McGregor’s Theory x and Theory Y

Douglas McGregor proposed two distinctive views of human beings. One negative labeled Theory x and the other basically positive labeled Theory y.

The following are assumptions held by manager- under Theory x

Assumptions Under Theory X

1. Employees inherently dislike work and whenever possible, will attempt to avoid it.
2. Since employees dislike work, they must be coerced, controlled, or threatened with punishment to achieve goals.
3. Employees will avoid responsibilities and seek formal direction whenever possible.
4. Most workers place security above all other factors associated with work and will display little ambition.
In contrast to these negative views about the nature of human beings, McGregor listed the four positive assumptions that he called Theory y.

**Assumptions Under Theory y**

1. Employees can view work as being as natural as rest or play.
2. People will exercise self-direction and self-control if they are committed to the objectives.
3. The average person can learn to accept, even seek responsibility.
4. The ability to make innovative decisions is widely dispersed throughout the population and is not necessarily the sole province of those in management positions.

What are the motivational implications if managers decide to accept this Theory?

The answer is best expressed in the framework presented by Maslow.

- Theory x assumes that lower order needs dominate individuals
- Theory y assumes that higher order needs dominate individuals
- McGregor held to the belief that Theory y assumptions were more valid than Theory x.

Hence, he proposed such ideas as:

1. Participative decision-making, responsible and challenging jobs, good working relations as approaches that would maximize an employee’s job motivation.