What Makes Employees Productive

Mingyang Sun

Abstract—**The research combines the traditional way of motivating employees and contemporary analysis of distinctive performance. Thus, established theories and up-to-date data are incorporated in different views and provide employees with a clearer picture of managing employees.**

Index Terms—**Motivate, employee, productive, contemporary.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Herman Melville's "Bartleby the Scrivener" is a well-known story published in 1865, telling the work-life of Bartleby: began as the most efficient and hardworking copyist in the lawyer's office on Wall Street but one day started saying, "I would prefer not to" to everything and ended up dead in jail [1] (Melville, 1970). Bartleby's tragic ending reflected a lot on the lack of employee's work-life management, such as Bartleby's secluded working area, the less authoritative way of giving commands. Also, the lawyer doesn't quite understand what his employee Bartleby wants, contributing to his ending. Thus, employers are urged to pay more attention to managing employees.

While the problem revealed by "Bartleby the Scrivener" is not constrained with the time of 1865, it has been evolving until the present, with employers' growing importance on managing for employees. Since happy employees were 12% more productive, while dissatisfied workers proved 10% less fruitful, in this case, many rewards strategies are considered apart from the traditional money-driven model to motivate workers effectively, integrating intrinsic and extrinsic awards. Apart from a financial perspective, as a part of stakeholder management, employees' work-life management contributes to the prominent trend of creating shared value that is expected to generate greater innovation growth and better image for companies. Also, from successful cases such as Delta and Starbucks, crucial it is to reconsider how perks and compensation affect employee's performance. In this case, to adapt future trends and compete for better economic performance, it's important to research What makes employees productive?

The research would be significant for combining the traditional way of motivating employees and contemporary analysis of distinctive performance. Thus, established theories and up-to-date data are incorporated in different views and provide employees with a clearer picture of managing employees.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are multiple established works that this essay bases on. For understanding Bartleby's story, critical views measure employees' alienation for meaningless work due to lack of work-life are analyzed. Then, the means of work for employees are further interpreted from different perspectives, such as the factors like job security and culture, which employee cares about are considered.

Apart from data analysis, multiple theories Maslow's hierarchy, Herzberg motivation theory, and Taylor's scientific management principles are used to explore the je ne sais quoi side of employees' happiness. Maslow's hierarchy suggests that people are motivated more than money, and their psychological needs are satisfied with a sequence from physiology needs to self-actualization. Furthermore, based on Maslow's hierarchy, Herzberg's motivation theory categorizes two factors: hygiene factor (mainly physical aspect) and motivators (mainly psychological aspect) that contribute to employees' motivation [2] (Herzberg, 1968). Lastly, reviews on similar topics with experiments in hospitals are taking into account.

III. METHODOLOGY

There are mainly two parts in this essay---the data analysis and theoretical evaluations to provide quantitative and qualitative supports for the conclusion. In the data analysis parts, rankings in relation to employees' satisfaction, reviews, and scores of companies by employees are collected to target successful representatives and analyzed reasons behind them. In the theoretical part, sources are news, anecdotes, journals, books, and theories used to examine individual cases.

In the data analysis part, the rankings are collected from authoritative websites such as Comparably [3] and Indeed to establish reliable reviews for the companies' contribution to employees' happiness on the basis of traditional considerations---compensation and perks. Next, experimental and control group companies are identified from former analysis to examine what makes employees satisfied and productive apart from traditional considerations. Then, scores of selected companies by employees from different perspectives are added to explore their effects on companies' high rankings in employees' happiness. Then, tables and calculations are made to find the reason behind. Lastly, a conclusion is made from the above data analysis.

To elaborate on the specific reason of outstanding companies, information of each is collected and applied to the Maslow Hierarchy. Using the Maslow Hierarchy, each companies employees' wants and needs could be identified and evaluated. Theories such as Herzberg's motivation theory and Taylor's scientific management principles are involved as a supplemental discussion because they could insert other

practical angles apart from Maslow's psychological consideration. Lastly, theoretical evaluation and statistical analysis are integrated to form the final conclusion and further business suggestions.

