CASE STUDY: PREDICTING HARRY'S WORK EFFORT

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Purpose This exercise is designed to help you understand expectancy theory and how its elements affect a person's level of effort toward job performance.

Instructions This exercise may be completed either individually or in small teams of four or five people. When the individuals (or teams) have completed the exercise, the results will be discussed and compared with others in the class.

Read the following interview case. Then, calculate whether Harry will engage in high or "just acceptable" performance effort under the conditions described. Valence scores range from –1.0 to +1.0. All expectancies are probabilities ranging from 0 (no chance) to 1.0 (definitely will occur). The effort level scores are calculated by multiplying each valence by the appropriate P-to-O expectancy, summing these results, then multiplying the sum by the E-to-P expectancy.

Interview with Harry

Interviewer: Hi, Harry. I have been asked to talk to you about your job. Do you mind if I ask you a few questions?

Harry: No, not at all.

Interviewer: Thanks, Harry. What are the things that you would anticipate getting satisfaction from as a result of your job?

Harry: What do you mean?

Interviewer: Well, what is important to you with regard to your job here?

Harry: I guess most important is job security. As a matter of fact, I can't think of anything that is more important to me. I think getting a raise would be nice, and a promotion would be even better.

Interviewer: Anything else that you think would be nice to get, or for that matter, that you would want to avoid?

Harry: I certainly would not want my buddies to make fun of me. We're pretty friendly, and this is really important to me.

Interviewer: Anything else?

Harry: No, not really. That seems to be it.

Interviewer: How satisfied do you think you would be with each of these?

Harry: What do you mean?

Interviewer: Well, assume that something that you would really like has a value of +1.0 and something you would really not like, that is you would want to avoid, has a value of –1.0, and something you are indifferent about has a value of 0.

Harry: OK. Getting a raise would have a value of .5; a promotion is more important, so I'd say .7; and having my buddies make fun of me, .9.

Interviewer: But, I thought you didn't want your buddies to make fun of you.

Harry: I don't.

Interviewer: But you gave it a value of .9.

Harry: Oh, I guess it should be –.9.

Interviewer: Ok, I just want to be sure I understand what you're saying. Harry, what do you think the chances are of these things happening?

Harry: That depends.

Interviewer: On what?

Harry: On whether my performance is high or just acceptable.

Interviewer: What if it is high?

Harry: I figure I stand about a 50–50 chance of getting a raise and/or a promotion, but I also think that there is a 90 percent chance that my buddies will make fun of me.

Interviewer: What about job security?

Harry: I am certain my job is secure here, whether my performance is high or just acceptable. I can't remember the last guy who was doing his job and got fired. But if my performance is just acceptable, my chances of a raise or promotion are about 10 percent. However, then the guys will not make fun of me. That I am certain about.

Interviewer: What is the likelihood of your performance level being high?

Harry: That depends. If I work very hard and put out a high degree of effort, I'd say that my chance of my performance being high is about 90 percent. But if I put out a low level of effort—you know, if I just take it easy—then I figure that the chances of my doing an acceptable job is about 80 percent.

Interviewer: Well, which would you do: put out a low level or a high level of effort?

Harry: With all the questions you asked me, you should be able to tell me.

Interviewer: You may be right!

Harry: Yeah? That's nice. Hey, if you don't have any other questions, I'd like to join the guys for coffee.

Interviewer: OK, thanks for your time.

Harry: You're welcome.

Discussion Question

1. Use the expectancy theory model to predict Harry's motivation to achieve high or "just acceptable" performance in his job. Identify and discuss the factors that influence this motivation.