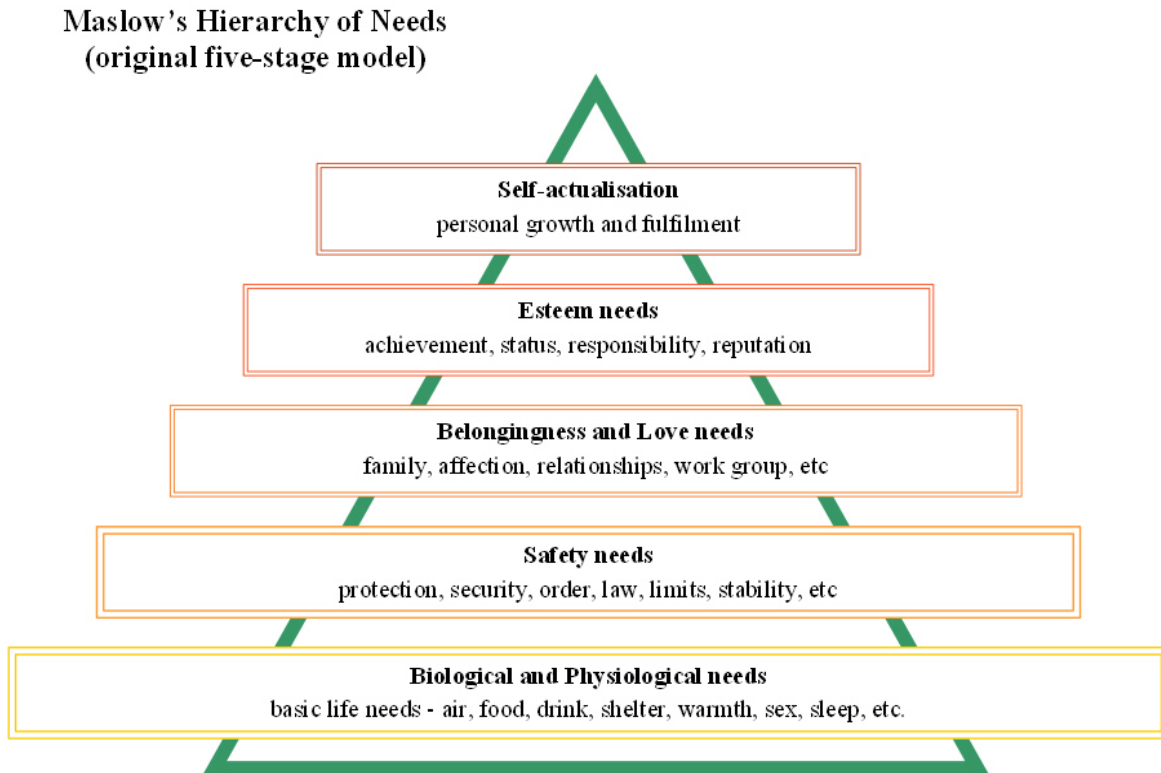


Theoretical Approaches

When building your business case, you may find it useful to make reference to various theoretical approaches linked to employee recognition. Here is one example:

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

An American psychologist mostly noted for his proposal of a hierarchy of human needs (1908-1970)



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Abraham Maslow outlines **five** basic needs that all human beings strive to fulfill. This theory divides human needs into to five levels; physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization needs.

- ★ At the bottom of the hierarchy is our *physiological* need for food, water, oxygen and sleep. These are the most basic of human needs and without them we could not survive.
- ★ After these basic needs have been satisfied, we feel the need for a sense of *safety*, *security* and protection from danger. In the workplace, this sense of security could include the desire for retirement savings and job security.
- ★ When we feel safe and secure and our physiological needs have been met, we seek to *belong*, be loved, to interact and share with others.
- ★ Next, we have the need to build our *self-esteem*, and to receive recognition. Self-esteem includes having respect from others as well as having self-respect and confidence.
- ★ The top level is *self-actualization* – this is the feeling that our potential has been reached, that our goals have been accomplished and we are complete.

As an employee, when we are sincerely recognized for our contributions, then our self-esteem needs are met and we are on our way to feeling that we have met our full potential.

Being recognized for one's work is motivating and having the support and tools to reach one's full potential at work translates into high-quality service. When this feeling is derived from an achievement that is accomplished at work, chances are, as employees, we will consistently attempt to reach our goals to continue feeling that we are working to our full potential.

According to Maslow's Theory, recognition is a critical element in fulfilling the top two human needs of esteem and self-actualization. Subsequently, an organization with an effective recognition program will be more likely to retain employees that may have otherwise been lost to other organizations.

McShane, S.L. (2004). *Canadian Organizational Behaviour* (5th ed.). Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson. – <http://changingminds.org/explanations/needs/maslow.htm>