The methodology is well designed, combining both qualitative and quantitative analysis, but there are still limitations. The reviews of companies by employees chosen on websites might be partial, manipulated, and bias because of the limited sample size. However, problems can be solved using multiple websites and eliminating reviews that have a really small sample size. For example, UiPath is scored by only eleven people on Indeed, and its score is largely inconsistent with the range that the companies of the same level have. Therefore, even though UiPath is one of the experimental group's identified companies, it is only used for theoretical analysis rather than data analysis.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

The data is collected based on the initial assumption saying that compensation and perks are the two dominant elements contributing to employees' happiness. Therefore, the rankings of employee's compensation, perks, and happiness are found and listed to seek their relationship, with the expectation that the companies with high compensation and benefits ranking should have same-high ranking in employees' happiness.

As shown in Table I, the brackets' numbers represent the rankings of a company: (the ranking the perks & benefits, the ranking of compensation, the ranking of employee's happiness). Also, the "*" represents that the rank is not high enough to be on the rank list. For example, Starbucks (*.47.10) represents Starbucks as not on the list of compensation, the 47th place in compensation rank, and the 10th place in employee's happiness [4] (Comparably, 2019). Some companies follow the assumption with rankings of benefits and compensation similar to the ranking of employee's happiness in the table. However, several companies don't fit with the presumption, having a high ranking of employee's happiness but low ranking or even no ranking in benefits and compensation. For example, Delta airlines don't have a high rank in benefits nor compensation, but the 4th place in employee's happiness. Therefore, there must be something else that those companies do to make their employees happy. Thus, a closer interpretation from the perspective of employees is needed.

Firstly, identify the companies that are needed to research. A control group and an experimental group of the research are identified to discover the hiding factor better. According to the table, the control group is the companies whose rankings match with the assumption: Salesforce (2.3.5), Intuit (8.9.8), LinkedIn (11.18.9), T-Mobile (19.13.13). The levels of their employee's happiness, compensation, and benefits are almost matched. However, the experimental group is the five companies whose rankings of happiness much proceed their rankings in benefits and compensation: Air Lines (*.*.4), UiPath (27.38.6), Starbucks (*.47.10), Fanatics (*.*.15), and International Flavors & Fragrances (*.*.20) [5] (Comparably, 2019). In this case, employees' reviews and scores on their companies are brought into consideration.

TABLE I: RANKINGS OF PERKS & COMPENSATION & HAPPINESS

Happiest Employee	Perks & Compensation & Happiness
1. HubSpot (Cambridge, MA)	4.14.1
2. Netflix (Los Gatos, CA)	12.5.2
3. Google (Mountain View, CA)	3.1.3
4. Delta Air Lines (Atlanta, GA)	*.*.4
5. Salesforce (San Francisco, CA)	2.3.5
6. UiPath (New York, NY)	27.38.6
7. LogMeIn (Boston, MA)	29.15.7
8. Intuit (Mountain View, CA)	8.9.8
9. LinkedIn (Sunnyvale, CA)	11.18.9
10. Starbucks (Seattle, WA)	*.47.10
11. Nevro (Redwood City, CA)	21.31.11
12. Insight Global (Atlanta, GA)	36.*.12
13. T-Mobile (Bellevue, WA)	19.13.13
14. Pegasystems (Cambridge, MA)	*.43.14
15. Fanatics (Jacksonville, FL)	*.*.15
16. Facebook (Menlo Park, CA)	1.2.16
17. Blizzard Entertainment (Irvine, CA)	28.44.17
18. eBay (San Jose, CA)	*.12.18
19. Golden Hippo Media (Woodland Hills, CA)	*.40.19
20. International Flavors & Fragrances (New York, NY)	*.*.20
21. Workfront (Lehi, UT)	41.37.21
22. Red Bull (Santa Monica, CA)	*.23.22
23. Adobe (San Jose, CA)	14.17.23
24. Axon (Scottsdale, AZ)	48.26.24
25. NVIDIA (Santa Clara, CA)	*.21.25

Multiple sources of employee's scoring on their companies are used to create the table. Table II shows that the five criteria, work-life balance, pay & benefits, job security & advancement, management, and culture, are chosen as the five popular ways employees see a company. As shown in the table, the average scores of the control group in the five aspects are 4, 4.1, 3.6, 3.7, 4.1 and 4.16, while those of the experimental group are 3.7, 3.775, 3.425, 3.475, 3.75, and 3.74, lower than the control group in every aspect [6] (Indeed,2020). Therefore, there isn't a leading aspect of the five popular factors that make the experimental group's effect on happiness stand out.

However, there is one thing different: the control group has a much higher variance of about 0.06 among different aspects, while the experimental group has an average variance of only about 0.03.

