

MOTIVATION: WHAT WORKS, WHAT DOESN'T

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Many firms look to incentive pay or bonus plans to motivate their staff. Such plans may provide short-term, superficial incentives but will fail to provide true motivation. Linda Honold summarized the reason why such efforts fail when she said, "Money is what helps people get to sleep at night, not what gets them up in the morning. Success and accomplishment are what really motivates people."

TRUE MOTIVATION

You cannot unilaterally motivate others. External or extrinsic motivators, such as rewards or punishment, produce only short-term results. As soon as the reward becomes expected or the punishment disappears, so does the motivation. The motivation for some of the most motivated people, such as Mother Teresa and her volunteers, clearly is not linked to an external reward. True motivation comes internally. It is a heartfelt mission based on values.

Strongly motivated people follow their inclination toward a mission that has strong personal meaning. Motivation reaches a peak when your personal goals and mission align with the specific demands of your work and the objectives of your organization. You like what you are doing. You are committed. You feel yourself growing. You see concrete results. You feel a strong sense of inner purpose. This is what motivation feels like—and it can come only from within.

MOTIVATORS VERSUS HYGIENE FACTORS

Frederick Herzberg's classic studies to determine what motivated workers found that distinctly separate factors lead to job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction. That is, the opposite of job satisfaction is not job dissatisfaction, because the factors involved are different. Rather, the opposite of job satisfaction is simply no job satisfaction. He separated this into "motivator" and "hygiene" factors.

The hygiene factors that can cause dissatisfaction (but not satisfaction) include company policies and administration, supervision, relationship with supervisor, interpersonal relationships, working conditions, salary, status, and security. He found that the motivators that can cause job satisfaction are achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, advancement, and growth.

In other words, adequate salaries and incentive pay and bonus plans can help workers avoid dissatisfaction but do not lead to satisfaction. Examples abound of people who leave high-paying, relatively secure jobs for an uncertain but more fulfilling venture. The fulfillment and related motivation comes from a new venture that more closely aligns with the person's internal values.

ALIGNING PERSONAL AND CORPORATE VALUES

You cannot motivate others, but you can create an environment that encourages and allows peoples' motivations to align with your organization's goals and values. When this alignment occurs, there is a tremendous release of energy. One study found that 50 percent of U.S. managers surveyed said their

careers gave them the most satisfaction in life. Family was a close second at 40 percent. This information shows that there is a tremendous source of psychological energy to be tapped.

A vice president of General Motors said, "...all people are at their best when they are the essential members of an organization that challenges the human spirit, that inspires personal growth and development, that gets things done and that symbolizes and stands for only the highest standards of ethical and moral conduct. That is what quality of work life is all about."

LOOKING BEYOND THE SURFACE

To appreciate the relationship between individual values and motivation, management expert Tom Peters suggests you talk to a dozen or so of your staff to find out what they do when they are not at work with your organization. He predicts that you may find a staff member who has never sold any work for your firm to be a deacon who has raised thousands of dollars for his or her church. Others are leaders of civic organizations or demonstrate amazing creativity as artists. They demonstrate astounding talent and drive - except during the hours spent working for your organization!

Everyone has internal values and goals that will truly motivate them. If they cannot align these internal values and goals on the job, they find off-the-job activities that do. Your challenge is to find out what each person's values and goals are and where they overlap with those of your organization, If there is no overlap, both the individual and the organization will be better off to separate. As William Edward Burghardt DuBois' said, "With work which you despise, which bores you, and which the world does not need - this life is hell."

Fostering Individual Motivation

Here are some specific steps you can take to create an environment that fosters opportunities for individual motivation.

Action	Motivators Involved
1. Remove controls while retaining accountability	Responsibility, personal achievement
2. Increase accountability of individuals for their own work	Responsibility, recognition
3. Give a person a complete natural unit of work (module, division, area)	Responsibility, recognition, achievement
4. Grant additional authority to staff in their activity, job freedom	Responsibility, recognition, achievement
5. Make financial reports available to all staff	Internal recognition
6. Show appreciation to all team members	Internal recognition
7. Provide unlimited training opportunities	Growth and learning
8. Introduce new and more difficult tasks than previously handled	Growth, learning, challenge
9. Assign individuals specific or specialized tasks enabling them to increase their skills and knowledge	Responsibility, growth, learning

The first five items are self-explanatory, but the other items deserve more discussion.

Appreciation

Item 6 refers to appreciation for a job done well. The tendency is to jump immediately to the next project or task without truly coming to completion and acknowledgment of the team members. It has been said that appreciation is like an insurance policy – you have to keep renewing it. Effective praise is genuine, specific, and offered at the time the good work is done. Such praise can elevate the energy level and encourage motivation. As Mark Twain said, "I can live for two months on a good compliment."

Training

In regard to item 7, consider reimbursing any training (whether directly related to the job or not) costs for any staff member so long as the training is satisfactorily completed. The only qualification on the blanket offer is that case-by-case approvals are needed if time away from work is involved. Firms using this approach have found improved energy and morale among those who seek training opportunities. And these individuals usually are those with the most intellectual curiosity, drive, and creativity.

Even if it is not apparent that the training is job-related, the organization still benefits. In addition to the worker's stimulation, indirect benefits may result from networking with others in the training session. They may turn out to be clients or provide information that leads to new work.

The individual may see new opportunities for the organization that never would have surfaced if the employee stayed focused only on the normal day-to-day work tasks. Some firms are reluctant to try this approach because they fear they are opening the door to unlimited costs. The sad fact is that the fear is unjustified because you won't be overrun with applicants.

Challenges and Opportunities

An "Individual Learning Plan" is a practical approach to Items 8 and 9. At the start of each year, each employee identifies what they want to learn in the next 12 months and defines a plan to do it. Much is revealed about values and goals in discussions about learning goals.

Elements may include seminars, training courses, college or continuing education courses, coaching by a senior staff member, teaching a class or seminar; and, importantly, project assignments that will contribute to the desired learning. The energy dedicated to project work increases dramatically when the employee is learning something he or she wants to learn; plus, the growth is not being funded with overhead dollars.

"Project Learning Plans" are another useful approach to Items 8 and 9. Each team member identifies what they want to learn or improve as a result of their project assignments at the start of each project. To the maximum extent consistent with effective project work, assignments are aligned with individual developmental goals. Include your clients in the process; they often want to learn from each project too. Periodic checks are made during the project to monitor the progress towards these goals.

Some examples of project learning goals:

- A worker spends time becoming proficient in a new software application.
- A person normally assigned to technical tasks wants the opportunity to review monthly project status reports to better understand project management.
- An employee volunteers time to attend public meetings on the project.

In one specific case, a project team, including the client, was developing a "green" design for a major new civic library. The team members wanted to learn as much as they could about similar facilities in other communities. They spent hours of their own time researching and visiting such facilities. The end result is a stunning, widely acclaimed design completed on budget, an enthusiastic and smarter team, and a delighted client who was involved in the entire process.

REFERENCE

Herzberg, F., "One more time: How do you motivate employees?" People: Managing Your Most Important Asset, Harvard Business Review, Boston, MA (1990).