Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory The best-known motivation theory is Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. Maslow was a psychologist who proposed that within every person is a hierarchy of five needs.
Physiological needs: Food, drink, shelter,, and other physical requirements.
Safety needs: Security and protection from physical and emotional harm, as well as assurance that physical needs will continue to be met.
Social needs: Affection, belongingness, acceptance, and friendship.
Esteem needs: Internal esteem factors such as self-respect, autonomy, and achievement and external esteem factors such as status, recognition, and attention.
Self-actualization needs: Growth, achieving one's potential, and self-fulfillment; the drive to become what one is capable of becoming.
Maslow argued that each level in the needs hierarchy must be substantially satisfied before the next need becomes dominant.
How does Maslow's theory explain motivation? Managers use Maslow's hierarchy to motivate employees to do things to satisfy employees needs. But the theory also says that once a need is substantially satisfied, an individual isn't motivated to satisfy that need.
Therefore, to motivate someone, you need to understand what need level that person is on in the hierarchy and focus on satisfying needs at or above that level.