

Research Methodology for Staff Motivation and Values-Based Framework within Educational Institutions

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Abstract: This paper, as part of a PhD dissertation, outlines the need and methodology for additional survey-based research to better understand the real and practical aspects of what motivates university employees and the underlying values of these employees that affect their performance. It explores how the alignment of these values align with the values of the institution are also relevant in the way the performance of the employees enhances the performance of the institution. The methodology and survey reflect trends in higher education, such as: the inclusion of Undergraduate Medical Schools; societal changes stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic that affect employee motivation and values due to the re-prioritization of health concerns, remote work options and work life integration/balance; inclusive workplace issues; and especially within the education sphere - whether the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has influenced staff motivation and values. The survey contains motivation and values sections and was completed by Georgian American University (GAU) staff and lecturers. Although not included in this paper, AI will be used to "analyze" the survey results and "create" a relevant (and usable) menu of performance incentives to match each employee or set of employees that will then also enhance the values and performance of the institution.

Keywords: Motivation, Personal Values, Institutional Values, Key Performance Indicators, Educational Institutions, University, Job Category, Covid 19 Pandemic, Work-Life Integration, Inclusive Workplace, Artificial Intelligence, AI

Introduction

Although much literature and research exist on what motivates employees, there is little information specific to institutions of higher learning, especially universities. Further, even less information exists that ties motivation to the key performance indicators of the universities (Cowgill, 2017a). The goal of this research is to better understand what motivates employees and how their values coincide with those of the university to develop a menu of performance incentives for individual employees that also enhance the value(s) of the institution (university). Management (employers) will then have a set (or menu) of performance incentives to match each employee or set of employees, which will then also enhance the values and performance of the institution.

An overarching phrase that has become more common and is at the core of this research is that of "Inclusive Workplace", which in my definition in the context of this project, means that each employee, regardless of any differences in role, level, gender, orientation, etc., is recognized as a valued member of the institution, by themselves and the university. This has always been the goal of a menu of performance incentives for each employee that also enhances the value and performance of the institution.

Survey Participants

Ideally, a multi-university sample would have been used, including various sizes of universities and types (public and private). However, this is practically very difficult to do, and I opted to use only employees of the Georgian American University (GAU) and Georgian American Medical University (GAMU), where I am President. As such, I tried to encourage as wide a response throughout GAU's staff and lecturers as possible. By keeping the survey respondents anonymous,

I hoped to minimize any bias in the responses, i.e., “let’s keep the boss happy with positive responses”.

Respondents were identified and aggregated only through the following criteria:

- Age (<20, 20-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, >60), specifically to determine if there are any age-related or generational differences;
- Gender (male, female), which should also determine any existing issues of gender inequality;
- Job category (management, administrative staff, support staff, lecturer); and
- Faculty (or School) (Business; Law, Social Sciences & Diplomacy; Informatics and Engineering; Medical School; Multiple Schools to determine if there are any differences in motivation and values with employees in different Faculties.

These groupings provided the necessary specificity when analyzing the results and developing a usable and practical menu of incentive measures for a wide variety of employees. From my experience, there are sufficient similarities in sizes and types of universities so that the results are reasonably transferable and can be used with a high degree of compatibility. The key criterion for grouping the survey respondents was by job category, as one would expect those categories to be more similar in both values and motivating factors. Further, this would be the logical place to apply the set of incentives when negotiating with individual employees.

Current compensation measures (performance incentives)

First, to describe the more conventional compensation measures in use, based on managing an Educational Organization experience. These are generally motivational, not negative(s) or punishment, and include:

Financial – which includes salary, bonuses, personal loans, commissions for new work or programs, etc.

Standard benefits – vacation; holidays (in addition to Government holidays); sick leave; paternity/maternity leave (in addition to what is required by law); health insurance; life insurance; pension plans (can also be classified under financial); gym or health club membership (or discount) etc.

