

Looking To Increase Employee Performance? Motivation Is Critical.

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By Dick Grote

What's an organization to do when all of its honest and genuine efforts to motivate Sally and Sam

to come to work on time, work safely, deliver efficient services, and act as if they were happy to be a part of the team, fail? There is no shortage of pop-psych books and motivational speakers who'll tell you a thousand-and-one ways to light a fire in Sam's belly. But what do you do when the fire goes out and none of those thousand-and-one ways seem to work any more? What do we really know about motivation?

Does anything work? Given the constant barrage of pep talks and posters, slogans and free advice on the topic of motivation, there should certainly be at least a couple of core principles that predictably work every time. Aren't there? Or are we stuck with the notion that everybody's an individual, and what's a turn-on for Sally is likely to be a turn-off for Sam?

Rather than speculate, let's gather some data. Think back through all the jobs you've ever had, and bring to mind the job you had that produced the greatest amount of motivation in you. It doesn't matter what the job was — it might be the job you have right now; it might be a part-time job you had in high school. Doesn't matter.

It also doesn't matter what the word, "motivation," means to you. However you choose to define the term is fine. Simply bring to mind the job that you had when you had the greatest degree of job satisfaction, excitement, enthusiasm, turned-on-ness. Now that you've got the job clearly in mind, quickly jot down the factors that caused you to feel so motivated, so satisfied, and so turned on. If you're like most people, the factors you listed are highly predictable — and so are the ones that didn't make your list. On your list appear such items as recognition, opportunities for achievement, freedom and autonomy, challenge, the chance to learn and grow, and the work itself. What was missing? You probably didn't write down such important items as job security, benefits, working conditions, and the organization's policies and procedures.

It turns out that the missing link in understanding motivation is understanding that there are two very different factors at work. On one hand there are the things that motivate us, that turn us on, that cause us to feel satisfied with the job. On the other are those things that dissatisfy us, that turn us off, that

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demotivate us. There are two separate variables at work, and you have to attack both of them. Psychologist Fred Herzberg stated it best, "Job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction are not flip sides of the same coin. They are entirely different coins, and the wise manager uses both those coins to buy better performance."

What is motivation? A good working definition of motivation is this: motivation represents a measurable increase in both job satisfaction and productivity. The motivated worker does his job better and likes it more than those folks who are not so motivated. What generates real motivation is the first set of factors mentioned: opportunities for achievement and accomplishment, recognition, learning and growth, having some say in how the job is done, and worthwhile work. Those are the items that generate strong feelings of loyalty, satisfaction, enthusiasm, and all those other important attributes we want to see in those whose paychecks we sign.

But you can't get away with working exclusively on the satisfiers scale. You have to make sure that you clean up the job to reduce or eliminate those things that cause people to be unhappy and quit.

Wait a minute, some of you are saying — where does money fit into this scheme? Pay is the ringer in the equation; the one factor that shows up as both a source of satisfaction and a source of dissatisfaction. People are dissatisfied with their pay when they feel it isn't commensurate with their efforts, or is distributed inequitably, or doesn't reflect the responsibilities of the job, or is out of touch with market realities. If you don't pay competitive wages, people will be unhappy and they will quit. But no matter how much you raise salaries, you won't generate motivation and job satisfaction, because job satisfaction is a function of the content of the job.

Look at it this way: Hire me to wash dirty dishes and pay me chickenfeed and I'll be unhappy and demotivated. But raise my wages to a princely sum and guess what — I'll still hate washing dirty dishes. But I won't complain any more about my crummy compensation; I probably won't quit; and I may even improve my attendance record (if you pay me my munificent wages on an hourly basis). What you have bought with the generous pay increase you provided me was not real job satisfaction. All you have bought is the absence of dissatisfaction. They are not the same thing. If you really want me to be a happy camper, you'd better change the nature of my work.

And changing the nature of the work is the true key to motivation. The message is clear: do everything you can to get rid of the things that generate employee unhappiness, recognizing that no matter how big an investment you make you'll get precious little in return. All your money will buy is the absence of dissatisfaction. Listen up — you have no choice! You must pay people competitive wages, you must provide a healthy, safe and attractive work environment, you must give at least as good insurance policies and vacations and retirements plans as people could get working for the bagel joint down the street. If you don't, people will quit and you won't be able to hire replacements. But all you'll get for the fortune you spend in this effort is a bunch of people who have to search hard for something to complain about.

If you want genuine motivation, though, you've got to look at the job itself. Does the work provide me with the chance to really accomplish something? Does my job allow me to do something that makes an

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actual difference? Do I have a lot of say in how I do my job or am I totally constricted by standard operating procedures? Can I learn and grow and develop on this job, or will I be tightening the same nut on the same bolt for the next thirty years? Do I get any recognition when I do something particularly well?

Providing recognition of good performance is the best place to start. Recognizing good performance any time it's encountered — with just a "Thanks" or a literal pat on the back — can be enough to get the motivational engine working. Sally and Sam will need more than just an attaboy, but acknowledging excellent work every time it appears is a wonderful place to start the engine of motivation running.

