



Evolution of a Motivation Theory

Contents

Evolution of a Motivation theory

Are People Inherently Lazy?	3
The Cangemi Study	6
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs	7
The Herzberg Studies	9
The Results Plus Theory	11
About Results Plus	14

Are People Inherently Lazy?

Motivation has always been a popular topic throughout history but it was not until the Industrial Revolution that it became of key interest to the business community.

This era marked the first time that a systematic approach was taken to understand the link between motivation and performance, initially starting with time and motion studies.

The first approach, known as the **Classical** approach, stemmed from a negative view of human nature and postulated that people need to be controlled, are basically lazy and are not to be trusted.

Proponents of this approach treated people like machines and totally disregarded workers as human beings.

A pioneer in this area was Frederick Taylor. He developed the “Scientific Management” approach, where he said that output could be increased with more effective job design. Taylor believed that there was “one best way” to do a job and by understanding what the job required, via time and motion studies, the human machine could produce more.

In this mechanical approach, workers could have easily been substituted for machines and indeed, as a result of Taylor’s belief, jobs were simplified, categorised and narrowed. The classical approach emphasised a fairly rigid, formal, autocratic, highly rational, regulated environment, based on the assumption that people needed to be controlled.

This approach eventually lost favour as employees became increasingly dissatisfied and there gradually developed some understanding of the human being and its needs. This led to the next major trend called the **Human Relations** approach.

This approach stemmed from research which revealed that the organisation was more than just a set of individual man-machine systems. It was a social organisation where people had friends, enemies, hopes, fears and desires that were unaccounted for by the “system”.

Approach	Central Idea
Classical	People can be controlled like machines
Human Relations	People are human beings with social and emotional needs
Systems	Motivation and behaviour is complex. Also a recognition that the preceding two approaches are too extreme and do not take into account synergy.

Well known researchers in this area are E. Mayo, T. Whitehead and F. Roethlisberger. Much of this work was later developed into a general concern about the welfare and working conditions of the employee. This “humanistic” concern was further developed by research undertaken by people including Likert, McGregor and Argyris.

Then the tide changed and there was a growing conviction that this approach, based on the individual, not only had gone too far in the opposite direction, but also was not comprehensive enough.

Are People Inherently Lazy?

It lacked an explanation for the interrelationship of various aspects or subgroups. So a new approach gradually developed, called the **Systems** approach. The emphasis in this approach is that the whole is greater than the sum of the individual parts. Systems theorists at this time took a more neutral position regarding human beings and motivation. They proposed that motivation and behaviour is a combination of many factors. It is not only our thoughts which contribute to behaviour but also the group's norms and our bosses expectation!

Motivation Theory Today

In today's business environment, aspects of all these approaches are relevant and these can be seen in the variety of "theories". These theories are classified as either **content**, **process**, **reinforcement**, **instrumental** or **expectancy**.

Content Theories

These focus on the "what" of motivation. Prominent authorities on this approach include Maslow, McGregor, Herzberg, Atkinson, Alderfer and McClelland. The content theory approach presumes that people are driven to satisfy a specific need.

Process Theories

Process theories focus on the "how" and the "what", that is, the type of goals an individual is motivated by. This depends on an individual's needs, expectancy of result and how important it is to them that they achieve a specific result. Goal setting and equity theory are also important and related to the process approach.

Reinforcement Theories

Reinforcement theories focus on behaviour modification or conditioning, particularly on the basis of past actions.

Instrumental Theory

Another approach is known as the instrumental theory, pioneered by Goldthorpe and his colleagues¹ who concluded that for some people, work is only a means to gain financial reward. He did a study of British car workers and found that although they were not especially interested in the intrinsic (higher aspirational) aspects of work and they said work was boring and unsatisfying, they still did not have negative attitudes to their employers. This was because these workers had an "extrinsic" orientation to work, whereby work is a means to an end and thus not expected to be a central life interest or to provide an avenue for personal development and fulfilment.

This shows that for certain people, extrinsic rewards such as high economic gains are valued more than intrinsic rewards like job satisfaction.

1. J.H. Goldthorpe, D. Lockwood, F. Bechhofer and J. Platt, 'The Affluent Worker: Industrial Attitudes and Behaviour'

Are People Inherently Lazy?