In this case, the lower variance indicates that the experimental group companies have a more balanced performance in the five aspects. Simultaneously, there might be a huge gap between different aspects of the control group companies that cause unmatched performance from different perspectives. For example, Google has a score of 4.2 in work-life balance, which is a good score that enables employees to expect that Google would be good in other aspects such as Job security and advancement as it is in work-life balance. However, Google has only a score of 3.6 in job security and advancement, which is discrepant with its high 4.2 in work-life balance and 0.4 away from its average score. Unlike the great variance in Google, Delta Airlines has

only a 3.9 for work-life balance but 3.7 in job security and advancement. In this case, employees won't feel so disappointed when they experience 3.7 job security (Indeed, 2020). Furthermore, even though Delta doesn't a striking score for work-life balance and has a relatively lower score of 3.88 as average, its score in job security and advancement is not as far away as Google is with the work-life balance and average. Thus, with more balanced performance in every aspect, employees are less likely to be disappointed and unhappy as they don't have high expectations triggered by one outstanding aspect. Therefore, it can be inferred that employees are happy in experimental group companies. That's because even though those companies don't have high performance in compensation and perks, experimental companies are performing in a relatively even way that employees expect them would be, without much disappointment.

TABLE II: SCORES OF COMPANIES BY EMPLOYEES TABLE

	Work-Life balance	Pay & benefits	Job security and Advancement	Management	Culture	General	Variance
Control group							
Google	4.2	4.1	3.6	3.9	4.2	4.2	0.065
Salesforce	4	4.3	3.8	3.7	4.2	4.3	0.065
Intuit	4.1	4.2	3.5	3.7	4.1	4.2	0.092
LinkedIn	4.1	4.2	3.8	3.8	4.3	4.3	0.053
T-Mobile	3.6	3.7	3.3	3.4	3.7	3.8	0.033
Average	4	4.1	3.6	3.7	4.1	4.16	0.0616
Experimental group							
Delta Airlines	3.9	4.1	3.7	3.7	4	4.2	0.032
UiPath	3.2	3.9	2.5	2.8	2.8	3	0.293
Starbucks	3.8	3.8	3.6	3.5	4	4	0.038
Fanatics	3.5	3.5	3.1	3.3	3.5	3.7	0.032
International Flavors & Fragrances	3.6	3.7	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.8	0.025
Average	3.7	3.8	3.4	3.5	3.75	3.8	0.032

Also, the conclusion can be confirmed by Locke's Value Theory, which suggests that job satisfaction appears when job outcomes an employee get matches with his desire and expectation [7] (Locke, 1976). Therefore, the more the employees realize its expectation, the more they feel satisfied and happy. In conclusion, companies with more balance performance in each area would make employees happier and more productive. However, the correlation stated is not strong nor verified by direct evidence. Further explanations and proofs are needed to support the relationship.

V. THEORETICAL APPLICATION

As mentioned above, the match between employees' needs & wants and what the company provides is so important that it determines employees' happiness and productivity. In this case, it's valuable to know how successful companies identity and meet their employees' needs. Maslow Hierarchy, which suggests that workers' needs are satisfied following a sequence from physiology needs to self-actualization, is applied to successful companies' cases to prove the needs-driven productivity [8] (Maslow, 1958).

As shown in Fig. 1, the Maslow Hierarchy states people's needs are satisfied following the sequence of physiology needs, security needs, social needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization. Also, people would need to be satisfied with their lower level of needs before moving on to higher-level needs. For example, a person won't expect to be stable, which is a part of the safety needs, before he gains enough water, food, and sleep. The different levels of needs are demonstrated in the case companies Delta Airlines, UiPath, and Starbucks.
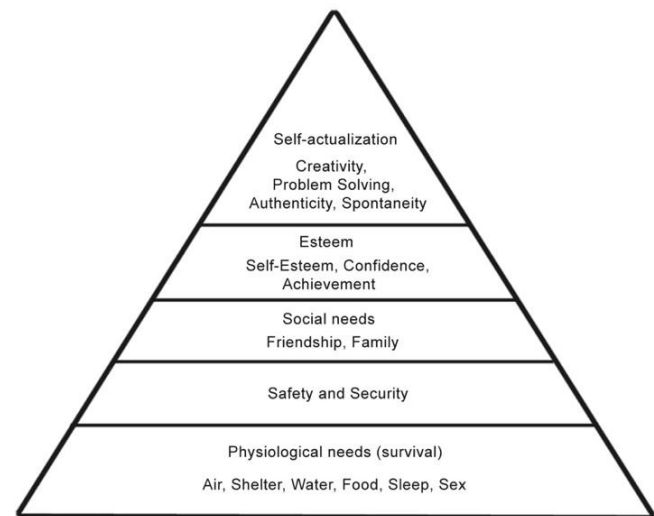

Fig. 1. Maslow Hierarchy of needs.