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Effective Ways to Motivate Employees

By Myron Curry

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WHAT'S THE DRIVE

What is it that drives an employee? More specifically, what is it that causes an employee to WANT to do his or her job? After all, the answer to this question is the key to the motivation of employees and employer happiness. And, even more important than knowing what it is that motivates an employee is whether or not this "motivation" is something that will cause an employee to go through the motions of doing the job or instill actual desire for a job well done in the employee's mind.

The answers to these questions and more are what should always be on every employer's mind if they are to create effective, productive workforces. A lack of motivation is a true killer, as anyone certainly knows.

SHOW ME THE MONEY...OR NOT

Popularized by the movie Jerry Maguire, starring Tom Cruise and Renee Zellweger, "Show me the money" has become a commonly used term in society. And, often, this is the basis for what most people think is at the top of the list for employee motivation. But, is it?

Naturally, higher pay is never frowned upon. There is not a person in the world that couldn't use more money. Between bills, children, higher education, and personal desires, among many other reasons, money is a factor that can never be ignored. It is a need that we must all have filled.

Many companies use money as incentive for motivation. Is this wrong? Not necessarily. Big pay raises

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and bonuses are always something that a person can use and these are things that will certainly never be turned down. Cash is a motivator that will always be popular. And, if possible, money is always a good choice to use for employee motivation because who doesn't like money?

But, money should not be the ONLY tool used from the toolbox of motivation. There are many other choices for motivational increase. In fact, many employees who claim money is the only thing that will drive their motivation higher do so because there is a lack of any other form of compensation. This frame of mind adheres to the comment so often heard, "Well, they better pay me more money or give me a bonus because I'm sure not getting anything else out of working here." In other words, there sure isn't anything else the employee is receiving that even remotely resembles compensation to increase motivation.

SOMETHING ELSE

Employee contribution is something that can increase employee motivation. If an employee is regularly able to contribute thoughts, ideas, and suggestions to problems at hand or regular work activities, that is a feeling of accomplishment which goes a long way. It makes an employee feel as though he or she is important and, hence, their motivation is elevated.

Recognition is another form of motivation. If all an employee hears is the things he or she does wrong, the opposite affect of motivation will occur. Of course, an employee is going to do things wrong, at times. But, they will inevitably do things right, as well. Let them know when this happens, always.

If an employee feels he or she has the respect of his or her peers and colleagues, this is another motivation booster. Stifle negative comments in the workplace. Do not allow employees to talk down to one another and/or "drag each other through the mud". Likewise, make sure you don't do the same when other employees are able to see it happen to a fellow co-worker. That's bad for moral and only downplays motivation.

Keeping an employee "in the loop" is something else that is important to motivation. When an employee feels he or she is not up-to-date with what is occurring in the company or their department, that is a message to the employee that says, "You are not important." That's not the kind of message that increases motivation. Keep information flowing to each employee; let them know what the company is doing and the direction it is taking.

Stay flexible. Make an absolute effort to ensure your employee is not tied up in red tape. If an employee is not able to solve problems with a degree of flexibility because there are too many company rules hampering common sense progress, an employee feels nothing but frustration. Motivation is not built on frustration.

Constant check-in with higher-ups when working on a project undermines an employee's confidence and willingness to think for themselves. It also deteriorates motivation.

Make sure plenty of sufficient resources are available for an employee's use. Motivation cannot thrive if an employee is constantly faced with having inadequate resources to do the job.

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Create a fun and stimulating work place. Let everyone address each other on a first name basis or have a "casual dress day". Encourage employees to create a work environment that is as comfortable as possible and not so office-like by bringing in personal pictures and things such as plants, for example. This will only promote creativity and, in the long run, increase motivation.

Communicate with your employee. Find out what interests them and what doesn't. Speaking with an employee frequently shows that you care about them in more ways than simply wanting them to keep up with productivity. This will increase an employee's motivation as well.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

Keep these points in mind and motivation will have a chance to soar:

- * Employee contribution important
- * Recognition from an employer a must
- * Retaining respect of peers and colleagues
- * Keeping employee informed
- * Stay flexible and make sure the employee can avoid as much red tape as possible
- * Constant check-in with higher-ups only leads to micro managing and lack of motivation
- * Make sure an employee has sufficient resources available to them
- * Create a fun and stimulating work environment
- * Make sure you communicate

Keeping these methods of compensation in mind is what it takes to understand what it is that drives your employee to want to do a better job. They must WANT to do a better job or the work they do will never be as excellent as it could be. If you are ever in doubt as to what it is that drives your employee, simply ask, either in a group meeting or one-on-one. In fact, asking an employee what it is that motivates him or her is a good idea right from the start. Then, you can always be sure of what to provide.

All in all, make sure that money isn't the only thing you can offer an employee to increase his or her motivation. If it is, then as soon as the money is better somewhere else, your employee's motivation will definitely increase...working for the other company.

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