

MANAGEMENT OUTLOOK

Learning Disability: Dyslexia In The Workplace

What To Look Out For And What You Can Do

Disability discrimination legislation in the UK now includes dyslexia, and employers have a responsibility to make reasonable allowances for all employees with this specific learning disability. Dyslexia awareness has increased in the last few years, and it's important for managers to understand this learning difficulty so that they can work with people with dyslexia effectively.

Dyslexia Statistics, Signs and Symptoms

Around 10% (1 in 10) people have dyslexic tendencies, with about 4% severe and 6% mild to moderate problems. Dyslexia can affect all backgrounds and abilities, from people with literacy difficulties to people with advanced doctorate degrees. Most people associate dyslexia with reading and spelling difficulties, however, difficulties in-

clude poor short term memory, dis-organisation and poor concentration.

In the UK, dyslexia is formally diagnosed by an educational psychologist, however a simple, non scientific test is that specific learning difficulties may exist if there is a large discrepancy between intellect and learning ability.

At this point you may think that dyslexia is a bad thing in the workplace - not so! There are many professions where dyslexic tendencies are advantageous and it would make sound business sense to actively recruit people with dyslexia. There are disproportionately more people with dyslexia in for example, the architect profession, where artistic creativity and design are highly valued.

It is thought that the dyslexic brain processes information in the right brain, (compared with the more usual left brain

dominance), and this may be reason for the distinctive dyslexic strengths and talents.

What You Can Do To Assist People With Dyslexia in the Work- place

Use coloured paper for handouts, or coloured overlays for reading material. Use diagrams or pictures instead of lengthy written explanations. Use simple, colour coded systems for filing or organization. Consider font size and style e.g. comic sans or verdana in written communication. Encourage use of spell-checker and thesaurus. Consider more advanced software such as text readers or providing audio versions of information. Build on and encourage strengths, such as creativity and design and develop coping strategies for weaker areas, e.g. use mind-maps for organising. Above all, be patient and supportive!

By Lyndsay Swinton



"As we start a new school year, Mr. Smith, I just want you to know that I'm an Abstract Sequential learner and trust that you'll conduct yourself accordingly!"

By Lyndsay Swinton

How To Motivate Your Team; Put Frederick Herzberg Theory Into Practice

Using Frederick Herzberg theory is a simple, structured way to motivate your team and increase job satisfaction. By considering Herzberg's two factor theory, you can work out what dis-satisfies your team, what motivates them and most importantly, what you can do to increase job satisfaction.

Herzberg, an American behavioural scientist, observed that people could get very dissatisfied about with problems about; salary, job security, supervisor behaviour and company policy. However, if these issues were resolved, it did not guarantee job satisfaction. Herzberg identified job satisfaction was a result of different factors such as achievement, recognition and growth.

Herzberg called the dissatisfiers "hygiene factors" because they helped prevent dissatisfaction, but in themselves would never provide real satisfaction. Perhaps you have a good salary, in a secure job in a company you like, but there's something missing. You're not dis-satisfied with your work, but you're not satisfied either. The key to job satisfaction is having one or more of the "motivator factors" present.

To put Frederick Herzberg theory into practice, consider these two questions;

1) "Which of these cause me irritation or frustration is I don't have them?"

2) "Which of these when I do have them, make me feel fulfilled and involved in my work?"

Critics consider Herzberg's two factor theory to be simplistic - what motivates me may be a dissatisfier for someone else. For example, increased responsibility for one person may be a motivator as they can grow and develop in their role, allowing them to further their career. But to another person, increased responsibility can be a dissatisfier, particularly if pay does not reflect the new role or if they are over-stretched already.

To make use of this criticism, you need to consider your team as a collection of individuals, not as a homogeneous group with one set of wants and needs. Take each individual and ask the same two questions, and by the time you've worked through your team, you will have a clear idea what you need to do to increase job satisfaction.

Some factors may be within your control, some may not. For example, it may not be possible to influence company holiday policy, but you could decide within the team how holidays are allocated. Work with what you can change and highlight those you can't to your manager or through the company's employee feedback mechanisms.

Unlike some staff motivation

theories, Frederick Herzberg theory is easy to remember, easy to explain and easy to use. By considering Herzberg's two factor theory, you can work out what dissatisfies your team, what motivates them and most importantly, what you can do to increase job satisfaction.

By Lyndsay Swinton