Expectancy Theory

This theory proposes that motivation is influenced not only by desirability of an outcome but an assessment of its achievability (Vroom 1964).

Calculation of the likelihood of an outcome being achieved is in turn influenced by three things. These are:

- *Availability of the desired outcome*
- *Personal belief that a specific act will result in the outcome*
- *Personal conviction that one has the ability to perform the required act successfully (i.e. expectancy of success)*

It is the latter of the three aspects, particularly expectancy of success, which has been demonstrated to be a potent predictor of performance. Fortunately, this is an area in which a manager can exert much influence.

The Results Plus Approach

Whatever the theory, it is important to realise that there will always be a conflict of opinion between two parties. Whether between management and non-management, buyer and seller, or organisational need and individual need, it is easy to understand in theory for each is on a different side of the fence.

In **practice** however, this simple but crucial point is often **overlooked**. A landmark survey conducted by Joseph Cangemi and George Guttschalk highlighted how such a simple misunderstanding can be at the heart of much employee dissatisfaction and management frustration.

The Cangemi Study

“The very three things listed as most important by staff were ranked last by their supervisors.¹”

In a survey of 35,000 employees, researchers Cangemi and Guttschalk asked employees to nominate what they wanted most from their jobs. The top three wants were:

- *Full appreciation for work done*
- *Feeling “in” on things*
- *Sympathetic understanding of personal problems*

When their supervisors were asked what they perceived their staff wanted, the exact reverse was true! Supervisors put these same aspects at the bottom of the scale, listing a series of material benefits, such as wages and promotion, as the things they thought were most important to their employees.

Supervisors Perceptions of Employees Wants

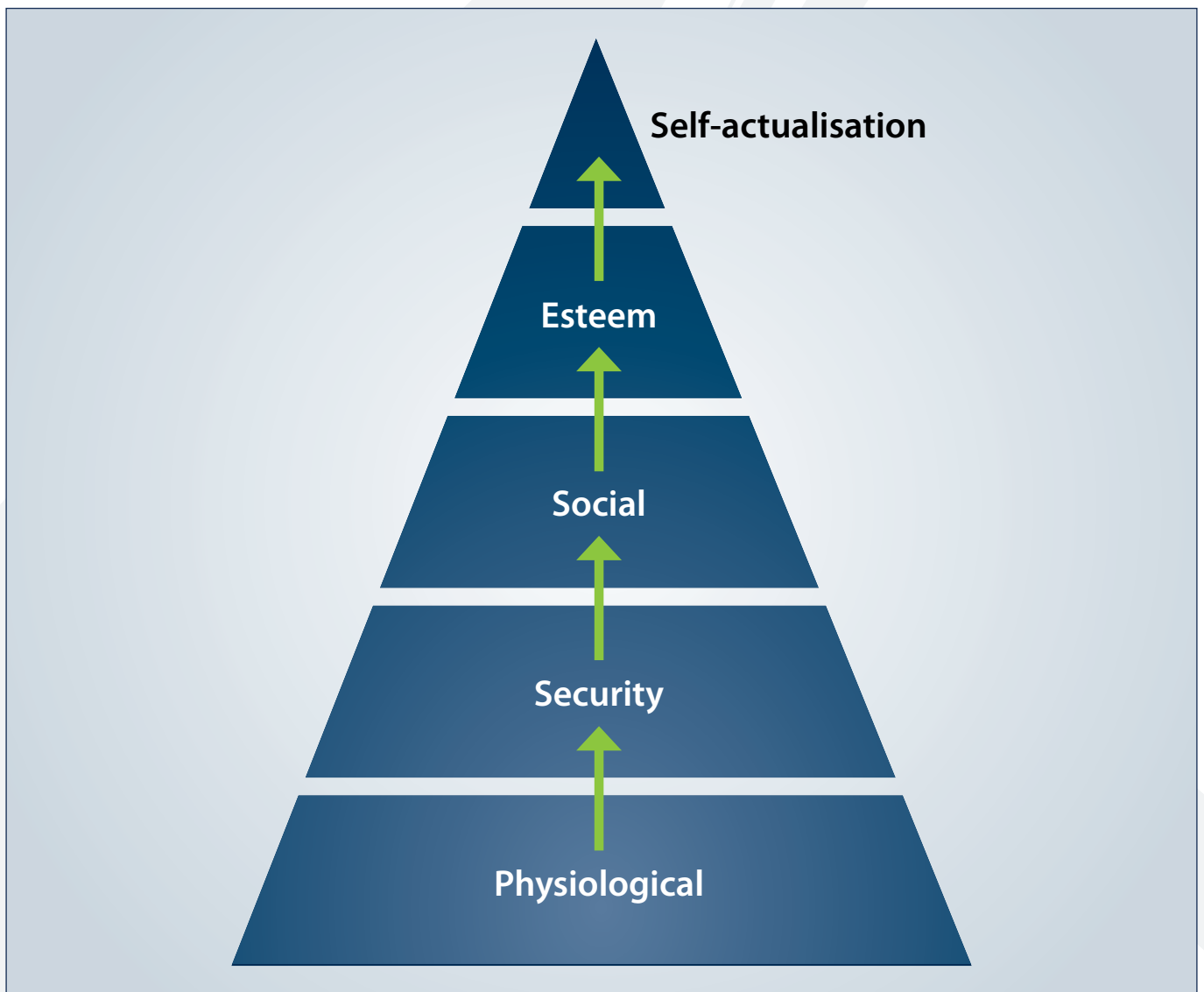
	Employees ranking of what they want	Supervisors ranking of what employees want
Full appreciation for work done	1	8
Feeling “in” on things	2	10
Sympathetic understanding of personal problems	3	9
Job security	4	2
Good wages	5	1
Interesting work	6	5
Promotion and growth with the company	7	3
Management loyalty to workers	8	6
Good working conditions	9	4
Tactful disciplining	10	7

