

**Principles and models
for motivating agents**

This section provides the *principles* to help you understand what truly motivates your agents. Key models are presented that provide the foundation for increasing productivity and motivating your agents.



Principles and models

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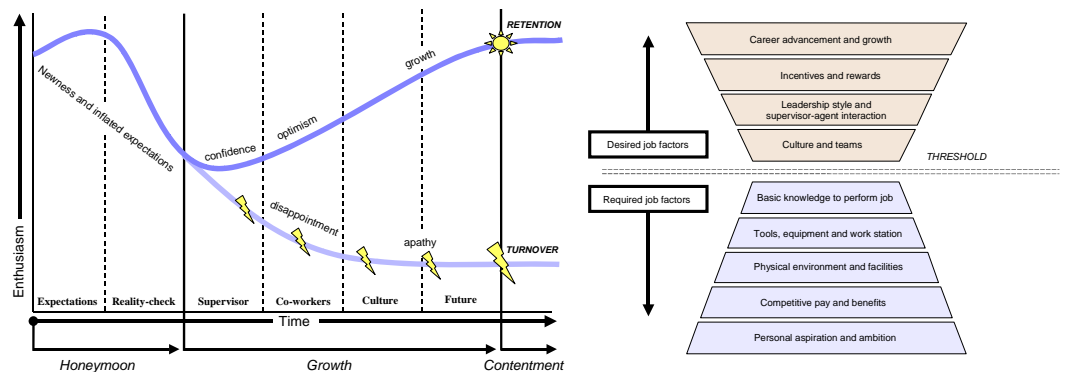
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Introduction

Principles and models

In this section we introduce the basic **principles** behind the incentives that *really* matter to call center agents in their jobs. These fundamental concepts are based on solid research of employee motivation and workplace behavior, and Prosci's own benchmarking data compiled through independent investigations and interviews with call center agents and their managers.

This research is compiled and translated into practical **models** to help you develop your plan for motivating your agents.



The next section in this toolkit, the **Process overview**, will show you *how* to make these changes.

The agent-manager disconnect

Introduction

Most call centers provide incentives to their agents to increase productivity and promote a positive work environment. In this section, you will discover that the things that most managers and supervisors *think* their agents value, and what agents *say* they value, are often very different. You may be surprised at the “disconnects.”

Are the incentives you are using supporting your goals, or are they actually interfering with them? Are you motivating your agents to achieve quality and performance, or are you inadvertently teaching them how to “beat the system”?

This section will help you learn the genuine differences between “incentives” and “motivators,” and prepare you to create lasting changes for a truly motivating workplace.

Destroying the “top 100 incentives” notion

There are literally thousands of activity workbooks, game-oriented software packages, and structured programs of so-called “incentives” on the market today aimed at bolstering employee performance. The incentive industry generates revenue of more than *\$27 billion* per year, and is growing. Consider that some sort of incentive program is offered to employees in the majority of call centers, an industry which suffers a turnover rate of 20% to 40% as a cost of doing business.

Call center managers and supervisors regard incentive programs as a crucial component in maximizing employee productivity, as well as a way of leveraging worker loyalty. In fact, managers and supervisors interviewed for this toolkit rated “incentives” as the Number One workplace motivator for their call center agents.

Candid interviews and surveys were also conducted with call center agents. They provided invaluable insights and definitive data on what truly motivates them on their jobs. Guess where *they* rated “incentives”?

Here’s a hint:

If the employees don’t value it, it’s not much of an incentive.

The agent-manager disconnect

Are managers and supervisors out of touch with their workforce?

Call centers are investing record amounts of money and time in incentives specifically aimed at motivating and retaining their agents. This is a predictable response, given that the baseline turnover rate of 20% to 40% is considered an industry norm.

But how is it working? We conducted interviews with hundreds of call center managers, supervisors and agents to find out what they considered the top workplace motivators that directly influence job performance and worker loyalty.

How can you reconnect?

This toolkit will *not* provide you with the latest menu of the “top 100 incentives.” Your goal is not another “program of the month.” One size does *not* fit all.

This toolkit *will* help you discover what really works to inspire and motivate *your* call center agents.

To do that, we need a better model to break down and analyze the true motivating factors for your agents. To do that we need to get back to basics.

Let's start with some fundamentals.

Principles of motivation

Introduction

In this section, you will learn some fundamental terms and concepts which will help shift your attitude and point of view regarding motivating agents.

You will learn the difference between things that *can* be done for your call center agents, and the things that *should* be done, as well as the potential consequences for neglecting them.

You will be introduced to some terms that will help you clarify the reasons that agents value certain activities and behaviors that managers and supervisors normally take for granted.

Finally, you will learn that some important motivators for your agents are the least expensive. The bonus is that the benefits can be experienced throughout your call center, and among all levels of employees, many times at very low cost!

