

"Motivating Employees - Not All Fun and Games"

Motivate: v. To stimulate to action, provide with an incentive or motive

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Spurring employees to action is an age-old problem employers have been attempting to address for ages. How do we get employees to do what *WE* want them to do? This has proven difficult for a number of reasons.

The crux of the problem is a misconception: We can motivate people to do what we want them to do. People do things for their *OWN* reasons, not for our reasons. *YOU* cannot directly motivate them. This leads to two common problems when attempting to motivate.

The first problem is the assumption that, even though we place people in a situation (job) they don't like, they can learn to like it, once they get used to it. They may adapt their style to the situation by changing the job, but the more they try to change themselves for the job, the more energy is spent changing. That energy would normally be focused directed on the job itself. Stress is also a direct result of stretching your personality to fit the job. This type of situation is *DEMOTIVATIONAL*.

NASA's downsizing in the 1960's provides a case in point. At that time, many highly qualified technicians and engineers flooded the local job markets. As scarce as jobs were, many had to take jobs they would not normally consider, such as "cold-call" selling to the public. Think about it. The last thing a typical engineer wants to do is meet new people and motivate them to buy something! They will have to put time, energy and focus into "pumping up" - attempting to be enthusiastic, outgoing, likable - trying to fit a role in which they are incompatible. They might be able to do it, but for how long and how intensely before they start finding excuses to take longer lunch breaks, not to go in, anything to avoid the facade.

This de-motivation is caused by mismatching one's preferred behavioural style with a job where optimum behaviours are too different. If one must make only minimal changes to fit the job's optimum role, then more energy and focus is directed to the job itself. They can "be themselves", and work does not seem so much like work.

Those who are in well-matched jobs still need motivation, but actual motivation is considerably different from those demotivating processes. To stimulate increased action, the employer must realise exactly what this individual's "hot buttons" are. Decades of study have finally made companies realise that not all employees are motivated primarily by money. U.S. studies have indicated other key motivators as well - the quest for knowledge (theoretical), the desire to help others (social), the need to influence others (political/individual), the need for inner harmony and wholeness (aesthetic) and the need to have direction from outside (regulatory). One's needs by priority - their values - determine what motivates them. Values change as needs are met and others take priority, but they do tell us how this individual makes decisions and how he/she prefers to be compensated.

Someone with higher political values than economic would be more motivated to reach their target goals if you offered increased prestige, such as a new title for their business card instead of a monetary bonus. Likewise, someone with a high theoretical value, say in computers, would be more motivated by an offer of an all-expense paid trip to Comdex and any three workshops/seminars than by monetary reward.

Decisions are primarily influenced by Values. A partner who has very high economic values and very low aesthetics is driven by the bottom line: assets, balance sheet, etc. Having nice things or going to nice places means little to him/her. If their partner has a very low economic value and a very high aesthetic value, nice things and going to nice places is what life is all about - money in the bank is worthless. One wants to save, the other wants to ...

Since one's values are the true motivators, employers today are using profiles and assessments to determine values and to reward accordingly. Certainly, their people will be more motivated - their true needs will be increasingly met. Meeting these needs allows for maximum energy to be directed to the goals of the job itself, rather than on coping with a misalignment between the job and one's own style.