Source: Psychology, A Quarterly Journal of Human Behaviour, Volume 23, Number 2/3, 1986.

1. Cangemi, Joseph P. and Guttschalk, *What Employees Really Want From Their Jobs*, Psychology, A Quarterly Journal of Human Behaviour, Volume 23, Number 213, 1986.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Experience has taught us that the content theory is particularly relevant in today's business environment, although it also has ramifications for our life outside of work.



Source: Abraham Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, 2nd Edition (New York: Harper and Row, 1970)

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

A well known proponent of the content theory is Abraham Maslow who stated that there is a set of five needs and that these become drivers or motivators when a deficiency state arises. These five needs in ascending order, are as follows: **Physiological, Security, Social, Esteem** and **Self-actualisation**.

Maslow says that these five needs work in a hierarchical manner, in that the base or lower level needs have to be satisfied before a person can concentrate on higher level needs

Physiological

This includes the most basic needs for survival including food, water, shelter, clothing and similar. When this need has been fulfilled, we move onto the next level.

Security

This encompasses the need for safety and a feeling of security. People with a high concern for this need may choose less risky public service jobs in preference to being a freelance consultant or stuntperson!

Social

This covers our need for love, affection, belonging and satisfying relationships with family, friends, colleagues and more intimate contacts.

Esteem

Maslow believed that people generally need to have a good evaluation of themselves and they desire that others also value and respect them. He says that it is only from having our needs for love basically met that we can aspire to working on this level of need. The majority of people on levels 3 and 4, having satisfied 1 and 2.

Self-actualisation

When a person has satisfied all 4 of the lower level needs, Maslow proposed that they could then direct attention to the highest level need - that of self-actualisation. Only a small percentage of people reach this level.

Self-actualisation refers to becoming all that you are capable of. In other words, being the best you can and fulfilling the purpose for which you were "put on this earth". The quest for self-actualisation is generally fuelled by a dissatisfaction with the current status quo, which motivates us to change, shift or improve, so that we can live life doing what we feel is our absolute best.

Maslow believed that fulfilled self-actualisers are basically satisfied people and that since satisfied people are basically the exception in our society, not many people become self-actualisers.

