

## CHAPTER VII

### BASIC DEALER WANTS AND MOTIVATION

Motivation here is closely allied to the company's communication network. After exposing itself to the dealers and making itself known to them, the company now tries to get greater co-operation from dealers through persuasive action and psychological technique for it clearly believes that unless it can clearly motivate its dealers for improved performance, a programme will only become theoretical. Understanding Why and How a dealer decides to accept and take action is important in planning the company's motivation efforts. When a dealer is called upon to take action, invest money, change his way of thinking or doing, the first thought that enters his mind is "what is there in it for me?" or "What will I gain, if I do what he asks?" Every dealer has a number of basic wants, desires or drives which motivate or cause him to act. In its company-dealer relations programme, the company is very careful in determining and cataloguing these basic wants and desires as these enable it to show its dealers how its recommendations will help them satisfy their wants and why they should accept

and take action on its recommendations.

Dealer wants or desires can be catalogued in these six classifications:<sup>29</sup>

1) Gain or Profit : This includes the desire to make money and to acquire the physical things that money can buy. The prime objective of any business is to make profit and use that money for personal or business gratification.

Noting this trait, Esso communicates to its dealers that its ideas or recommendations will help them increase profits or reduce costs and it thus encourages them to take action on its proposals. A recent recommendation is the introduction of the "Esso New Identification System"<sup>30</sup> and the "five-step service method" described earlier.

2) Control or influence: This includes the desire to direct or influence the thinking

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<sup>29</sup> These classifications are quoted from an Esso Manual - Towards Better Selling Action - Chapter on Dealer needs and Motivation, Esso Australia.

<sup>30</sup> This new system is actually an improvement of the old. The identification now consists of the Esso oval flanked by two red stripes.  
See Esso, front cover, Esso Dealer, Vol. V, No. 2, Esso Standard Malaya Ltd., February 28, 1966.

to be in command of each situation and to be independent of the control of others.

In this area, the company communicates to its dealers that its recommendations will provide them greater control over their business growth, their customers, their competitors, their finances or make them more independent of outside influences. Here again the dealers will be made more ready to accept company's proposals. One such recommendation is good station up-keeping. In the petroleum business, the appearance of a station is of particular importance in influencing potential and old customers.

3) Reputation or Recognition: This includes the desire to be accepted, to be recognised for achievements, and to have prestige and status in the eyes of others.

When the company can convincingly communicate to a dealer that its ideas and recommendations will enhance his personal reputation or status - increase recognition of his station by customers, competitors, employees and the community, the company can motivate him to accept or act on its recommendations. One of the main instruments to acquire prestige

and status is to have fair dealing and to give polite and excellent service to consumers. The company instils this importance into dealers in its training programmes. To further motivate dealers, contests in station cleanliness and good service are given yearly.

4) Security or Self-Preservation: This includes the desire to be physically healthy, to be free from mental stress and worry, and to protect and keep personal possessions.

In this field the company communicates to its dealers that its recommendations will provide them peace of mind and freedom from worry, make their job easier, make their future and the future of their stations more predictable, or provide them with financial security they seek, solely with the objective of motivating its dealers to accept and take action on what it recommends. The company promises dealers that on matters of advertising and sales promotion, it will undertake all actions. The company only wants dealers to co-operate with it in this respect and together they will face competitors in the market.

5) Family and Community Welfare: This includes the desire to protect and make life easier

and more enjoyable for the family, and to do the right thing for employees, associates community and country.

The company ventures into this field too because it realises the fact that if it can communicate to a dealer that its recommendations will help him protect his family, to do the right thing and to be fair to his customers, employees and community, it can encourage him to take more vigorous and gainful action. For community welfare the company recommends that dealers take part in highway safety campaigns and some other public projects like participating in national language celebrations and the like.

6) Satisfaction of senses: This includes the desire to please and satisfy their basic senses of sight, smell, touch, taste, or hearing and to avoid things which are displeasing to the senses.