Flexibility – set own work hours as long as the job gets done; work remotely; allowed to do work outside the organization; awareness of and willingness to adapt to an optimum work-life balance

Tenure/job security – tenure is a very typical mechanism whereby professors, once satisfying certain criteria, are guaranteed their position; duration of employment contracts is another key aspect of job security

Training and development – providing free or partially funded training that is relevant to the employee and the organization

Titles – title, which is valued by the employee and reflects the operational role within the organization

Trappings – a general category including office/workspace, company-provided transportation, driver, parking, club memberships, etc.

Social interactions & Societal benefits – both within and outside of the institution

Acceptance of technological innovation, such as artificial intelligence (AI)

These rewards can also be broadly categorized as: Financial; Quality of Life; Respect; Social and Societal Benefits; Innovation.

Although not an exhaustive search of references, there are many relevant and typical ‘statistical’ studies which conclude that there is a link between motivation and performance, especially within educational institutions.

- One study indicated that motivation positively influenced lecturer teaching performance, but not research performance. However, the measurement of performance was subjective from surveys, and specific motivational techniques were not identified. *Motivation and Job Performance of Academic Staff of State* (Babangida, 2012).
- Realizing that employees are complex and individual in their expectations, employee research resulted in the development of a multi-criteria model for motivation based on: Safety (job stability); Work Pay & Benefits; Work Content; Clear Work-pay Rules (including bonus structure); Employee Needs in Self-realization; Participation in Company Management *Functions of Motivation in the Management Process in the AHP Framework* (Adams, n.d.).
- Another study concluded that there is a definite link between motivation and job performance in universities but wasn't clear on motivational techniques. The job performance was more structural than tied to KPI's of the university, except for relevant research performance. *An Evaluation of Staff Motivation, Dissatisfaction, and Job Performance in an Academic Setting* (Mawoli, 2011).
- Interesting research study in Belgium concluded that in comparing public and private sector organizations: Public sector employees were: Less motivated by financial rewards; More motivated by intrinsic factors such as responsibility and self-development; More motivated by a supportive working environment; Less willing to exert more effort for organization; Experience less work-family conflict *An Analysis of Differences in Work Motivation between Public and Private Sector Organizations* (Buelens & Broeck, n.d.).
- Another relevant study looking at motivation in a private university but still lacked links to organizational framework(s) as follows: Love for the job; Career development prospects; Good salary; Healthy relations *Factors influencing Workers Motivation in a Private African University* (Afful-Broni & Nanyeke, 2012).
- Probably the most relevant reference I found was a thematic debate published in Paris in 1998. Although without results or conclusions, it at least mentioned some of the key performance indicators, but also posed many of the same questions which are also relevant to my thesis. Thematic Debate: Higher Education Staff Development: A Continuing Mission, Leader: Commonwealth Secretariat (Fielden, 1998).
- Another paper concluded that workers are individuals and managers must understand that motivating human beings means getting people to act because they want to and based on proper incentives, resulting in improved performance and productivity. *Understanding Motivation: An Effective Tool for Managers* (Bessell et. al, 2020).

Survey Development (Attached is a condensed version of the survey, which was administered on Google Docs. (Appendix 1). Employees were given the survey as one document, containing 2 parts: 1) Motivation Section and 2) Values Section.

Motivation Section

Employees of educational institutions, especially universities, exhibit a relatively complex variety of motivating factors. A private university such as GAU is run like a business with a strict profit motive, but still has the research and public interest characteristics. So, what are the motivating factors for staff in educational institutions (universities)?

The survey methodology was based on Nuttin's Motivational Induction Method (MIM) where respondents complete simple open sentences about what they like/love/want or on the flip side, what they don't like/love/want to better understand what motivates them, also called motivational inducers (Nuttin, 1985, 2014).

The genius and complexity of Nuttin's approach is in the analysis (or coding) of the answers to the survey and will be described in more detail as part of the analysis of the

results. (not included herein). The survey followed the general categories outlined by Nuttin, but was slightly modified by many of the concepts I have observed in almost 50 years of working in every type of organization, and more specifically in 20 years of running a private university.

