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Psychic Income

One characteristic feature of modern management is its concern about the conditions responsible for good employee morale and job satisfaction. Management has come to realize that pay, although of great importance, is only one among many factors to be considered in employee relations. Some of the other factors important in both job satisfaction and productivity are, according to a committee of the United Nations, "the need to give the staff a sense of belonging to their organization; the opportunity to do constructive work on important problems; adequate recognition of work well done; a reasonable sense of security." These nonfinancial factors constitute "psychic income and are in many cases far more important to the recruitment and retention of superior staff members than pay and fringe benefits" [James M. Mitchell, *Public Personnel Rev.* **17**, 268 (Oct. 1956)].

That employees themselves regard "psychic income" as important is apparent from the results of a study of 17,439 Government and 3317 industrial scientists and engineers [*Attitudes of Scientists and Engineers in Government and Industry* (Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1957)]. Government respondents on the average ranked the following factors in research employment either as of considerable or of great importance on this descending scale: interest potential of the work, integrity of management, opportunity to discover and do creative work, opportunity to move up in the organization, caliber of supervision, living conditions, pay, chance to contribute to basic scientific knowledge, and so on.

One large-scale program designed to stimulate endeavor in Government work was only lightly touched upon in this study. This is the program that began following passage of the Incentive Awards Act of 1954 and that has since been expanding rapidly. The act permits departments to make awards—either cash or honorary—for useful suggestions or superior performance. The number of awards made for suggestions adopted was 35,246 in fiscal 1955, 79,295 in 1956, and 86,209 in 1957; the total cash awarded during the three years amounted to $6.1 million and resulted in estimated savings in Government operations of $176.1 million. Similarly, the number of awards for superior performance was 3856 in 1955, 23,054 in 1956, and 41,340 in 1957 and resulted in estimated savings of $136.1 million.

From an administrative standpoint the program is clearly a success even though the estimate of savings—about $18 for each dollar of awards—may be somewhat inflated. Whether the program stimulates scientific creativity (as opposed to money-saving suggestions) is uncertain, as is its effect on morale and job satisfaction. In those agencies such as the Bureau of Standards and the Office of Naval Research where awards are frequent and in general regarded as based on merit, the employee reaction is favorable; in other agencies where awards are infrequent or where there is dissatisfaction with the mode of selection, the employee reaction is less favorable.

Further experience and study will doubtless show how best to use the awards and indeed whether the program has any effect upon the creativity and job satisfaction of scientists and engineers. Most Government scientists (69 percent) would, if selected for an award, prefer a cash to an honorary award. This is hardly surprising since the cash award constitutes both psychic and real income.—G.DuS.