In this respect the company tries to communicate to its dealers that its recommendations will help them to satisfy their desires for an attractive, clean, and orderly environment, and at the same time satisfy the same desires of their employees and their customers. These recommendations come through the salesmen

of the company who constantly visit dealers' outlets to advise them as to how to display point of sales materials and how to set up their lay out of their service stations. In addition to these, the company also has a competition among its dealers to foster more efficient service which will ultimately lead to job satisfaction and thus to greater profits. This competition is "The Dealer-of-the-year Contest" where dealers are judged according to their sales volumes,<sup>31</sup> station cleanliness and standard of service. Through this the company can help motivate them to be co-operative dealers.

A knowledge of basic dealer motivation provides company representatives with why a dealer takes action, but equally important too is the knowledge of How a dealer arrives at a decision to accept and act. To get a dealer to accept and take action on its recommendations, the company communicates to him the idea of taking action, as the understanding

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These sales volumes are calculated according to the size of the station - percentage of sales to capacity. In absolute values it is natural that big stations will command bigger sales volumes. Therefore the company makes use of relative values.

of how an idea starts, develops, and becomes entrenched in the mind of a dealer will enable the company to pattern its communication process clearly and sharply. To ensure that a dealer accepts the right idea and takes the action that the company feels he should take, it is essential that it guides and accelerates his thinking process to help him arrive at his decision faster, easier, more assuredly, and to his best interest and that of the company. Here is how the company guides and accelerates a dealer's decision making progress:

- 1) To be certain that a dealer does not have to go through a time-consuming search for, and interpretation of facts and to be certain that he receives the correct facts, the company supplies the facts for him to evaluate.
- 2) To be certain that the dealer has sufficient, relevant evidence for his justification and conviction,<sup>32</sup> the company provides proof and evidence.
- 3) To be certain that the dealer does not

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<sup>32</sup> This denotes the dealer's position as a businessman as agent. As a businessman the dealer acts quite independently of the company but as the company's public relations agent, he takes suggestions and recommendations from company personnel.

delay unnecessarily, or put off taking action, the company suggests ways for him to act and makes it easier for him to make his decision.

The company at all times is keeping a close watch on its numerous dealers. In the oil industry to-day, the market structure is that of oligopoly and the competition among existing firms is growing stronger. The company, besides sending out salesmen, also undertakes to help dealers with teams of advisers who are always ready to assist with innovations. These are some of the company's evidences of showing dealers that their welfare is the company's welfare too.

Effective motivation and persuasive selling are a procession which the company "tailors" its communications to fit and complement its dealer's normal and natural thought process and apply its plans for improved performance. Its analysis of a dealer's station, however thorough, its pinpointing of performance weaknesses, no matter how precise, and its proposed plans for improved sales and profit performance, however sound - will be all wasted unless the company can get the dealer to accept and take action on its proposals. Planning therefore is very essential to productive motivation efforts because it:

- 1) gives specific direction to its motivation



effort and provides a target or focal point for concentrating its time, energy and money.

2) helps it guide dealers to a common goal.

3) enables it to save time, effort, and expense in securing action on its recommendations.

4) enables it to anticipate communication difficulties and dealer resistance and how to handle them.

5) strengthens the confidence of dealers and companys' sales representatives.

These motivation efforts are thus another instrument which Esso uses to advance its company-dealer relations programme; for through it, Esso can anticipate particularly strong resistance from an individual dealer and consequently can prevent resistance from occurring. One of the chief instruments of these motivation efforts is company sponsored contests among dealers. These contests which have been mentioned earlier inspire dealers to work harder and to keep their stations in tip-top conditions in the area of cleanliness and service, thus ultimately increasing their sales volumes and profit potentials. The company offers valuable prizes such as "Tiger Scooters",<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> These scooters are offered in conjunction with the Esso Tiger Advertising Campaigns. They are painted red with black stripes.

watches, trips abroad and very often cash gifts too.  
Through these Esso dealers, station attendants are  
motivated to work harder.

