



Management Assistance Program

MOTIVATING EMPLOYEES TO PERFORM:

Moving Beyond the Old Models and Myths to a Relational Approach to Motivation

GOALS:

The goal of this module is to provide organizations, managers and employees with techniques for maintaining a highly motivated staff with the underlying goal of using motivation to increase performance and job satisfaction, and sustain a highly productive workforce.

The specific goals are to help organizations, managers, and employees:

- Understand the importance of a motivated workforce
- Learn what motivates employees
- Obtain motivational techniques
- Motivate disengaged employees

OVERVIEW:

According to a recent survey of 905 workers by Kepner Tregoe Inc., a Princeton, N.J.-based management consulting firm, only one third (37%) feel that their bosses know what motivates them.¹ This may be due to the popular misconceptions managers have about what motivates their employees. For instance, organizations may still promote “The Carrot and the Big Stick” theory which involves finding something that employees need and desire, using it as a motivator to get them to do things they would not otherwise want to do—such as boring or unpleasant jobs—and punishing those who do not do their job because they are unmotivated.² Or, organizations take the “one-size fits all” approach to motivating employees by offering simple solutions such as just paying staff members more money to buy their allegiance or giving them more interesting tasks to do as a reward for their unwavering dedication.

These motivational techniques fail to take into account that employees are complex human beings who have a complex set of needs and desires—part

¹ McNerney, Donald. “Creating a Motivated Workforce.” *HR Focus*. Aug. 1996. Vol. 73, Iss. 8, p.1 (4 pp.)

² Thomas, Kenneth W. “Intrinsic motivation and how it works.” *Training*. Oct 2000. Vol. 37, Iss. 10, p. 130-135 (5 pp.)

material, part social, part emotional, and part intellectual -that must be met if they are to be motivated.³ Therefore, managers must take the time to get to know some of the needs, concerns and goals of their employees, and tailor their motivational techniques accordingly. By identifying the needs and values of their staff instead of concentrating solely on their own projected needs managers will sustain a highly motivated staff with high morale. Motivated employees mean increased performance, job satisfaction, and a more productive work environment. Employees who are willing and want to do their jobs will take more ownership for their results and will strive to increase the quality of their work.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Importance of Motivating Employees

Employee performance is a function of motivation and competency. To improve or maintain organizational effectiveness, it is important for managers to know their employees and to know how to improve or maintain their job satisfaction.⁴ Managers should do their utmost to enhance employee motivation by demonstrating through words and actions that employees are valued members of the organization and that their leaders are always seeking to understand what employees want and are striving to meet their needs.⁵

In addition, managers need to motivate employees to want to satisfy customers, solve operational or customer related problems, and use more of their own ingenuity and interest to further the organization—which is not just performing a task—but actually being motivated to care about the business and its success.⁶

Managers should also have a clear understanding of how to use their motivational skills and employee successes to improve job satisfaction and performance. When managers invest the time to understand their employees and develop tailored motivational techniques—the return on investment is greater commitment, increased productivity and enhanced job satisfaction. Highly motivated employees excel especially if they are personally fulfilled and energized by their work; they strive to meet organizational goals and the specific needs of their customers.

³ McNerney, Donald.

⁴ Skemp-Arlt, Karen and Toupenncce, Rachelle. "The Administrator's Role in Employee Motivation." *Coach and Athletic Director*. Feb 2007. Vol. 76, Iss. 7, p. 28,30,32,34 (4 pp).

⁵ Skemp-Arlt, Karen and Toupenncce, Rachelle.

⁶ McNerney, Donald.

2. Learn what motivates your employees

Kenneth Thomas, author of *Intrinsic Motivation and How it Works*, discusses the concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in the workplace. He states that intrinsic motivation involves the psychological rewards you get from your work. When you are intrinsically motivated, you genuinely care about the work, you look for better ways to do your job, and you are energized and fulfilled by doing it well. Intrinsic motivation is quite different from extrinsic motivation, which refers to the economic rewards you get from others such as pay raises, bonuses and benefits. While extrinsic motivators are important, they may not be enough to keep employees at their best. With extrinsic motivation one tends to focus on the rewards rather than the work itself—you work only well enough to get the rewards and once you get the extrinsic rewards you tend to look only for the next level of reward and work to that expectation. It can actually be counterproductive. Research shows that intrinsic motivation is a key factor in performance and innovation. At a personal level, intrinsic motivation makes your work fulfilling, makes work less stressful, and serves as a major reason why people decide to stay at a job.⁷

In order to help employees get intrinsically motivated, managers need to ask themselves, “What do my employees want from their job?” Many organizations believe that their employees are only motivated by money, power, time off, challenges, and independence. While those motivators can work for some employees, in reality, most people desire personal satisfaction, control and respect, work/life balance, accomplishments, and the ability to enjoy life.⁸ Paying employees a competitive salary and providing bonuses can be a strong motivator, but, establishing an environment that fosters a healthy balance between work and family life may be more rewarding in the end. One of the greatest incentives for increased performance may be the actual return on the investment experienced by the employee who feels appreciated at work and at home. The manager who meets their employees’ values and priorities gets the strongest results.

In addition, research shows that organizations that have certain positive characteristics sustain highly motivated employees:⁹

- *A strong corporate culture:* The corporate culture is often based on the organizations mission and goals. Some organizations encourage employees to express their individuality and others promote trust by having no micromanagers.

⁷ Thomas, Kenneth.

⁸ Penn Behavioral Health presentation.

⁹ McNerney, Donald.