These are the Nuttin categories:

- Self: We code this when participants talk about their personality or its different aspects
- Self-realization: Used for activities that help develop the subject herself /himself (he or she want to become some kind of person)
- Realization: refers to work or school activities
- Social Motivations: this group has three subcategories – contact with others, social reciprocity (subject wants something from others), and wishes and fears attributed to others
- Cognitive Motivations and Exploration: We code this when the subject wants to understand, know, or explore something
- Transcendental Objects: Refer to religion or philosophical, and existential domains
- Possessions: We can understand buying and possessing something as a special way of dealing with things, which is why it constitutes an entire category
- Leisure: We code this if subjects talk about fun activities, relaxation, or sensorial pleasure (eating, drinking, taking drugs, etc.)

The open-ended questions are included in the Survey Form in Appendix 1.

Values Section based on a modified Schwartz Values Survey (SVS) (Schwartz, 2005)

The values survey was based on GAU corporate values described within the statements and intended to understand how those values coincide with or differ from those of the individual employees. These are critical in developing individual performance incentives that are in sync with the values of both the university and the employee.

To better understand GAU's corporate values, a brief history of GAU is necessary and included in Appendix Attachment 2.

GAU's corporate values include:

- Performance; effective fiscal management; profitability
- Western standards, programs, and management principles
- Value to society; corporate social responsibility (doing the right thing)
- Academic quality; demand-driven courses and programs; combination of practical and theoretical knowledge; emphasis on job readiness/communications skills – clients are those organizations that hire students/graduates
- Academic freedom; personal student attention
- Ethical behavior including Code of Ethics and Conduct
- Inclusive workplace concepts
- Research that contributes to advancing scientific knowledge and enhances the brand of GAU.
- Has the introduction of AI affected GAU values vs. those of the employees?

Those GAU corporate values were then modified to better address employee values as follows:

1. Fair Compensation (Fair salary based on work role and efforts) similar to every other organizational staff member. There are numerous studies that define this characteristic, including “how much is enough” and methods, timing, and forms of payment. Equal pay for equal work based on gender is also relevant here.
2. Employee Well-being (support through benefits that enhance the quality of life). Benefits, both formal and informal, including vacation, holidays, sick leave,

maternity/paternity leave, insurance, pension/retirement, sabbaticals, training, access to courses, discounts for family members, etc. Is a menu approach to benefits better for motivating staff?

3. Work-Life Balance (emphasis on balancing personal and professional life).
4. Infrastructure and Resources (providing necessary tools and environment for work). facilities, office space, equipment, etc.
5. Safety and Health (prioritizing physical and mental well-being at work). What also needed to be considered in the survey questions is whether there are any changes due to the re-prioritization of health concerns stemming from the COVID-19 Pandemic.
6. Recognition and Status (acknowledgment of individual achievements and reputation). including public notoriety
7. Social Responsibility (commitment to societal improvement and education). Allowing the employee the opportunity to improve society in general and a sense of “giving back” – where there is a realization that education is a key aspect in the growth and success of society. Also, many involved in education feel responsibility to give something back to the same society that gave them whatever measure of success they feel.
8. Community and Social Interaction (fostering relationships and collaboration). this desire for social interaction can be manifested with other staff and/or with students. Further, this is inversely related to remote work options. Imparting knowledge and developing the minds and character of students – a combination of assuming one has something which is of value to the students and a truly altruistic concept of wanting to see students grow in knowledge and maturity. Being associated with a younger generation, there is a motivating factor of being associated with a dynamic younger generation. Learning from students – with some similarities to being associated with a younger generation, it can be very motivating to learn from the students, especially when there are international and adult students’ programs.
9. Flexibility (accommodating personal preferences and needs). remote work options, work-life integration/balance
10. Voice and Autonomy (feeling heard and valued by leadership). being and “being considered” as a leader within the organization, with the students, and outside the institution
11. Organizational Pride (personal investment in the success and reputation of the institution). – being involved in a complex organizational structure.
12. Equality and Fairness (non-discriminatory and equitable treatment). each employee, regardless of any differences in role, level, gender, orientation, etc., is recognized as a valued member of the institution, by themselves and the university
13. Cultural Preservation (respect for and promotion of cultural heritage). Does GAU respect its dual Georgian (and regional) & American (and Western) heritages, including languages and culture? Does it respect the cultures of its international students?
14. Social Responsibility (commitment to ethical and socially beneficial practices). Does GAU value its role in improving society?
15. Employee Empowerment (involving employees in decision-making about their performance).
16. Inclusivity and Participation (ensuring everyone has a chance to engage). Does GAU give me the opportunity to participate in all activities?
17. Ethical Innovation (responsible and ethical adoption of technology). Is GAU value the new technology, such as AI, and if so, does GAU use it ethically and responsible, in operations, research and teaching?