A. Physiological Needs

The first stage of needs in Maslow's Hierarchy is physiological needs, which refer to the basic needs that people must meet to survive, such as water, food, air, warmth, and sleep. Without money, people couldn't possibly gain water, food, warmth, and sleep, so money is the driven force in basic needs (Maslow, 1958). In this case, Delta provides a profit-sharing bonus of $1.6 billion for its employees, which is nearly extra two-month salaries [9] (Murphy, 2020). Therefore, employees in Delta airlines are quite happy and productive because they know the better they act, the more profits their company will earn, and thus the more money they will get from the profit-sharing bonus. Also, it's worth

noted that it is not the money given that drives employees' happiness, but the incentives of money: the happiness is not for the high salary, but the policy that the more you work, you more gain in money.

Similarly, Taylor's scientific management principles say that employees are primarily motivated by money, and thus productivity could be improved by setting pay-related output targets [10] (Taylor, 1911). However, physiological needs stress the satisfaction of basics needs, which are realized by money before employees desire security needs. It is the sequence of needs that Maslow highlights, but it doesn't clarify how the needs should be met. Whether employee's satisfaction is generated from giving high compensation directly or setting bonuses related to their production is not stated. Thus, Taylor's principles act as an aid to boost the Maslow theory in physiological needs. Incorporate both Taylor's theory and Maslow's physiological needs. It is discovered that the profit-sharing bonus is an effective motivation for Delta's employees. Therefore, with no ranking in compensation and perks, Delta is at fourth place in employees' happiness.

However, the problem is that employees are seen as integrity in the profit-sharing bonus. It doesn't mind how much an employee contributes to the profit, but he could always receive a greater bonus as long as the company is generally making greater profits. In this case, the employee will be happy but less productive, relying on others to work harder. Delta's main workers are not the unskilled and uneducated kind of labor who have the urgency to make money. Therefore, money could be a motivation initially, but as it is satisfied, workers may feel less motivated, and deeper motivation is needed. Still, the advantage of a profit-sharing bonus in Delta is that working in an environment where peers all strive to make the company earn more profit, employees would get press pressure and motivation, feeling guilty to be lazy when others are fighting.

Even though with existing problems, identifying physiological needs and satisfaction from Taylor's theory makes Delta's employees happy.

B. Security Needs

The second stage in Maslow's Hierarchy is security needs, which mean the demands necessary to make people feel safe and stable, such as job security and maternity leave. In Starbucks, full health-care benefits and securities, including medical, dental, vision, and alternative services, are provided to both part-time and full-time employees (Maslow, 1958). In this case, Starbucks employees would feel much relieved and secure as they know the securities guarantee their health, and there is nothing to be worried about. Gaining the sense of being safe and stable, Starbucks employees could be more concentrated on their work to have higher productivity rather than being distracted by worries and insecurity. Therefore, even though Starbucks has no ranking in perks and 47th place in compensation, which is a relatively low ranking, its employees' happiness is at the 10th place. However, it is stated that the compensation would contribute to job security: a salary that is below the average would cause job insecurity since workers would always seek to find a better-paid job that is above the average. The instability resulted would affect the overall air in the workplace negatively.

The security needs level is higher than the scope of physiological needs in Maslow Hierarchy. However, according to Herzberg's motivational theory, Starbucks employees' happiness could not be attributed to the satisfaction of security needs because the security falls within the range of hygiene factors, which only prevent dissatisfaction but don't contribute to happiness (Herzberg, 1968). In comparison, Herzberg's motivational theory separates employees' needs into hygiene factors (physical aspects) and motivators (psychological aspects) but neglects the coexisting relationships between the physical and psychological aspects (Herzberg, 1968). In this case, Starbucks employees would need both the health securities, which are basic needs and the sense of security having health benefits in the second stage of the Maslow Hierarchy. At the same time, critics from Herzberg's theory seems to be limited. With the "bounds" on health benefits, Starbuck's employees could be less likely to leave the job, contributing to lower labor turnover. Therefore, Starbucks could save many expenses on human resources, recruiting new people. However, health securities are not a common need for everyone since some employees have already got it. Thus, the securities could be ineffective in making employees happy.

