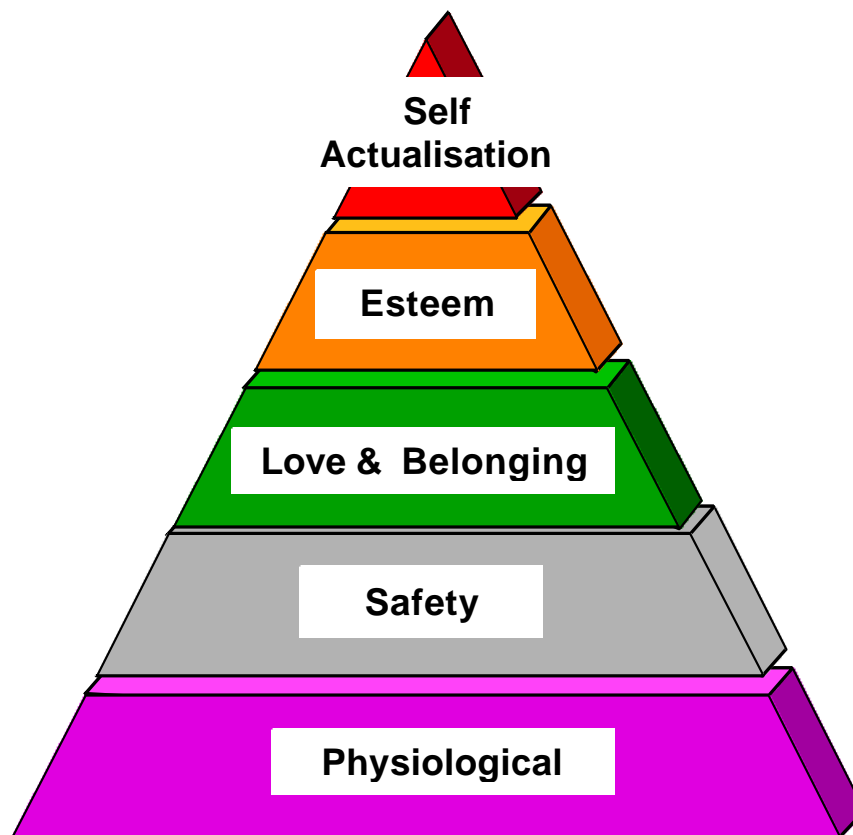


## Maslow's Hierarchy of needs



Abraham Maslow is known for establishing the theory of a hierarchy of needs, writing that human beings are motivated by unsatisfied needs, and that certain lower order needs must be satisfied before the higher order needs motivate the normal being.

Maslow was a student of Freud. Freud was primarily a psychiatrist in that he studied those who were neurotic or in other ways mentally ill. However, Maslow studied normal people and those who were exemplary such as Albert Einstein, Jane Addams, Eleanor Roosevelt, and others. This was a radical departure from the two chief schools of psychology of his day. On the one hand Freud et.al. saw very little difference between the motivations of Animals and Human beings. From their perspective, we are supposedly rational beings; however we do not always act that way. Maslow believed that such pessimism was the result of the study of the mentally sick people. He held that "The study of crippled, stunted, immature and unhealthy specimens can yield only a cripple psychology and a cripple philosophy" (*Motivation & personality*).

B. F. Skinner, on the other hand studied how pigeons and white rats learn. His motivational models were based on simple rewards such as food, water, sex

and the avoidance of pain. Say “sit!” to your dog and give that dog a treat when it sits, and after several repetitions – the dog will sit when you command it so to do (the original stimulus for the work of Pavlov also). Skinner relied on statistical descriptions of people.

Maslow thought there were other motivators for an animal’s behaviour such as playfulness, affection, curiosity etc. He also believed that Skinner discounted things that make humans different from the rest of the animal kingdom. Maslow held that although human beings were also animals, they were of a higher order and although much of the motivation of humans was common to all high order mammals, there were differences, which it was important to understand.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs was an alternative to the depressing determinism of Freud and Skinner. He felt that people were basically trustworthy, self-protecting, and self-governing. Humans, in his view tended toward growth and love.