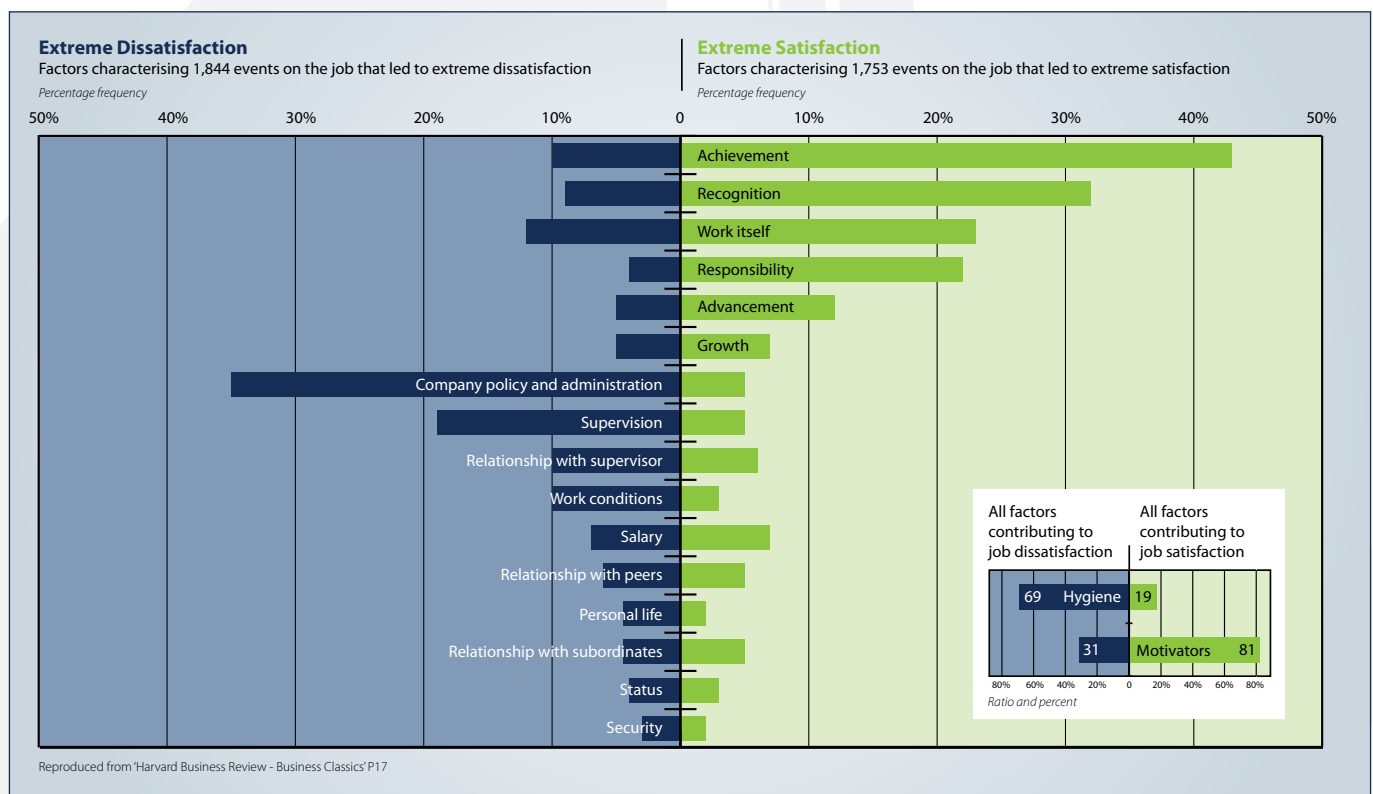
The Herzberg Studies

Our understanding of how Maslow's hierarchy of needs operates in the work arena is deepened by the work done by Frederick Herzberg in 1959.

Herzberg and his colleagues looked at the relationship between specific job characteristics and motivation. Based on the outcome of their studies, Herzberg proposed a two factor approach; the first being what he calls "Satisfiers" (or motivating factors) and the second being what he calls "Dissatisfiers" (or hygiene factors).