- *Job security:* A stable working environment is a very important trait. Organizations that have a low-turnover rate and provide employees with job security will have highly motivated employees. People who are afraid of losing their jobs will be less motivated to do well and may become disengaged.
- *Good pay:* Proper compensation, promotions and raises are always helpful. However, once an employee has reached a respectable salary other incentives such as a good work environment, job security, safety, and respect weigh more heavily.
- *Perks or incentives:* Keeping employees happy by providing various perks and incentives. For example, some companies have corporate events like company picnics or quarterly dinners. Other companies offer their employees discounted travel fees or merchandise.
- *Continuing education programs/scholarships:* Offering programs such as continuing education classes, tuition reimbursement, and scholarships show employees that you are invested in them and their future.
- *Opportunities for growth:* The opportunity for promotion and advancements motivates employees to perform well and achieve their goals.
- *Recognition:* Recognizing and rewarding employees for outstanding performance and going above and beyond the call of duty. This helps employers show their employees that their hard work does not go unnoticed.

3. How to Motivate Your Employees

As mentioned above, the first step in motivating your employees is to understand their current wants, needs, values, and goals. In addition, the advice listed below may help managers motivate their employees more successfully:

- *Talk to your staff members:* Ask your staff what they currently need in order to work more effectively. This involves asking employees, "What tools, resources, clearer communications and expectations, rewards and workplace norms do you need that you are not getting now? How can we help you fulfill your part of this bargain to be

effective, efficient, optimistic, and a good team player?"¹⁰

- *Use influential performance motivators:* Some of the most influential performance factors include, fear, desire, challenge, reward, control, relationships, recognition, anger, pride, and guilt¹¹. These motivators are neither negative nor positive—their benefits or drawbacks are based on how they are used, when they are used, and who it is being used on. For example, *fear* can be used to increase intensity. If an employee tends to procrastinate, fear can be a great motivator. People will be motivated to achieve their task or meet a deadline in fear of disappointing themselves or their management. However, fear can be a de-motivator when people are in constant fear of losing their job, or being reprimanded by their manager. *Pride* can motivate employees because they feel the need to prove themselves and succeed in the assigned task. On the other hand, *pride* is an ineffective motivator if the employee is disengaged from their job and feel that they are “too important” to perform certain tasks.
- *Understand good/bad personality traits:* Each person has a blend of good and bad personality traits. As a manager is it important to develop motivational techniques that capitalize on the person’s good personality traits and compensate for the bad traits. That compensation is called “character” and what a manager wants to build with their employees is a stronger workforce character. A manager can do this by focusing on developing traits that bring out the employees’ intrinsic motivations which makes them desire to succeed and excel at work.

4. How to Motivate Disengaged Employees

When managers are faced with a disengaged employee, someone who is no longer committed to the job, they can take steps to either recapture the worker's attention or help him or her move on.¹²

- *Identify the disengaged employee:* Certain signs of a disengaged employee may be an employee who used to contribute in meetings but now no longer offers his or her views. Or, an employee who was always ready to pitch in during an emergency, but now sits on the sidelines. A disengaged employee may also have some behavioral changes such as arriving late to work, taking long lunches, and taking more sick time.

¹⁰Reinhold, Barbara. “How to Improve Morale in the Workplace.” Monster Solutions.com. Accessed 1 May 2007 at http://solutions.monster.ca/657_en-CA_p1.asp.

¹¹ Penn Behavioral Health presentation

¹² Prencipe, Loretta W. “Reenergize the disengaged worker”. *InfoWorld*. 16 Apr 2001. Vol. 23, Iss. 16, p. 95 (1 p.)

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- *Consider if it is the corporate or team culture that is affecting the employee:* Events in the organization or the team can affect an employee's attitude. For instance, if an organization is being downsized and job security is at risk, or there are a series of organizational and management changes, motivated employees can become disengaged.
- *Talk to the employee:* Plan a meeting with the employee and explain that a change in behavior has been noticed. Ask the employee if they see a change and whether they believe the problems are coming from work or home. Ask open ended questions to find out what is causing the employee to become disengaged. Does the employee have the skills to perform the job? Does the employee have the will to do well? Or, does the employee just simply not have the desire to work at the organization anymore?
- *Create a strategy for re-motivating the employee:* Once the manager has talked to the employee, devise a plan for engaging the de-motivated employee. If the attempt to motivate the disengaged employee is to no avail—the manager should think about helping their employee move on to another organization.

SUMMARY: Tips for Motivating Employees

- Do not use old motivational styles such as the “The Carrot and Big Stick” theory and the “one-size-fits-all” motivational techniques.
- Understand that employees are complex individuals who have a complex set of needs and desires that must be met if they are to be motivated.
- Motivate people to achieve goals such as the desire to satisfy customers, solve problems and care about the business and its success.
- Understand the limitations of extrinsic motivation and the power of intrinsic motivation.
- Take the time figure out what your employees want and need from their jobs. Work to understand their wants, needs, values, and goals. Tailor your motivational techniques accordingly.
- Talk to your employees individually. Ask them questions such as, “What tools, resources, rewards and workplace motivations do you need that you are not currently getting now?”
- Encourage employees to get involved in the organizational mission by asking “How can we help you fulfill your part of this bargain to be effective, efficient, optimistic, and a good team player”?
- Learn the values of each of your employees to understand when, how and with whom to use influential performance motivators such as fear, pride, guilt and reward.
- Replace bad employee habits and poor workplace traits with stronger incentives to build character and develop the motivation to excel and succeed.
- Take steps to either recapture the worker's attention or help him or her move on.