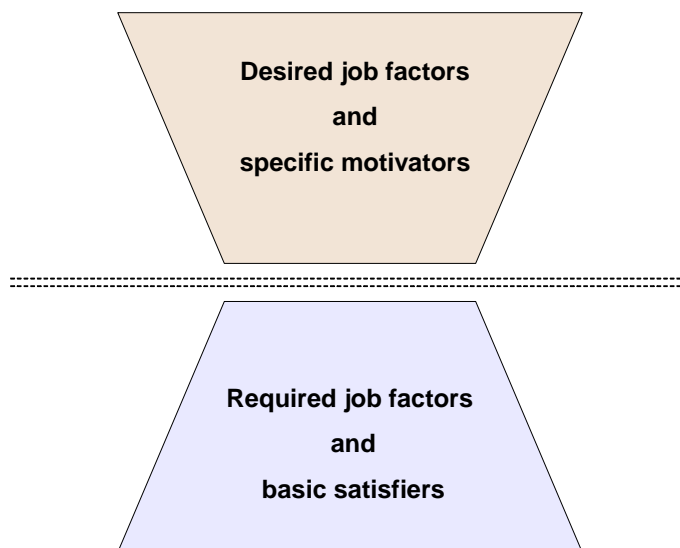
The Threshold Model

Introduction

Prosci's **Threshold Model** combines what you have learned about the “Hierarchy of Needs” (i.e., meeting *required* job factors before *desired* job factors), and the role of *satisfiers* and *motivators*, and how they affect your call center agents' performance.

This unique model will illustrate what you should do first to motivate and inspire your agents, and when to take various steps in the process.

Let's take a look at an outline of the model on the next page.

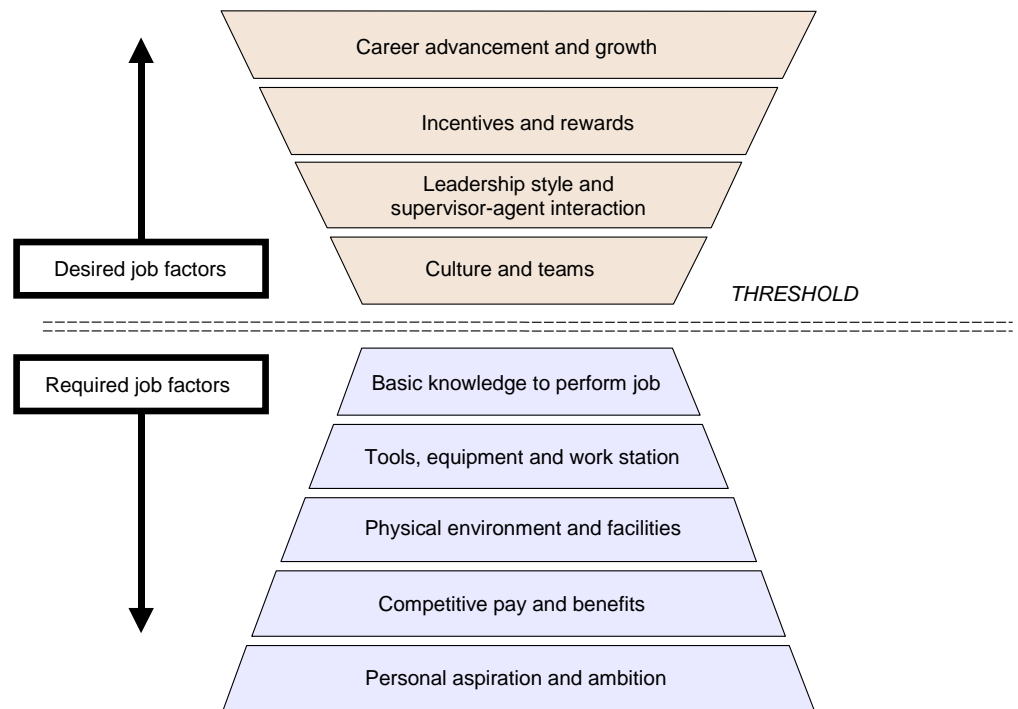


This model divides all job factors into two areas: *desired job factors and specific motivators* on top, and *required job factors and basic satisfiers* at the bottom.

Below the line are the *required job factors*. If any of these *basic satisfiers* are neglected, they become de-motivators and can lead to turnover and lower productivity.

Above the dividing line are the *desired job factors* which can become genuine incentives and *motivators* for agents.

The Threshold Model



This figure represents the complete model. Now that the **Threshold Model** is built, we can make several observations.

Observations about the Threshold Model

What this model illustrates is that while there are several factors that add to a person's level of competence and comfort on the job, these factors are distinct and meet different needs. Some of these needs are fairly basic and essential, such as having a safe place to work with properly-functioning equipment, as well as clear directions on how to do the job. These needs are reflected in the bottom half of the model.