The work was based on asking employees to recall times when they felt particularly good about their jobs and times when they felt particularly bad. Herzberg and his colleagues then attempted to find what factors led to each type of reaction. The combined results of 12 different studies involving 1685 employees is as follows:

Factors affecting job attitudes, as reported in 12 investigations covering 1685 employees



The Herzberg Studies

These results can be explained as stemming from two different aspects:

- *Our animal nature (built-in drive to avoid pain and fulfil basic biological needs)*
- *The unique human characteristics to achieve and to grow*

As Herzberg stated:

"Two different needs of man are involved here. One set of needs can be thought of as stemming from his animal nature - the built-in drive to avoid pain from the environment, plus all the learned drives which become conditioned to the basic biological needs. For example, hunger, a basic biological drive, makes it necessary to earn money, and then money becomes a specific drive.

The other set of needs relates to that unique human characteristic, the ability to achieve and, through achievement, to experience psychological growth. The stimuli for the growth needs are tasks that induce growth; in the industrial setting, they are the job content. Contrariwise, the stimuli inducing pain-avoidance behaviour are found in the job environment."

Herzberg's work oversimplifies the relationship between these and it overlooks that it is subjective as to whether a particular item is satisfying or dissatisfying. Nonetheless, it is still regarded as an important contribution to our knowledge on the relationship between job characteristics and satisfaction, motivation and performance.

A review of all published research data on the subject of motivation points to the same conclusion:

Motivation will only be internally-fuelled when people are allowed to fulfil their higher aspirational needs in the context of work.

The Results Plus Theory

Our experience has taught us that for the majority of people, applying motivational psychology is highly beneficial. Repeated program implementation has shown that three out of four people are generally committed and want to do a good job.

They will be open to attempts by management to increase their quality of work enjoyment and this will flow on to increases in productivity. Our motivational approach is designed to provide the right conditions under which these employees can realise more of their work potential.

The remaining one in four (or less, depending on the organisation) will not respond to any such initiatives. In this scenario, we have found the most effective way to manage and improve the performance for this group is to set and raise the minimum standards of acceptable performance.

Our philosophy is based on many years of experience in conducting incentive/motivational programs. Working with numerous companies during this time, we have uncovered a

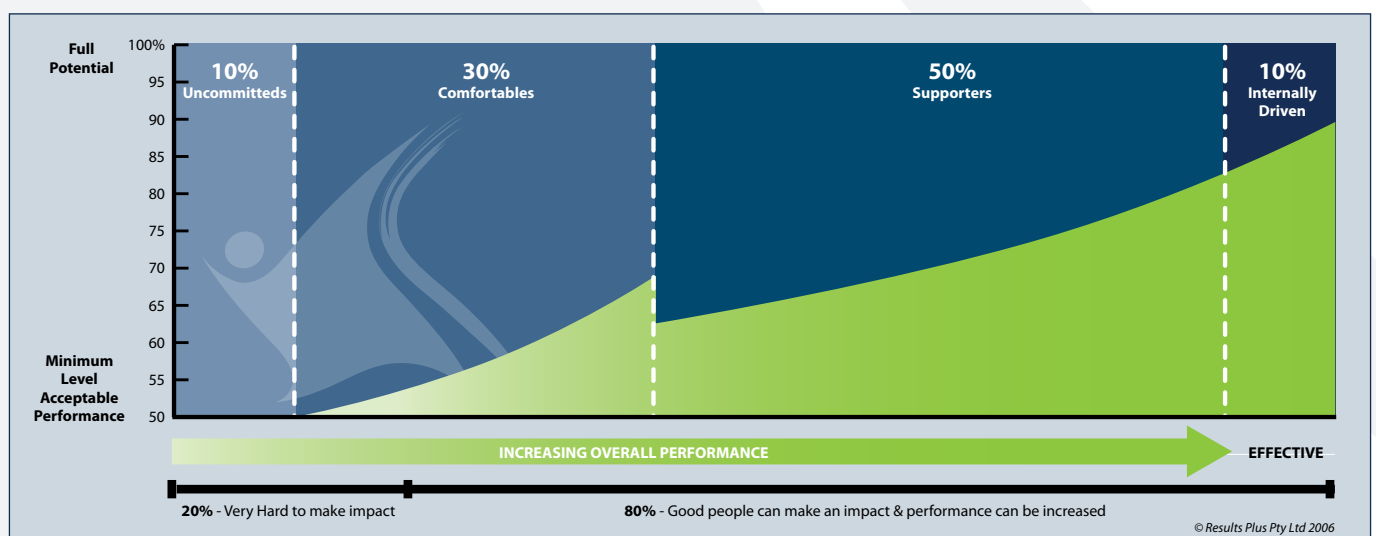
number of reasons why programs do not work as well as they should and have developed strategies to overcome these.

