

INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE ON WORK MOTIVATION

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After the special issues on Clinical Psychology in 2006 (Philippot & Hermans, 2006) and Educational Psychology in 2007 (Roskam & Lens, 2007), this year's special issue of *Psychologica Belgica*, the flagship journal of the Belgian Association for Psychological Science, is entirely devoted to Work and Organisational Psychology. As an overarching theme for this special issue, we chose the topic of 'Work Motivation'. Few themes are as central to the study of Work and Organisational Psychology as work motivation. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the work environment is characterised by global competition, rapid technological changes, a short-term focus and frequent organisational restructuring. In addition, organisations are increasingly dealing with a changing workforce. Companies have difficulties attracting and retaining the necessary talent, while at the same time they are confronted with an aging workforce. Each of these trends closely relates to questions of work motivation. Therefore, managers and business leaders see work motivation as an integral part of the performance equation at all levels of the organisation. For instance, when taking a closer look at the so-called 'war for talents', Hesketh and Brown (2004) argued that the real war for talent might not be about attracting the best and most promising workers, but about making better use of the wealth of talent that is present in the company by increasing their motivation.

The importance of employee motivation for organisations is reflected in

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the continued attention to work motivation in research and theory over the past several decades. For instance, in recent years a special issue on work motivation has been published in the top-tier conceptual journal *Academy of Management Review* stimulating new theoretical developments in this area. Similarly, scholars have recently called for more empirical research into work motivation theory (e.g., Kanfer, Chen, & Pritchard, 2008, Latham & Pinder, 2005; Locke & Latham, 2004). To respond to these calls and to highlight the importance of theoretically innovative and empirically rigorous research in this continuously growing area, we entirely devoted this special issue to the topic.

The importance and continuous attention that has been paid to work motivation, however, also has its drawbacks. A broad range of perspectives and theories on work motivation have been developed and, in turn, each of these has inspired diverse and rapidly growing research streams without much attention or work towards integration. This has resulted in an extensive research literature characterised by a lack of unifying theoretical framework or theme and often difficult to grasp for the inexperienced (and even for the experienced!) reader. In the words of Lyman W. Porter (2008, p. 7): “Work motivation is... a sort of a Rubik’s cube of many interesting facets and components, but also extremely difficult to put together into a meaningful whole with all of the pieces lined up appropriately”. In putting together this special issue, we decided to acknowledge the diversity in conceptual perspectives and empirical traditions in this area, and therefore, considered a broad scope of topics on work motivation for publication in the special issue. In recent years, a few scholars have tried to tie various isolated research streams together into an overall comprehensible framework (e.g., Locke, 1997; Locke & Latham, 2004). In retrospect, we are happy to see that the various studies included in this special issue can be easily mapped on this preliminary work motivation model and seem to provide new insights for each of the components of this framework. The studies included provide a comprehensive overview of most of the current dominant theories and topics of work motivation including feedback processing, organisational commitment, organisational justice, leadership, perceived organisational support, typical and maximal performance, and achievement goals. Apart from the various theoretical perspectives discussed, the special issue also gives a good picture of the various methods (e.g., cross-sectional and longitudinal field studies, experimental designs, conceptual analysis, multi-level studies) and statistical procedures (e.g., linear regression, structural equation modeling, hierarchical linear modeling) that are typical of this field. We are convinced that, after reading this special issue, the reader will come away with a rich picture and better understanding of the diversity of work motivation research in Work and Organisational Psychology.

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