Values, Attitudes, and Moods and Emotions

What are managers striving to achieve? How do they think they should behave? What do they think about their jobs and organizations? And how do they actually feel at work? We can find some answers to these questions by exploring managers’ values, attitudes, and moods. Values, attitudes, and moods and emotions capture how managers experience their jobs as individuals. Values describe what managers are trying to achieve through work and how they think they should behave.

Attitudes capture their thoughts and feelings about their specific jobs and organizations. Moods and emotions encompass how managers actually feel when they are managing. Although these three aspects of managers’ work experience are highly personal, they also have important implications for understanding how managers behave, how they treat and respond to others, and how, through their efforts, they help contribute to organizational effectiveness through planning, leading, organizing, and controlling.

Values: Terminal and Instrumental

The two kinds of personal values are terminal and instrumental. A terminal value is a personal conviction about lifelong goals or objectives; an instrumental value is a personal conviction about desired modes of conduct or ways of behaving. Terminal values often lead to the formation of norms, which are unwritten, informal codes of conduct, such as behaving honestly or courteously, that prescribe how people should act in particular situations and are considered important by most members of a group or organization.

Milton Rokeach, a leading researcher in the area of human values, identified 18 terminal values and 18 instrumental values that describe each person’s value system. By rank ordering the terminal values from “1 (most important as a guiding principle in one’s life)” to “18 (least important as a guiding principle in one’s life)” and then rank ordering the instrumental values from 1 to 18, people can give good pictures of their value systems — what they are striving to achieve in life and how they want to behave.

Several of Rokeach’s terminal values seem to be especially important for managers such as “a sense of accomplishment (a lasting contribution)”, “equality (brotherhood, equal opportunity for all)”, and “self-respect (self-esteem).” A manager who thinks a sense of accomplishment is of paramount importance might
focus on making a lasting contribution to an organization by developing a new product that can save or prolong lives, as is true of managers at Medtronic (a company that makes medical devices such as cardiac pacemakers), or by opening a new foreign subsidiary. A manager who places equality at the top of his or her list of terminal values may be at the forefront of an organization’s efforts to support, provide equal opportunities to, and capitalize on the many talents of an increasingly diverse workforce.

Other terminal values are likely to be considered important by many managers, such as “a comfortable life (a prosperous life)”, “an exciting life (a stimulating, active life)”, “freedom (independence, free choice)”, and “social recognition (respect, admiration).” The relative importance that managers place on each terminal value helps explain what they are striving to achieve in their organizations and what they will focus their efforts on.

Several of Rokeach’s instrumental values seem to be important modes of conduct for managers, such as being “ambitious (hardworking, aspiring)”, “broad-minded (open-minded)”, “capable (competent, effective)”, “responsible (dependable, reliable)”, and “self-controlled (restrained, self-disciplined).” Moreover, the relative importance a manager places on these and other instrumental values may be a significant determinant of actual behaviors on the job. A manager who considers being “imaginative (daring, creative)” to be highly important, for example, is more likely to be innovative and take risks than is a manager who considers this to be less important (all else being equal). A manager who considers being “honest (sincere, truthful)” to be of paramount importance may be a driving force for taking steps to ensure that all members of a unit or organization behave ethically.

**Attitudes**

An attitude is a collection of feelings and beliefs. Like everyone else, managers have attitudes about their jobs and organizations, and these attitudes affect how they approach their jobs. Two of the most important attitudes in this context are job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

**JOB SATISFACTION** Job satisfaction is the collection of feelings and beliefs that managers have about their current jobs. Managers who have high levels of job satisfaction generally like their jobs, feel they are fairly treated, and believe their jobs have many desirable features or characteristics (such as interesting work, good
pay and job security, autonomy, or nice coworkers). The figure below shows sample items from two scales that managers can use to measure job satisfaction. Levels of job satisfaction tend to increase as one moves up.