18. Skepticism of Technology (concern about the impact of technology on traditional values). Can technology, such as AI, replace the traditional teaching/learning methods embedded in educational institutions/universities?

These 18 values can be organized/categorized into groups as shown in the table below.

Workplace Values (Fairness, Equity, and Support)	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 12, 15
Social and Ethical Values	7, 8, 13, 14, 17
Personal Development and Recognition	6, 11
Flexibility and Autonomy	9, 10

The values research as reflected in the survey, includes the Schwartz values model as the framework, but also modified to include questions that pertain to modern approaches to values-based management attitudes found in Human Resource Management HRM, plus my own experience in almost 50 years of management practice and my experience in managing GAU.

Hypotheses

We will test the following Hypotheses:

H1. The organizational values-based framework has a positive impact on shaping the multidimensional space of staff motivation.

H2. The organizational values-based framework ensures alignment between individual motivation factors and the values-based practices implemented by GAU for its staff.

Both Nuttin & Schwartz contend that motivation and values are age & gender dependent. The research contained herein, especially when analyzing (using AI) the motivational statements and the values priority ranking, will statistically test those contentions, at least within the survey group at GAU. Further, the analyses will determine if there are other statistical differences by faculty (school) and role(s) within the University.

Analyses

Also, Research by both Nuttin and Schwartz show the predictive behavior of measuring motivation and values. Although I found little reference to values in Nuttin’s research, Schwartz (2022) in his paper, states that “Values refer to desirable goals that motivate action.”

This research will analyze together motivation and values with the use of AI techniques as it is the point of this research that both individual motivational factors and value priorities (for the individual and the institution), must be considered together. They are not independent of each other, and must be analyzed for developing the most realistic and practical menu for employee/employer compensation.

Although not included in this paper, the next phase of this research is the most interesting for me: using AI as a tool to analyze the survey responses of “my” employees and see if they conform to my perceptions and hypotheses, and then create a usable menu.

We will use AI techniques from Deep Seek to analyze and correlate the value categories and the 8 motivation categories.

I will prepare another paper detailing the results of the analyses and the formation of a usable menu of performance incentives. Hopefully, this menu will be usable for other sectors as well.

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Appendix 1

Survey: Motivation and Values

Thank you for participating in this survey! I realize it is a extremely busy time with the end of the Fall semester, and start of the Spring semester. But your timely completion of this online version of the survey is greatly appreciated. Your input will help us improve and better serve our university community. Please note that this survey is completely anonymous, and your responses will remain confidential. There are no questions that can identify you personally, so feel free to share your honest thoughts and experiences.

Respectfully,
R. Michael Cowgill
President

General Questions

Please check the appropriate boxes

Age

- <20
- 20 – 30
- 31 – 40
- 41- 50
- 51 – 60
- >60

Gender

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

Job category

- Management
- Administrative Staff
- Support Staff
- Lecturer

Faculty

- Business
- Law, Social Sciences & Diplomacy
- Humanities and Liberal Arts
- Informatics and Engineering
 - Medical School
 - Multiple School

Part 1: Personal Motivation and Values

Instructions for completing the survey: Each page contains the beginning of a sentence, such as “I want..... or I do not want.....”. Please complete the sentences with the first ideas that come to your mind. Most of the survey sentences are about your job and mention “job”, “GAU”, or “work”, etc. If the sentence does not specifically mention anything job related, feel free to complete the sentence with any thought you have

- On my job, I want: -----
- In my job, I love: -----
- In my job, I wish: -----
- In my job, I hope: -----
- I wish GAU management would: -----
- On the job, it makes me happy when: -----
- I want my GAU Supervisor to: -----