Even though the investment in security needs could be ineffective, it is common that everyone would have a different level of needs based on their experience. Hence, with no highly educated feature, Starbucks employees could start with the basic needs, without a high expectation, and move to security needs. Thus, the satisfaction of security needs is the right path based on Maslow's Hierarchy to make employees happy after basic needs.

C. Social Needs

Building on the basis of basic needs and security needs, social needs is a higher level of psychological needs in Maslow's Hierarchy, which refers to the human desire to be seen as part of a friendship group or a family and gaining the sense of belonging and beloved (Maslow, 1958). With the mission statement "to inspire and nurture the human spirit – one person, one cup and one neighborhood at a time," Starbucks underline the company's feeling of love and integrity. Instead of being seen as workers, Starbucks' employees are viewed as "partners," a Starbucks family, neighborhood, and community member [11] (Starbucks, 2015). Everyone is being loved and valued in the "family": each employee has a distinctive name tag and is provided with intact health care as if they were looked after by the family members. Thus, it is not the employment relationships that matters in Starbucks, but the friendship and the kinship that attached employees' sentiment matters. It is the emotional and mental dependence that Starbucks employees have on their company, which motivates them to make their family a better place. Hence, happy and productive employees were in Starbucks, being loved and valued.

Admittedly, Starbucks ' mission statement [12] and corporate culture provide employees a warm and loving atmosphere, which corresponds with the sense of affiliation that humans need. According to McClelland's Human Motivation Theory, every person has one of three main driving motivators: the needs for achievement, affiliation, or power [13] (Mcclelland, 1988). The affiliation is what

Starbucks gives to its employees in the social needs of Maslow Hierarchy that makes employees emotionally attach to the company and contribute to make the company a better place wholehearted. Therefore, there is less likely to have cases such as doing a job with lower quality but higher quantity to gain more money. However, creating a sense of belonging and love is very hard for a company that involves a great amount of time and money. Plus, it's risky that the company may not create what they want successfully with huge investment. Starbucks, a company developed for dozens of years, has an outstanding performance in creating corporate culture, but the successful examples that can be named are limited.

Thus, it can be said that social needs are hard to be realized since it stresses the general feeling that the job and the company give to the employees as integrity, and it is quite risky to prone to satisfy the social needs. The belonging air could also be extended to every new worker that positively impacts long-run productivity.

D. Esteem Needs & Self-Actualization

The fourth level in Maslow's Hierarchy is esteem needs, which refers to people's desires to be self-respect and recognized by others. The top of the hierarchy is self-actualization, which refers to the forces that drive people to achieve the best they could, such as gaining personal development and promotion. The fourth and fifth levels are related since self-recognition and respect could be from personal development and promotion. Therefore, UiPath, which is a leading Robotic Process Automation (RPA) vendor providing a complete software platform to help automate business processes, is used to interpret the satisfaction of employees' esteem needs and self-actualization.

With the high technology working environment, 92% of employees in UiPath have recognized themselves having greater efficiency attributed to the interactive, enjoyable, creative tasks within their high-tech jobs [14] (Ross, 2019). Also, as the chief marketing officer, Bobby said, "the reality is that RPA allows employees to engage in richer interactions with others, perform work that requires more brainpower, and make fewer mistakes." The difficult tasks UiPath employees do make them realize the worth of themselves, gain respect from peers, and achieve a better self.

Also, the boosts of employees' creativity in UiPath could be categorized as the motivators in Herzberg's theory that leads to workers' psychological growth and hence increase satisfaction and performance at work. However, motivators' psychological growth has multiple kinds, including achievement, recognition, responsibility, and advancement, making companies hard to focus. In contrast, Maslow's esteem needs and self-actualization focus on specific kinds in Herzberg's motivators (achievement and recognition). The collaboration between Herzberg's motivators and Maslow's levels of needs provides companies with a more targeted way of satisfying employees to achieve higher productivity.

Admittedly, the RPA tasks in UiPath do improve employees. Also, the progress that employees made would create a stronger and more advanced labor force. Therefore, reach higher productivity and inspire innovations. However, the motivation comes from the job's intrinsic feature, which couldn't be changed through management. It is the creativity and high-tech that makes the job valuable and offers employees the chance of self-achievement. Other changes in external factors couldn't shape the same sense of recognition and advancement as the job itself does. Plus, this kind of internal feature doesn't have wide applications since employers don't have much ability to make the job interesting.

