

Motivation

The word motivation is often defined as "getting someone moving." Motivation theory breaks down these forces into internal or intrinsic motivation and external or extrinsic motivation. But beyond theory, it is important to understand how individuals are motivated and what you, as a leader, can do to keep them motivated.

Employee Motivation

Some of the most effective ways for leaders to motivate others include recognition, providing positive performance feedback and by challenging team members to learn new things. Many new managers make the mistake of introducing de-motivating factors into the workplace such as punishment for mistakes or frequent criticisms.

When people feel they are being supported and they have the ability to remain in control of their workplace, they tend to stay motivated. Leaders can foster this feeling by allowing staff to take on added responsibility and accountability for making decisions.

But the important thing to keep in mind is that motivation is highly individual and the degree of motivation achieved through one single strategy will not be the most effective way to motivate everyone on your team.

Figuring Out What Motivates Others

That being said, here are some tips on how to figure out what motivates others:

- Talk to your people not about what motivates them - because they may not realize it themselves - but what they value. This will give you insights into motivational factors that might be important to them.
- Test your assumption with that person. For example, if you think that recognition might help motivate someone, then try using that factor.
- Check in with your team. It is always a good idea to get feedback from your staff. Make sure you are getting the reaction you are looking for.

However, be on the lookout for signs of de-motivation. Make sure you are not inadvertently introducing something into the work environment that counter-productive to your goal - motivated team members.

Effective Motivation Methods

1. Use appropriate methods of reinforcement.

Rewards should be tied directly to performance. If you have determined that delivering quality service is important, then the employee's performance in delivering that service should be rewarded.

Keep in mind, however, that reinforcement is personal. What reinforces one person may not reinforce another. It is also important to dispense reinforcement as soon as possible after the desired performance.

For example, the employee who "goes the extra mile" should be acknowledged and rewarded accordingly.

2. Provide people with flexibility and choice.

Whenever possible, give people a chance to make decisions — particularly when they affect them in some way. Choice and personal commitment to results are essential to motivation. People who are not given the opportunity to choose tend to become passive and lethargic.

For example, if you are thinking of re-modeling or redesigning the employee work area, give people the guidelines or parameters, then allow them to design the area themselves.

3. Provide support when it is needed.

One key characteristic of the achievement-oriented person is the willingness to use help when it is needed. People should be encouraged to ask for support and assistance; otherwise, they will become frustrated. Asking for help should never be considered a sign of weakness; it should be considered a sign of strength.

When an employee comes to you for help, be careful not to turn him or her off with comments such as "You still don't know how to do that? I thought I explained it to you." Instead, ask, "Tell me where you are having problems. What can I clear up for you?"

4. Encourage team members to set their own goals and objectives.

Let them participate actively in the goal-setting process. People tend to know their own capabilities and limitations. Also, personal goal setting results in a commitment to goal accomplishment. In setting sales, ask people to come up with a realistic goals and a plan to reach them.

Then the two of you should evaluate goals by using SMART Goals:

- Is the goal Specific? Write the goal so that anyone would be able to identify exactly what you are going to accomplish.
- Is it Measurable? Identify the deliverable.
- Is it Agreed upon? All those involved must agree. In most cases, this means the manager and the employee who make it happen.
- Is it Realistic? Make sure that you have the appropriate resources (time, skills, equipment, and environment, money) to successfully meet the goal.
- Is it Time bound? Set deadlines, interim reviews and target completion dates.

5. Demonstrate and describe how tasks relate to personal and organizational goals.

Routine work can result in passivity and boredom unless people are aware of how routine tasks contribute to their own development and the success of the organization. Point out how their task fits into the big picture. A few extra minutes can increase productivity tremendously.

6. Design tasks and environments to be consistent with the individual needs.

What may satisfy one person may not satisfy another. The observant leader is aware of the more basic needs of the person such as affiliation, approval and achievement.

7. Clarify your expectations and make sure that people understand them.

Regardless of the size of your organization, you should have a job description for every position, clearly outlining qualifications and responsibilities. Also identify the expected standards of performance.

For example, if you expect the telephone to be answered within three rings, say so. People are not mind readers. You cannot assume that just because they have experience in doing the job, they know what you specifically expect of them in that position.

8. Have a flexible management style. Many managers pride themselves on treating everyone the same. This misconception can be dangerous. Team members are individuals with individual needs. You need to treat everyone fairly but not necessarily the same. A flexible management style also means that you vary your approach not only to the individual but also to the situation. An employee who is new to the job will need more direction than a five-year veteran. However, if the veteran employee is given a new task or responsibility, that person may need more direction in that particular situation.

9. Provide immediate and relevant feedback that will help people improve their performance in the future.

Feedback is most effective when it follows performance. Feedback should be relevant to the task and should indicate how to improve performance at the task. Never give negative feedback without providing informational feedback. Keep in mind that feedback should be both positive and negative. People often complain that the only time they receive feedback at work is when they do something wrong. Practice catching people doing something right and tell them about it. The feedback also must be specific. Just telling someone that they are doing a good job and "keep up the good work" is of no help. It is much more effective and meaningful to say something like, "John, I liked the way you handled that difficult customer. You showed a great deal of restraint and professionalism by not raising your voice or losing control."

10. Recognize and help eliminate barriers to individual achievement.

Many people that are labeled "failures" or "incompetents" are simply being hindered by relatively minor obstacles that managers have not recognized. The tragedy is that after a while, the employee may begin to accept the failure label as a fact. Does the employee have the knowledge and skills to do the job? If not, it is your job to provide him or her with the necessary training. Does the person have the appropriate tools or technology? If not, get it. Make sure people have the training, information, tools and equipment to do the job.