- When at work, I feel: -----
- On my job, I try to: -----
- I can help GAU by: -----
- At work I try to: -----
- I dream about: -----
- My greatest desire is to: -----
- I wish GAU would let me: -----
- Best thing about my job is: -----
- On my job, I do not want: -----
- When at work, it makes me sad: -----
- At work, it makes me angry: -----
- At work, I hate: -----
- GAU should not: -----
- My GAU Supervisor should not: -----
- In my job, I am afraid that: -----
- Worst thing about my job is: -----
- At work, I worry most about: -----
- On my job, I wouldn't like: -----

Part 2: Values Survey

Please mark the number that best represents how important those conditions are to you personally, from 1 to 5, with 1 being little or not important up to 5 being of highest importance. Please answer each statement independently from the other statement.

1. GAU fairly bases my salary on my role and efforts.
2. GAU provides valuable benefits for me (including vacation, course discounts, health insurance, etc.)
3. GAU supports my quality of life and balances my job.
4. GAU provides me with suitable Office/Parking/Facilities.
5. GAU provides me with a safe & secure workplace, including keeping me healthy.
6. GAU is concerned about my Status/Title/Reputation.
7. GAU supports my belief that it is important to be involved in educating youth and improving society.
8. GAU provides me with the opportunity to interact socially with other employees & students.
9. GAU allows me to work remotely.
10. GAU management listens to me.
11. GAU's financial and reputational success is important to me.
12. GAU treats me equally and fairly without discrimination.
13. GAU values culture and tradition.
14. GAU is socially responsible.
15. GAU provides me with the opportunity to have input on my performance goals & rewards.
16. GAU provides me with the opportunity to participate in all activities.
17. GAU supports the ethical use of AI as an educational tool.
18. GAU believes AI is a threat to classical education.

Appendix 2

Brief GAU history

The original concept of GAU was to create a Doctor of Juris Prudence (JD) program in law to fill the gap in Georgia's legal education. In the early 2000's, Georgia still had an 11-year school program. The academic requirement to become a lawyer was a 4-year bachelor program (LLB degree where the legal subjects were combined with all other general education subjects) and further, there was no bar exam necessary to become a practicing attorney. As such, most of the graduates (some only 20 years old) were lacking both the maturity, full legal education and testing to be effective practicing lawyers. This was the

scenario that precipitated the original creation of the new university, which was to be named, Caucasus American University.

When this concept and original business plan for the university was introduced to me, I understood that for financial viability, the university also needed to include a business school. Although Georgia had 2 other private universities focusing on business, I believed that there were also improvements that could be made to the general business education also. As the business plan was reworked, I agreed to serve as the President of the new university. During that time the Rose Revolution happened in Georgia in 2003, so to emphasize the renewed focus on Georgia, we changed the name of the university to Georgian American University (GAU). After an unsuccessful search for an individual investor to provide startup capital for GAU, I also agreed to be the major investor, secured a private loan and then collected other shareholders that provided a broad range of necessary skills.

My primary reason for involvement in the development of GAU was to give back something to a society that was in transition from Soviet to post-Soviet to reformer and performer, and one in which I had grown to love and call home. As such, and to be a part of the success story for Georgia, GAU had to provide the highest quality, demand-driven, practical programs that were useful to the private, public and NGO sectors. Programs had to be based on successful best Western practices. Students and lecturers had to have academic freedom and excellent communications skills. GAU needed to have ethical practices as its core value, to lead by example and make socially responsible decisions. The university had to be run like a business using Western management principles, with an emphasis on meeting the needs of the organizations that would hire the students and graduates. With a loan to pay off and other shareholders expecting a return on their investment, profitability was also a necessary motive. And further, to ensure its continuing academic excellence and essential to post-graduate degrees, research had to be a key part of the academic programs.

In 2018, an undergraduate Medical Program (GAMU) was developed and added within the GAU family. Medical Schools have been added within many Universities in Georgia and beyond. This global trend required the survey to also include responses from relevant staff members within the Medical School