Although the provision of esteem needs and self-actualization is unique, it has a nonnegligible promotion on the overall development of a company, elevating human resources equality. Thus, esteem needs and self-actualization in Maslow have a greater contribution to employees' happiness and productivity.

VI. CONCLUSION

From the data analysis, companies with a more balanced performance could make employees happier and more productive since there isn't a huge discrepancy between different categories and employee expectations. Based on this stated importance of employees' desire, different level of needs on Maslow Hierarchy are examined to help companies to identify the needs of their employees. Advantages and disadvantages are associated with satisfying physiological, security, social, esteem, and self-actualization needs.

The advantage of satisfying physiological needs is that performance-related payment effectively encourages better performance and disadvantages. If payment is not closely tied with performance, there is room for the employee to "cheat." To solve this problem, companies could test different motivational strategies in advance. If the security needs are satisfied, employees could be tied to the health security provided, but not everyone would need the security provided. Therefore, companies need to analyze employees' information in advance and identity if they need security provisions. For the social needs, employees would be loyal and work wholeheartedly with emotional attachment, but it's risky and costly to create a sense of belonging since not every employee would pay the bill. However, whatever the employees prefer, the best to solve it is to have a dominant and distinctive corporate culture that could attract suitable employees. Lastly, for esteem needs & self-actualization, a stronger and advancer labor force results, but it largely relies on the job's intrinsic nature, which couldn't be easily mimicking. This issue could be relieved by re-considering the job content when the employer is designing the job.

In conclusion, no matter which stages the employees are in, the most important thing for employers is to know what employees want and how to realize their needs. Maslow Hierarchy is just a way for employers to look, but multiple methods should be adapted to have a whole picture of employees' needs. With enhanced communication and understanding, the tragedy of Bartleby could be avoided.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Mingyang (Lucy) Sun is the principal investigator of the

project at hand. She reviewed sources, conducted research, and wrote this paper.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

REFERENCES

[1] H. Melville, *Bartelby. S.l.: Encyclopaedia Britannica Educational*, 1970.

[2] F. Herzberg, "One more time: How do you motivate employees?" *Job Satisfaction — A Reader,* pp. 17-32, 1968.

[3] Comparably. (2019). Best Companies for Perks & Benefits 2018. [Online]. Available: https://www.comparably.com/blog/best-companies-for-perks-benefits-2018/

[4] Comparably. (2019). Best Company Compensation 2018. Retrieved [Online]. Available: https://www.comparably.com/blog/best-compensation-2018/

[5] Comparably. (2019). Happiest Employees 2018. [Online]. Available: https://www.comparably.com/blog/happiest-companies-2018/

[6] Indeed. [Online]. Available: https://www.indeed.com/

[7] E. E. Locke, *What is Job Satisfaction?* 1976.

[8] A. H. Maslow, "A dynamic theory of human motivation," *Understanding Human Motivation*, pp. 26-47, 1958.

[9] B. Murphy. (2020). Delta Air Lines just made a big announcement that will make delta employees very happy. [Online]. Available: https://www.inc.com/bill-murphy-jr/delta-air-lines-just-made-a-big-announcement-that-will-make-delta-employees-very-happy.html

[10] F. W. Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management*, Boston: IndyPublish.com, 1911.

[11] Starbucks. (2015). [Online]. Available: https://stories.starbucks.com/stories/2015/starbucks-mission-and-values/

[12] Mission statement. [Online]. Available: https://www.starbucks.ca/about-us/company-information/mission-statement

[13] D. C. Mcclelland, *Human Motivation*, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

[14] A. Ross. (2019). Most businesses believe RPA helps keep employees engaged and happy. [Online]. Available: https://www.information-age.com/most-businesses-believe-rpa-helps-keep-employees-engaged-and-happy-123480914/

Mingyang (Lucy) Sun is a senior student of Beijing National Day School, China. She is passionate at business and economics. She has done some internships during school breaks. She worked with Citibank employees in Citibank country strategy group, developed the strategic alliance program with Okura Nikko Hotels Group, and built up a mutually beneficial marketing program to increase customer base for both sides. As the chief representative of Beijing high schools, she led the Citibank Open Day Program to introduce the history and operation of Citibank for other selective high school students, four times a year, 30+ participants each time.