11. Exhibit confidence in your team.

There is a great deal of research to support the contention that people who are expected to achieve will do so more frequently than others. Saying to the employee, "I know this new procedure may be uncomfortable and may be even difficult for you at first, but I know you will be able to make the adjustment" is more effective than "Give it a try. If you can't get the hang of it, we'll have to see what we can do." The latter statement has conveyed the subtle message that you expect the person to fail.

The concept of the self-fulfilling prophecy or Pygmalion effect is very powerful. Managers who are positive Pygmalion's create high performance expectations. They encourage people to ask more questions. They allow more time to do a job correctly, and they give people the benefit of the doubt.

12. Establish a climate of trust and open communication.

Productivity is highest in organizations that encourage openness and trust. Trust and openness are created by the way we communicate. Do you use phrases that build people and get things started or ones that destroy ideas and chloroform creative thinking? Review the following lists. Which do you use more frequently?

Killer phrases

- "A great idea, but..."
- "It won't work."
- "We don't have the time."
- "It's not in the budget."
- "We've tried that before."
- "All right in theory, but can you put it in practice?"
- "You haven't considered..."
- "We have too many projects now."
- "What you're really saying is..."
- "Let's put it on the back burner."
- "Let's discuss it at some other time."

Igniter phrases

- "That would be interesting to try."
- "I'm glad you brought that up."
- "Good work!"
- "You're on the right track."
- "That's the first time I've had anyone think of that."
- "I have faith in you."
- "I appreciate what you've done."
- "See, you can do it!"
- "Go ahead, try it..."
- "I never thought of that."
- "I'm very pleased with what you've done."
- "We can always depend on you."
- "We can do a lot with that idea."

People receive mixed messages when the verbal and non-verbal actions are not communicating the same message. The manager who says, "I'm listening" and continues to look through papers on his desk is communicating that he really is not interested.

13. Listen to and deal effectively with complaints.

It is important to handle problems and complaints before they get blown out of proportion. In addition, people feel more significant when their complaints are taken seriously. Conversely, nothing hurts as much as when others view a personally significant problem as unimportant. By telling someone, "It's no big deal" or "You shouldn't feel that way" devalues the individual. You may not think it is important, but it is to the employee. Acknowledge the complaint and its validity then solicit the employee's input in resolving it.

14. Point out improvement in performance, no matter how small.

This is particularly important when people are beginning work on new tasks. In getting team members to improve performance, frequent encouragement can be useful; however, it should be reduced as the employee becomes more confident and proficient.

15. Demonstrate your own motivation through behavior and attitude.

Nothing turns people off faster than a leader who does not practice what he or she preaches. Be a role model. If you expect people to be on time, then you must make sure you are on time, too. If you expect team members to treat customers with courtesy and respect, you should treat team members the same way. If you expect people to get additional training to upgrade their knowledge and skills, you should be attending workshops and seminars to fine-tune your leadership and management skills as well.

16. Criticize behavior, not people.

A person can do a task poorly and still be a valuable employee. Always remember to respect the individual. Too many people are inappropriately labeled "dumb," "incompetent" or "unqualified." Be sure to address behavior not attitude. Managers often have difficulty distinguishing between attitude and behavior.

For example, the following statement: "Janet does not take her work seriously." Is that an attitude or behaviour statement? The answer is attitude. An attitude is a conclusion that identifies a feeling or emotion about an observed situation. Behaviour, on the other hand, is something that can be observed. To state the above example in terms of behaviour, you might write, "Janet's reports contain errors that require rewriting. She misses deadlines that affect the timeliness of our quarterly statements."

About WrightOne Consulting:

At WrightOne Consulting, our mission is to help organizations select the right people, manage their workforce and develop strong leaders. We have the experience and expertise to help your company develop a fully engaged team.

We identify, develop, and implement solutions that enable our clients to:

- *Select and hire people who can make a real contribution
- *Objectively evaluate employee's strengths and assets
- *Measure and enhance employee engagement
- *Assess and develop a prosperous corporate culture
- *Develop strategies to minimize turnover
- *Build effective succession management systems
- *Enhance effectiveness through performance coaching

We focus on five key areas for leading people in organizations:

- ~ Assessment Testing for pre-employment and professional development.
- ~ 360° Development Surveys (Center for Creative Leadership Certified)
- ~ Organizational Surveys: Employee Engagement, Strategy Alignment & Motivational Climate
- ~ Career Developmental & Personal Effectiveness Coaching
- ~ Training Programs for Interpersonal Skill Development, Supervisory Training and New Managers

Assessment Testing

Assessments for Pre-Employment:

WrightOne Assessment Profile
WrightOne Customer Service Profile
WrightOne Executive Assessment Profile

Assessments for Development:

WrightOne Leadership Competency Assessment
Personal Effectiveness Assessment
Career Transitions Assessment

360° Leadership Development Surveys

Specific Surveys for the following Groups:

Senior Executives
Experienced Managers
Potential Managers
Leadership Potential Index

Organizational Surveys

Employee Engagement
Organizational Strategy Alignment
Organizational Motivational Climate

Career Developmental & Personal Effectiveness Coaching

Career Transition Coaching
Performance Enhancement Coaching

Training

Interpersonal Skill Development - Social Style
Team Development
Supervisory Skill Training
New Manager – Leadership 101