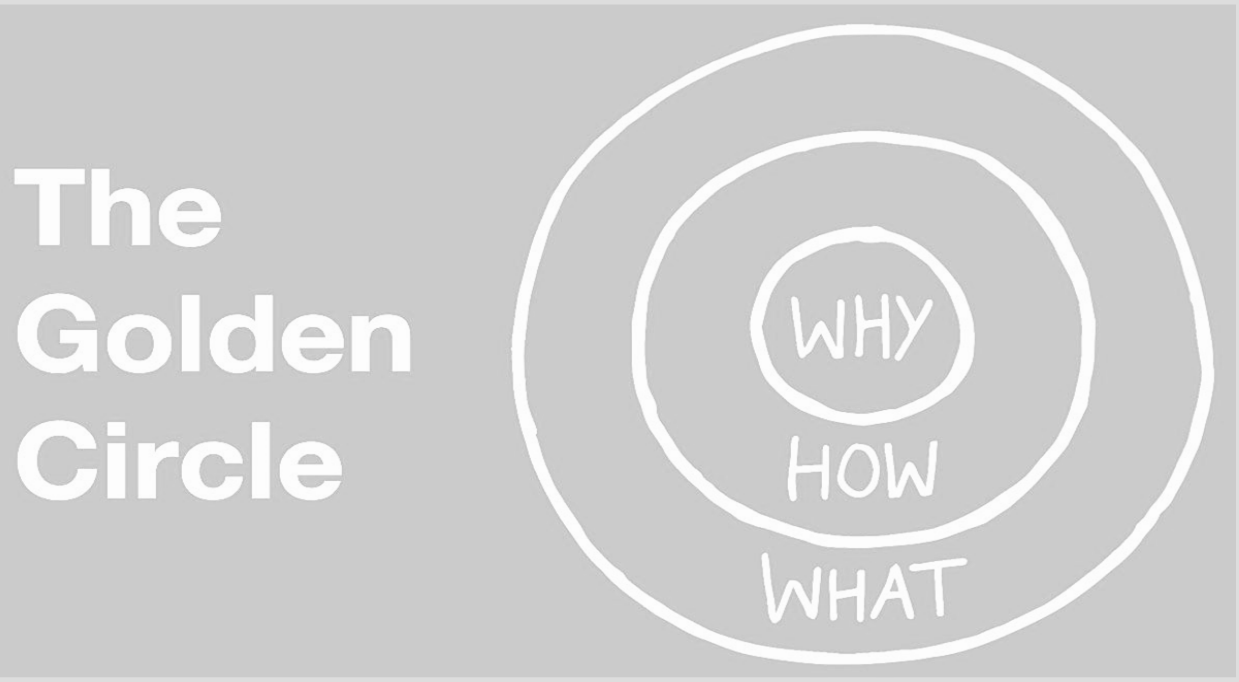


How to *not* use Maslow’s Pyramid

-Adopting Cash-incentives to engage the membership-

Managers state that salaries and benefits would satisfy the physiological needs. Employees could then move up the pyramid to achieve career success and, eventually, a higher purpose.

However, in today’s developed-world workplace, physiological and safety needs are, for the most part, already met. Salary and benefits can enhance motivation, but organizations shouldn’t focus on them disproportionately because emotional experiences can matter equally, if not more. In most global conglomerates, less than 4% of employees mention pay as the source of their high engagement. Instead, they highlighted feeling autonomous and empowered, and a sense of belonging on their teams.



Taking insights from Jim Collins’ book, Good to Great and applying the knowledge we borrowed from Maslow’s life work, it appears justified to conclude that the formula to becoming great- a great person, a great leader and great organisation- is through **disciplined thought, disciplined people and disciplined action**. Lucky for us, the theory imparts wisdom on all these three aspects.

The awareness of the presence of more than one level of human potential (in this case- eight!) motivates people to strive for more. This leads to **disciplined action**. In a lot of instances, when organizations or people reach a *good* state, they get comfortable and this is why some never become *great*.

Developing the potentials of the membership i.e. **disciplined people** can be broken down into 5 steps. They can also be used for identifying where the majority is functioning and where it needs to be guided.

Highly effective individual- a person who is equipped with the knowledge of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, and thus is well aware of his personal state, immediate needs and can prioritize his time and increase productivity.

A **contributing team member-** a person who has fulfilled his baser needs and is ready to be part of the social profile and is looking to build his/her self-esteem can be a good team member.

A **competent manager-** a person functioning on his self-esteem needs with a motivation to take responsibility.