Sample Items from Two Measures of Job Satisfaction

Sample Items from the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire:
People respond to each of the items in the scale by checking whether they are:

[ ] Very dissatisfied
[ ] Satisfied
[ ] Dissatisfied
[ ] Very satisfied
[ ] Can’t decide whether satisfied or not

On my present job, this is how I feel about . . .

1. Being able to do things that don’t go against my conscience.
2. The way my job provides for steady employment.
3. The chance to do things for other people.
4. The chance to do something that makes use of my abilities.
5. The way company policies are put into practice.
6. My pay and the amount of work I do.
7. The chances for advancement on this job.
8. The freedom to use my own judgment.
9. The working conditions.
10. The way my coworkers get along with each other.
11. The praise I get for doing a good job.
12. The feeling of accomplishment I get from the job.

The Faces Scale
Workers select the face which best expresses how they feel about their job in general.

The hierarchy in an organization. Upper managers, in general, tend to be more satisfied with their jobs than entry-level employees. Managers’ levels of job satisfaction can range from very low to very high.

In general, it is desirable for managers to be satisfied with their jobs, for at least two reasons. First, satisfied managers may be more likely to go the extra mile for their organization or perform organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) — behaviors that are not required of organizational members but that contribute to and are necessary for organizational efficiency, effectiveness, and competitive advantage. Managers who are satisfied with their jobs are more likely to perform
these “above and beyond the call of duty” behaviors, which can range from putting in long hours when needed to coming up with truly creative ideas and overcoming obstacles to implement them (even when doing so is not part of the manager’s job), or to going out of one’s way to help a coworker, subordinate, or superior (even when doing so entails considerable personal sacrifice).

A second reason why it is desirable for managers to be satisfied with their jobs is that satisfied managers may be less likely to quit. A manager who is highly satisfied may never even think about looking for another position; a dissatisfied manager may always be on the lookout for new opportunities. Turnover can hurt an organization because it causes the loss of the experience and knowledge that managers have gained about the company, industry, and business environment.

A growing source of dissatisfaction for many lower-level and middle managers, as well as for non-managerial employees, is the threat of unemployment and increased workloads from organizational downsizings and layoffs. Organizations that try to improve their efficiency through restructuring and layoffs often eliminate a sizable number of first-line and middle management positions. This decision obviously hurts the managers who are laid off, and it also can reduce the job satisfaction levels of managers who remain. They might fear being the next to be let go. In addition, the workloads of remaining employees often increase dramatically as a result of restructuring, and this can contribute to dissatisfaction.

How managers and organizations handle layoffs is of paramount importance, not only for the layoff victims but also for employees who survive the layoff and keep their jobs. Showing compassion and empathy for layoff victims, giving them as much advance notice as possible about the layoff, providing clear information about severance benefits, and helping layoff victims in their job search efforts are a few of the ways in which managers can humanely manage a layoff. For example, when Ron Thomas, vice president of organizational development for Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, had to lay off employees as a result of closing the organization’s catalog business, he personally called all the catalog businesses he knew to find out about potential positions for laid-off employees. Efforts such as Thomas’s to help layoff victims find new jobs can contribute to the job satisfaction of those who survive the layoff. As Thomas puts it, “If you handle a restructuring well, the word gets out that you’re a good place to work . . . if we post a job opening today, we’ll get 1,500 résumés tomorrow.”
Unfortunately, when the unemployment rate is high, laid-off employees sometimes find it difficult to find new jobs and can remain jobless for months. For small businesses, the decision to lay off employees and communicating that decision can be especially painful because managers often have developed close personal relationships with the people they have to let go, know their families, and fear what will happen to them with the loss of a steady income. Shelly Polum, vice president for administration at Ram Tool, a small family-owned manufacturing company in Grafton, Wisconsin, broke down in tears in her office after she had to let employees know they were being laid off. When Charlie Thomas, vice president of Shuqualak Lumber in Shuqualak, Mississippi, had to announce layoffs of close to a quarter of his employees, he wrote a speech that he could not get through without stopping and retreating to his office to pull himself together. As he put it, “I couldn’t get it out . . . It just killed my soul.” As these managers realize, being laid off can be devastating for employees and their families.

**ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT** Organizational commitment is the collection of feelings and beliefs that managers have about their organization as a whole. Managers who are committed to their organizations believe in what their organizations are doing, are proud of what these organizations stand for, and feel a high degree of loyalty toward their organizations. Committed managers are more likely to go above and beyond the call of duty to help their company and are less likely to quit. Organizational commitment can be especially strong when employees and managers truly believe in organizational values; it also leads to a strong organizational culture.

Organizational commitment is likely to help managers perform some of their figurehead and spokesperson roles. It is much easier for a manager to persuade others both inside and outside the organization of the merits of what the organization has done and is seeking to accomplish if the manager truly believes in and is committed to the organization.

Do managers in different countries have similar or different attitudes? Differences in the levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment among managers in different countries are likely because these managers have different kinds of opportunities and rewards and because they face different economic, political, and sociocultural forces in their organizations’ general environments. Levels of organizational commitment from one country to another may depend on the extent
to which countries have legislation affecting firings and layoffs and the extent to which citizens of a country are geographically mobile.

**Moods and Emotions**

Just as you sometimes are in a bad mood and at other times are in a good mood, so too are managers. A mood is a feeling or state of mind. When people are in a positive mood, they feel excited, enthusiastic, active, or elated. When people are in a negative mood, they feel distressed, fearful, scornful, hostile, jittery, or nervous. People who are high on negative affectivity are especially likely to experience negative moods. People’s situations or circumstances also determine their moods; however, receiving a raise is likely to put most people in a good mood regardless of their personality traits. People who are high on negative affectivity are not always in a bad mood and people who are low on extraversion still experience positive moods.

Emotions are more intense feelings than moods, are often directly linked to whatever caused the emotion, and are more short-lived. However, once whatever has triggered the emotion has been dealt with, the feelings may linger in the form of a less intense mood. For example, a manager who gets very angry when a subordinate has engaged in an unethical behavior may find his anger decreasing in intensity once he has decided how to address the problem. Yet he continues to be in a bad mood the rest of the day, even though he is not directly thinking about the unfortunate incident.

Research has found that moods and emotions affect the behavior of managers and all members of an organization. For example, research suggests that the subordinates of managers who experience positive moods at work may perform at somewhat higher levels and be less likely to resign and leave the organization than the subordinates of managers who do not tend to be in a positive mood at work. Other research suggests that under certain conditions creativity might be enhanced by positive moods, whereas under other conditions negative moods might push people to work harder to come up with truly creative ideas. Recognizing that both mood states have the potential to contribute to creativity in different ways, recent research suggests that employees may be especially likely to be creative to the extent that they experience both mood states (at different times) on the job and to the extent that the work environment is supportive of creativity.

Other research suggests that moods and emotions may play an important role in ethical decision making. For example, researchers at Princeton University found
that when people are trying to solve difficult personal moral dilemmas, the parts of their brains that are responsible for emotions and moods are especially active.

More generally, emotions and moods give managers and all employees important information and signals about what is going on in the workplace. Positive emotions and moods signal that things are going well and thus can lead to more expansive, and even playful, thinking. Negative emotions and moods signal that there are problems in need of attention and areas for improvement. So when people are in negative moods, they tend to be more detail-oriented and focused on the facts at hand. Some studies suggest that critical thinking and devil’s advocacy may be promoted by a negative mood, and sometimes especially accurate judgments may be made by managers in negative moods.

Managers and other members of an organization need to realize that how they feel affects how they treat others and how others respond to them, including their subordinates. For example, a subordinate may be more likely to approach a manager with a somewhat unusual but potentially useful idea if the subordinate thinks the manager is in a good mood. Likewise, when managers are in very bad moods, their subordinates might try to avoid them at all costs.