Although there is a continuous cycle of human wars, murder, deceit, etc. Maslow’s view was that violence is not what human nature is meant to be like. Violence and other evils occur when human needs are thwarted. In other words people, who are deprived of lower needs such as safety, may defend themselves by violent means. He did not believe that humans are violent because they intrinsically enjoy violence. Or that they lie, cheat and steal because they enjoy doing it.

According to Maslow, there are a range of general types of needs: Physiological, Safety (which we share with all animals) Love and esteem (which we share with gregarious animals) which must first be satisfied, and in that order.

Maslow called these needs ‘Deficiency Needs’ in that a deficiency of satisfiers would motivate behaviour. E.g. if the environment is too hot, or too cold, if there is a lack of sufficient food or water survival is threatened at a Physiological level and the being must act or die.

These ‘deficiency needs must be satisfied before a ‘normal’ person can act unselfishly. And before the individual can ‘Make their Statement’ – i.e. Self Actualise.

In Maslow’s view, satisfying our needs is healthy, we are moving towards growth. Blocking gratification makes the person sick and/or evil. In other words Maslow saw us as being “Needs Junkies”.

Needs are prepotent. A prepotent need is one that has the greatest influence over a person’s actions at a specific time in their lives. Everyone has a prepotent need, but which of the hierarchy of needs this may be, will vary from person to person. For example a teenager may have a need to be accepted by a particular group of peers.

A heroin addict will need to satisfy their craving (the drive to emulate the pleasure giving effect of endorphins that heroin mimics) before they can act 'normally' and will not worry about being accepted by others.

According to Maslow, when a deficiency need is met, then:

*"At once other (and higher) needs emerge, and these, rather than physiological hungers, dominate the organism. And when these in turn are satisfied, again new (and still higher) needs emerge, and so on. As one desire is satisfied, another pops up to take its place."*

## Physiological Needs

There are the very basic needs that any organism must satisfy in order to survive. Temperature, food, water, sleep, sex etc.. When these are not satisfied or are threatened the organism will react to preserve itself – in most cases (Maslow was not able to explain Altruism, which flies in the face of both this and the next need. That had to await the understandings explained by Richard Dawkins in the 'Selfish Gene').

These needs are often manifest by the feelings of sickness, hunger, pain, or other discomforts, etc. These manifestations motivate us to alleviate them, and once this is accomplished, the organism moves on to other things to concern it.

## Safety Needs

These are concerned with the organism establishing stability and consistency in an otherwise chaotic world. These can be said to be mostly psychological in nature in that they exist in the mental perception of the animal. Some animals will have a higher tolerance of chaos than others.

Human beings need the security of an ordered society, of a Peacetime rather than Wartime environment. In War, the normal human being often finds that their existence is so threatened that they are most often unable to move to a higher level. Love and belonging often have to wait (*Sex is another thing, it is to do with the survival of the species – it is Physiological – that is why birth rates in wars are higher than in Peacetime*).

Many people in modern society, particularly in inner cities, cry out for law and order because they do not feel safe enough to be outside their home in their neighbourhood.

In addition safety needs sometimes motivate people to be religious. Religion comforts many people with the promise of a safe secure place after we die, and leave the insecurity of this world.

## Love & Belonging Needs

Love and belongingness are next on the ladder. This set of motivations humans share with all gregarious animals (*mainly mammals*). It is the herd instinct, the hunting pack, a set of drives that aid the survival chances of the individual.

Translated into the human context, humans have a need to belong to other groups of humans; work groups, Clubs, Classes, Religions, Families and gangs etc. etc.