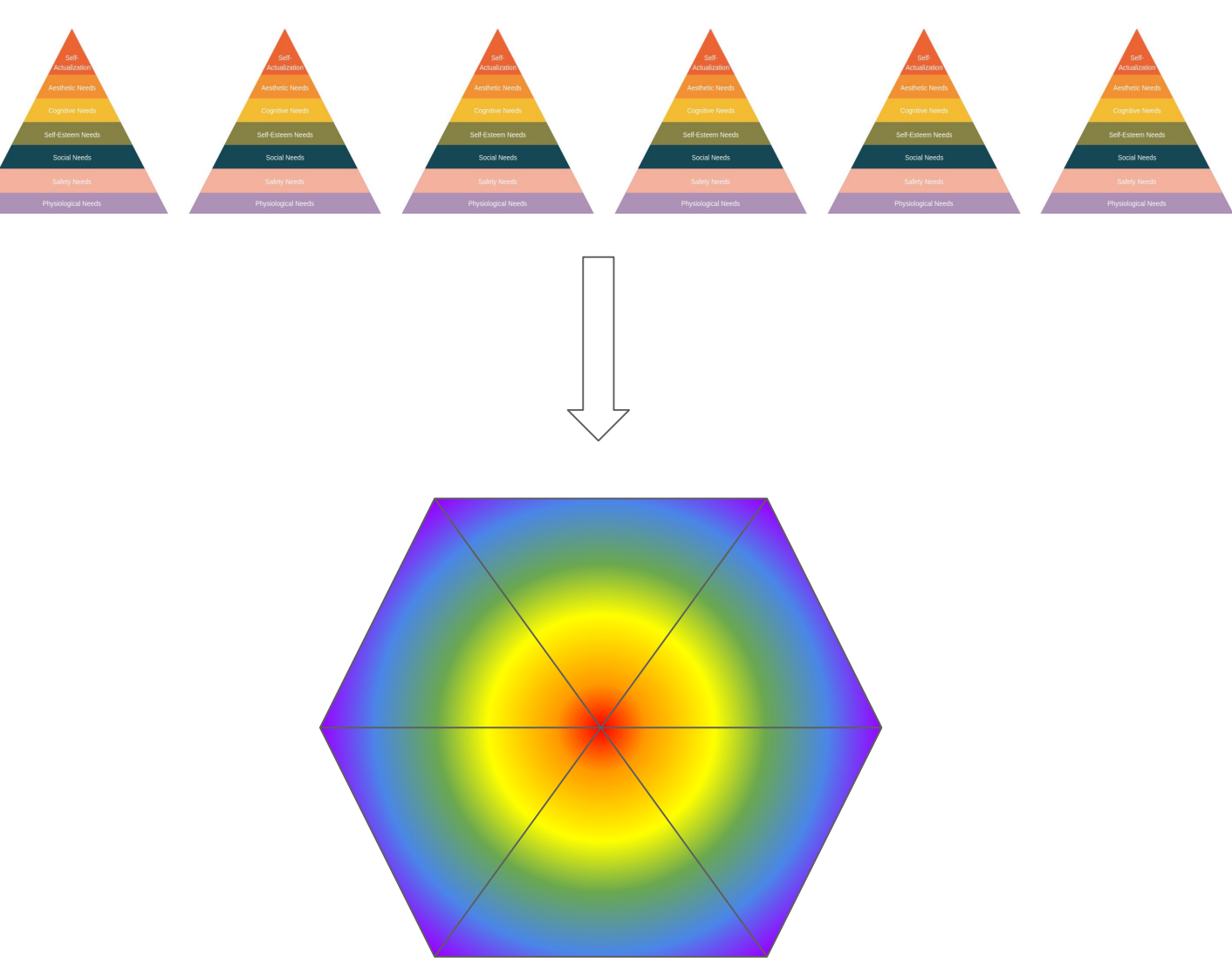
An **effective leader-** a person who has mastered the 4 stages of the pyramid and is reaching self-actualization by doing what he has prepared to be doing over the process.

A **Level-5 Leader-** a person who has attained a significant degree of self-actualization. His/her behaviours include humility, simplicity, a kind sense of humour, honesty and general calmness. They are not rattled by problems or fads and don't look to blame others. They are willing to self-correct and always see themselves in the learning process as they move towards transcendence)



LETS TALK WORK CULTURE

A higher understanding of the theory points in the direction of humanity reaching its true potential. For understanding, imagine your pyramid, and your boss's pyramid, and your colleagues' pyramid, your husband's pyramid, your friend's pyramid. Now imagine them all coming together.



The hexagon created is what resembles our collective lives. Phenomena where our basic needs are fulfilled, our consciousness and wisdom are flowing through us and we reach a collective state of transcendence. This doesn't require all our priorities to be identical, each individual should try to be what they truly want to be. But the collective powers meeting at the center balance each other.

Now, this might take years to achieve for all 7 billion of us. But it is very much possible to make this the guiding idea in our workplace. Aligning the needs of each team within itself. And aligning all these hexagons to create a dynamic organisation that functions on a higher understanding and the people of the organisation who function on their highest potentials.

The culture of this ***discipline, mindfulness and productivity*** translates into extreme focus in achieving the golden circle. The actions and thoughts of people, who are naturally allowed to grow in this process- come from within- they don't have to be forced by bureaucracy, micromanagement, temporary incentives. Self-motivated people are like diamonds!

A group of people which function on this mindfulness find it easy to confront brutal truths and take challenges. Combined with their technical excellence, they are equipped to make decisions based on facts and not their emotions as they realise emotions are not static. They also find it easier to spot red flags in their system.

This allows an organisation to build a culture of freedom and responsibility, unlike a bureaucratic dictatorship. Rather than an employer and employee relationship, the relation of mentor and mentee develops. People are encouraged and even guided to reach their potential inside and outside the organisation. It creates an environment where thoughts and creativity flow in their natural form and encourages unique innovations.

A culture so strong eventually builds a strong momentum and takes a life of its own and continues to develop self-motivated level-5 leaders who are conscious, mindful and intentional. A pipeline of such leaders leads to a thriving organisation and creates an environment of happiness!



The Moon

The Inference / Future / Summary)

In conclusion, let’s look back to which question Maslow was hoping to answer with this theory. He was looking for true happiness. And so are we all. It is a continuous quest we try to solve throughout our lives.

Maslow’s theory, above anything else, is a portrait of a life lived in harmony with the complexities of our being. He understood that most of our experiences, good and bad, are frantic. But he urged us to use our rare moments of calm to reflect with our newfound focus about what we want to do next.

In the end, it is also important to note that Maslow’s theory is not perfect, and Maslow was aware of it. Even as his life neared its horizon, he was working on sculpting the new apex of his pyramid-Self-transcendence. It no doubts is a work in progress, just like human development. But even in its unfinished form, it holds the vast practical potential for all of us-individually and as humanity.

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