Expectancy Theory

Expectancy Theory (Victor, 1964) suggests motivation is influenced by three variables that are equally important: Motivation = Expectancy × Instrumentality × Valence

- **Motivation**
  - How much does the student desire the outcome (e.g., exams, grades)?
  - Example: Will studying help the student learn the material?
- **Expectancy**
  - How much does the student believe he/she can do (determines the course grade)?
  - Example: Will the student learn the material?
- **Instrumentality**
  - How much does the student believe the outcome is related to the behavior? (e.g., exams, grades)
  - Example: Will the student learn the material?

### Applying Expectancy Theory

**Performance Feedback**

In a study focused on whether the introduction of accounting software will enhance learning outcomes in a beginning accounting class, students found that the increase in grades was likely due to the impact of changes on Expectancy through three channels:

- Increasing the students’ perceived control of their learning environment
- Decreasing the students’ perceived goal difficulty
- Increasing the students’ perceived control of their learning environment

**Performance Findings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Reward Link</th>
<th>How much does the student learn the material?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td><strong>YES</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td><strong>YES</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td><strong>YES</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td><strong>NO</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Motivating Students: How to Influence Expectancy—The Effort to Outcome Link

**Increasing students’ perceived control of their learning environment**

- Offer a variety of learning tools for varying types of learners (e.g., books, videos, online resources).
- Provide flexible grading policies (e.g., the grade for each exam). Be sure to explain how grading policies and explain how they will impact grades.

**Increase students’ confidence/self-efficacy**

- Emphasize cooperation.
- Offer tips.
- Provide rewards.
- Increase motivation for students’ use of additional resources, such as in-person or online discussions.

**Decrease students’ perceptions of goal difficulty**

- Explain how success in an accounting program will give them marketability.
- Explain how success in an accounting program will give them useful practical applications should they ever decide to start a small business.

### Motivating Students: How to Influence Instrumentality—The Outcome to Reward Link

**Communicate, Communicate, Communicate**

- Clearly define all grade points and graded assignments at the beginning of the course.
- Explain how grading curves are applied and following your grading policies.
- Help students understand the importance of the grade they are earning.

**Incentives**

- Offer tips.
- Provide rewards.
- Increase motivation for students’ use of additional resources, such as in-person or online discussions.

**Decrease students’ perceptions of goal difficulty**

- Explain how the student learns the material.
- Offer more flexible methods for students to assess their own learning and mastery of the material. Provide practice sessions, links to external websites, resources, and provide feedback on how to make the connection.

### Motivating Students: Valence

**Communicate Incentives**

- Help students understand the importance of their grade in their academic career.
- Explain how success in an accounting program will give them marketability and offer many choices for career opportunities.

**Create Classroom Incentives**

- Incent high achievers (full students) self recommended by their peers.
- Incent high achievers by identifying achievements and sharing them in a competitive format.
- Incent high achievers to share test or quiz results.
- Offer top achievers during class to share how or why they prepared or what high achievers are doing to share test or quiz results.

**Deemphasize competition**

- Everyone loves a competition!
- Lighten the pressure on exams.

**Establish clear expectations**

- Emphasize cooperation.
- Incent high achievers to share test or quiz results.
- Offer top achievers during class to share how or why they prepared or what high achievers are doing to share test or quiz results.