We need to feel needed, wanted, appreciated, to be accepted by others. Performers appreciate applause. Many goods or services that can be socially visible, i.e. consumed in a public context (*Cars, soft drinks, holidays, cigarettes etc.*) are often shown by advertising as helping to make the subject more socially acceptable.

The last time such a product was shown being consumed in a solitary situation, the product bombed ("*You are never alone with a Strand*" cigarette).

### **Esteem Needs** (Affection and Respect)

There are two types of esteem needs.

Firstly – Self Esteem, which comes from, for example, being accomplished in certain tasks or having a mastery of a particular skill or skills.

And -

Secondly -, the esteem which results from not just being accepted by the group to which the person belongs, but from being liked by them also. Others appreciate them as a valuable member of the group. We need to be loved (*not just sexually*)

Along with this second aspect is the need for status, for power, to have a position in the 'pecking order' (*so called because the concept was first studied in the behaviour of Jungle Fowl, the ancestors of the humble farmyard chicken*). We all have this naturally; we are the youngest, middle or eldest child. We are mothers, sisters, brothers or fathers, uncles aunts, grand parents etc.

However, in addition people may seek extra satisfactions of these needs. For example people with all the lower order needs satisfied will exhibit behaviour such as becoming the Club Treasurer, Chairman, commodore et.al., getting promoted at work, obtaining an academic distinction, being honoured by their government, and/or adopting certain status symbols such as fashionable clothing, driving a expensive motor car. Anything that sets them apart from the herd, as long as it does not divorce them from it.

### **Self Actualisation**

A country's armed forces once advertised for recruits with the slogan "be all you can be"; it was a phenomenally successful campaign.

Most people in the world find they have to spend most of their time addressing the first three needs Physiological, Safety, Love & Belonging (*the last being essential to address the threats posed by the first two*). They take what comes their way in terms of esteem, rather than have the time and resource to pursue positions of power and those that do this successfully often treat this as the end game.

But in spite of this, human beings have a drive to express themselves as individuals. To 'Make their Mark', to 'Make their Statement', for their life to be meaningful. So even in the most humble of circumstances there are the artists, the singers, the exemplary craftsmen. So far this is as a means of pursuing the last two drives, Love and Belonging, and Esteem. However, when the pursuit is for its own sake, not for immediate reward alone, then it is said to be Self Actualisation. They seek knowledge, aesthetic experience, a oneness with their maker etc.

It is more often the people in the position of having all four of the underlying motivations satisfied, that can afford the pursuit of self gratification, the middle class students that take up environmental causes, join the peace corps, go back-packing around the world, study exotic subjects like the History of Art et.al.

But beware – sometimes life in the developed world lulls us into a false sense of security – the infrastructure of our habitat address all of the first two needs and most of the third and it can lead us into foolish ways. The author has personally witnessed Japanese tourists pursuing a She Bear and her cubs into the woods next to the Trans-Canada highway so as to get better pictures. They had no concept that this was a wild animal and would feel threatened to the point of attacking her pursuers.

### Application to Marketing

Customers will only wish to acquire product if it is perceived to address at least one unsatisfied drive. However, to base the offering on one drive alone limits the security of sales and should only be relied on for fast moving consumer commodity goods and services which mainly appeal to Physiological needs, such as food and drink.

Products that can command a premium will appeal to as many drives as possible at the same time.

Building materials, Paints, Craftsman tools etc. that are sold for the DIY enthusiast, addresses more than one drive. The Physiological is keeping a roof over the person's head, The cost savings of not employing a craftsman make the available money go further, (safety from poverty, the esteem of the family etc.) the joint act of agreeing colour schemes with the family members re-enforces Love and Respect, and the achievement of being able to do what a craftsman can, and (*in the perception of the DIY'er*) do it better, is many person's self actualisation.

And lastly, consider the increasing popularity of cooking programmes on Television – if the audience applies what they learn and invite friends around to share the feast – all five drives are addressed. Think about it.