We term this philosophy the "Personal Motivational Style Model". This model classifies people into broad categories, according to their psychological makeup and corresponding predicted performance level on the job.

It is equally applicable to your customers, employees, franchisees, colleagues, shareholders... and even family... as it is a model of human behavioural tendencies.

We have identified four broad groupings which we call: **Internally Driven**, **Supporters**, **Comfortables** and **Uncommitteds**, as detailed in the graph below.

Personal motivation styles



© Results Plus Pty Ltd 2006

The Results Plus Theory

Incentive/motivation programs and management initiatives will work best with the first three groups, being all the Internally Driven, the Supporters and the majority of the Comfortables.

Let's explore these descriptive terms:

Internally Driven

We have called the first group the Internally Driven. The person who falls into this category is likely to be exceptionally self-motivated and already a top performer.

Incentive/motivation programs which focus purely on financial incentives are only a weak stimulus, as this person is already self-motivated and gets a buzz from doing a great job, becoming better at their profession and being recognised for doing so. Our observations are that the "Internally Driven" make up around ten percent of all people.

Supporters

This group accounts for approximately 50 percent of people who are very good performers, receptive to advice and new initiatives. They support management ideas and are committed to their work but they lack the high internal drive of the first group.

The supporters are by and large the most rewarding group to work with because they are genuinely willing to work hard and are committed to improving their performance once they are "brought into the fold" and shown how.

Incentive/motivational programs have the most impact on the people in this group and thus the **resulting performance gains** are the highest out of all the four groups.

Comfortables

This group accounts for approximately 30 percent of people. The Comfortables are not usually ambitious or career-minded and are quite happy to plod along doing the basic requirements of their job. Their performance is skewed towards the lower end of the scale.

This group tends to externalise problems and tends to believe they are helpless to change their own situation or aren't motivated to do so. For this reason, programs directed at this group have a more limited degree of success, particularly for those at the outer right of the scale.

They will not respond as well to management initiatives of their own accord but with the right structuring, an incentive/motivation program can lift the performance of this group.

This is achieved by default - by increasing the overall standard of performance across all four groups, the performance of this group is lifted, whether they like it or not.

The Results Plus Theory

Uncommitteds

Fortunately, this group only accounts for some ten percent of people. Their performance is poor and so is their attitude. People in this group are looking for better opportunities and will rarely be motivated by management initiatives or incentive/motivation programs. There could be a number of underlying reasons why these people are like this; it could just “be them”, a personality clash with their manager, or that they are just biding time, waiting for retirement or a better opportunity.

Motivation programs will do little to shift the behaviour or attitude of this group and for this reason, their wants are largely ‘ignored’ when designing a program. There are, however, specific strategies and actions that a manager can take with these people.

In Summary

- *Motivation theory today is very complex and takes account of many interrelated factors, including pioneer work by Maslow, Herzberg and Taylor*
- *3 in 4 people are genuinely capable and willing to do a good job; if the environment is conducive*
- *The 3 top employee wants are:*
 - 1. appreciation for efforts*
 - 2. feeling part of the team*
 - 3. understanding of personal problems*

About Results Plus

“Our mission is to research, develop and implement performance improvement programs to help organisations achieve improved results and reach specific outcomes. We value lasting relationships with our clients, built on trust and a shared vision of seeking opportunities for continuous improvements.”

Results Plus Pty Ltd was established in 1989 by Harry Coomans, Neil Southwell and Steve Dunne.

With a unique blend of specialist consulting, creative and communication skills between the three partners, Results Plus has developed considerable expertise in the design, implementation and management of programs which have helped organisations across a wide industry spectrum achieve increased performance.

Our current clients include high profile multinationals, and working with these companies over the years has given us considerable experience with franchised organisations and businesses with large distribution channels ... valuable experience that we can offer you.

Contact

PH: +61 2 8850 4400

FAX: +61 2 8850 4466

EMAIL: sales@resultsplus.com.au

WEB: www.resultsplus.com.au