A Business Application of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
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Abraham Maslow created a psychological theory of human motivation in which he espoused that for high-level motivation such as self-actualization to occur, more fundamental levels must first occur. Maslow's model is a five-tier sequential model, which is hierarchal starting with basic physiological needs, safety, and belonging, and then progressing to self-esteem and self-actualization.

Insert Maslow image here

How can a child learn or develop self-esteem without having their basic needs of food, shelter, and rest be taken care of? After that they must feel safe so as to explore and learn.

These same principles apply to business. How can we expect our employees to think big, to work hard, to be inspired, if their basic needs are not attended to? We cannot.
This article will parallel Maslow's hierarchy of needs and apply them to business so that employees reach the highest levels of self-actualization and businesses achieve excellence and financial success.

Maslow Need	Business Application
Physiological	Safe work environment. Proper lighting. Equipment. Clean facilities. Air flow. Heat.
Safety	Treated with respect. Ability to take risks and not be harshly criticized or humiliated.
Belonging	Opportunity to provide input. Feeling heard. Sense of Community. Part of something bigger than self. Clear understanding of a value-centered mission.
Esteem	Empowerment. Public praise. Employee Recognition Programs. Respect and empathy. Understanding that each person's job is contributing to the ultimate success of the company. Feeling valued and important.
Self Actualization	Opportunity to think big, to be creative, to have a vision for the future, to reinvent, to provide direct input to the most senior executive leadership.

Insert second image(one that I created) here

Maslow's model is a reminder that leaders and their businesses are best served when they serve their stakeholders and look at the world from the perspective of those stakeholders with an "outward mindset", demonstrating authentic empathy, concern, and compassion while establishing, articulating, and modeling clear and measurable values, standards and expectations. An effort to understand the physiological, safety, belonging, and esteem needs of those stakeholders are essential to creating an environment where people trust and strive for and pursue excellence. Too many leaders make demands upon their employees without an understanding of their needs and wonder why those employees don't feel or demonstrate the commitment that they are seeking.

Establishing a model of "Participatory Management" where employees are involved in the decision making process, where their input is sought and valued, and where they feel that "they are as important as what they do", will result in the true dedication that all leaders want and need to maximize the performance of the company. Leaders always espouse a desire for "team", but they often forget the leader's role in establishing a collaborative team feeling that drives performance and results. All too often I am asked by clients, "why don't my employees have the same dedication and commitment that I had when I was in their position?". The answer is that the environment that was provided for you by your leaders was so subtle, but powerful that you didn't recognize its value in recognizing and responding proactively to your "physiological, safety, belonging and esteem" needs and you aren't providing it for your stakeholders. Of course it also matters that you select people who have a predisposition to the pursuit of excellence and believe in the value of team-oriented success.

The best companies create a work force that is treated with respect and dignity, where each person feels heard and empowered, where everyone understands their role and how it contributes to something bigger than themselves, where there is no fear to take risks, and where there is a feeling of ownership. Only when these needs are satisfied can people strive for self-actualization, which is when businesses become communities and excel.

At the end of the article, please add: "This article was cowritten with my colleague, Suzy Jurist, President of SJI Associates".