Other needs are less concrete, but just as vital: a sense that we are working toward a goal; a sense of belonging; and a sense that our efforts and contributions are valued. We all want what we do to count. We also want to learn and grow. These needs are universal and apply to most aspects of our lives, and they don't diminish when we go to work. For most of us, the arena to express and meet these needs is our jobs.

You can see from the **Threshold Model** that the nuts-and-bolts requirements of a job form the base of the model (below the *threshold* line), which we are calling the *required job factors and basic satisfiers*. When these factors are neglected, they become *de-motivators*. But once these factors are provided in your call center and the agents' needs are met, upgrading *these* job factors will *not* necessarily make them *more* motivating to your agents.

The critical dividing line between these two sets of needs is the *threshold* itself. Once the basic needs are met, in order to *motivate* your agents, you must move *beyond* the *threshold*. You must then address the desired job factors which can distinguish your call center from every other alternative place to work.

The **Threshold Model** provides the foundation for motivating agents, which we will show you *how* to do later in the **Process overview**.

Now let's look at another aspect of the **Threshold Model**.

The Motivation Lifecycle

Introduction

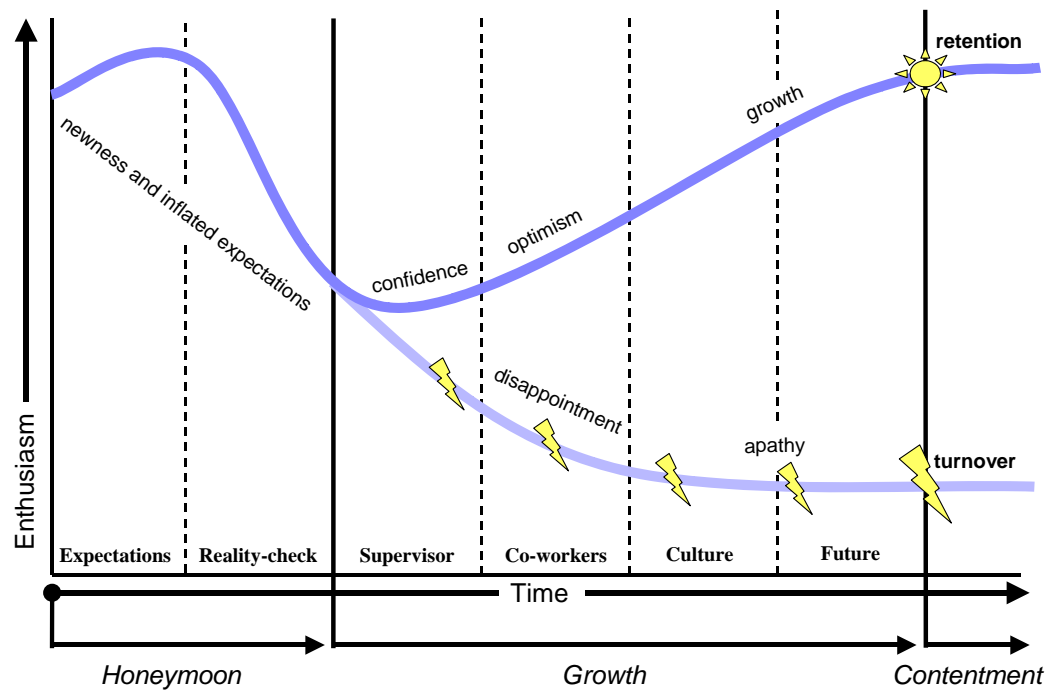
As a call center manager or supervisor, you are regularly faced with the issue of agent-turnover. Would it surprise you to discover that there are actual time indicators that can help you anticipate pivotal opportunities for intervention with new agents? *It is possible* to prepare for these opportunities, which are common to most people involved in new experiences, including new agents in your call center.

Understanding why agents leave

The **Motivation Lifecycle** will show you how this natural evolution works, and the critical time frame during which supervisors and managers can have the *most impact* on their new agents.

Now let's look at this evolutionary process as it plays out in the **Motivation Lifecycle**.

The Motivation Lifecycle



This is the **Motivation Lifecycle** and it depicts the initial period of a call center agent's employment. Depending on the actual rate of turnover at *your* call center, this time period can usually be measured in weeks or months.

Let's take a look at what the various stages mean.

Creating motivation is a process, not an event

Before moving to a systematic improvement process using this model, one more point needs to be addressed.

Just as the culture in your call center is established over time, creating *motivation* is also a *process*, rather than a one-time activity or event.

In order for your call center to be truly motivating, you must be *pro-active*, not *reactive*. Spending money on gimmicks, games and logo-emblazoned mugs and pens will have little long-term impact if your efforts *stop* there. The most *meaningful efforts* will be *relevant* and *specific*. Agents will value them, and you will see both short-term and long-term returns on your investment.

Like any meaningful change, you must view this effort as a process, not an event or a meeting, or even a new incentive program. Lasting change will result when the call center embarks on a program that addresses their unique gaps as measured by the **Threshold Model**.