

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS FOR REMOTE TEAMS

Maslow, in his original work in 1954, proposed that motivation is based on a number of human needs. These are arranged in a hierarchy that requires the 'lower', more basic needs to be satisfied before the increasingly less basic ones above.

Maslow identified five key categories of need.



Physiological and safety needs are considered the basic lower-order needs. It is only once these needs are satisfied or partially satisfied that Maslow feels people are driven to satisfy the higher-order social needs of belonging, esteem and self-actualisation.

Whilst Maslow's theory is often portrayed as rigid, in such a way that movement from one level of the hierarchy to another is possible only once a lower need has been fully satisfied, Maslow did not actually say that. He states that most members of our society are partially satisfied in all their basic needs and partially unsatisfied in all their basic needs at the same time. New needs emerge gradually following the partial satisfaction of the lower need. For example if need A is only satisfied 10%, need B, further up the hierarchy, may not be seen at all. It may only be when A becomes satisfied 25%, that need B emerges.

Maslow's theory has some interesting implications for remote working. We must take especial care to ensure that each level of the hierarchy has been addressed when considering remote working arrangements. If these needs are not met, people will feel dissatisfied and will look for ways to meet these needs.

Nickson and Siddons, in their book *Remote Working, Linking People and Organisations*, provide the following recommendations in order to ensure that needs at each level of the hierarchy have been met:

Stage 1: Physiological needs

- Ensure equipment is available, works and is suitable
- Have a set of standards and practices to facilitate the setting up of the remote office, to ensure the worker has everything they need

Stage 2: Safety needs

This does not only mean physical safety, but also the assurance of continuity of employment. Remote workers may feel they are not aware of the changes, openings and developments that occur within the organisation and may offer opportunities for progression. They may therefore feel they are at a disadvantage.

- Keep the remote worker informed of any changes, opportunities and activities happening at Head office and within the organisation
- Have a clear idea of how the remote worker's job will progress and discuss this with him or her
- Review the development of the remote worker

Stage 3: Affiliation needs (belonging and love)

This is perhaps one of the most difficult needs to fulfill. Isolation is one of the most common challenges of working remotely.

- Include the remote worker as much as possible in group bonding activities
- Encourage contact between the remote worker and their colleagues on a regular basis
- Arrange face-to-face meetings so that they occur regularly

Stage 4: Self-esteem

Feedback is crucial in building a worker's self-esteem, whether they work remotely or not. This presents a challenge as to how to make up for the loss of day-to-day informal feedback that occurs on a daily basis within an office environment.

- Publicise the successes of the remote worker to the rest of the organisation
- Remember the importance of feedback
- Include the remote worker in all reward schemes

Stage 5: Self-actualisation

- Provide opportunities for self-development
- Set challenges
- Allow a remote worker to organise his or her own way of working
- Do not micromanage.