

Motivating Your People

The word motivation comes from the latin verb *movere* (to move). The Oxford dictionary states that it is the “*causing or being the reason for something.*”

One of the highest challenges for management and business owners is that of having their employees working somewhere near full capacity – whether from a time basis (ensuring that they are productive for the majority of their work days) or their capacity in terms of the individuals talents and skills. In short, the employee is doing what they love to do (passion); working in a role that is suited to them (skill set) and working productively (time).

Intrinsic Verses Extrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation is best described as that motivation that comes from within a person whereas extrinsic motivation is that which comes from external sources. Intrinsic motivation is all about doing that which we find enjoyable and are passionate about; that which relates to what we value highly and where we gain a personal sense of satisfaction. Extrinsic motivation is about external factors that create stimulus to achieve or perform certain tasks. Examples of this are demonstrated when a child does what they are told due to impending potential consequences; an employee is told they are free to leave the company if they don't jump on board; people are rewarded with time off, financial and other material perks etc. Both the intrinsic and extrinsic motivators have their place but it is my view that if someone is motivated from within they will perform at higher levels for a lot longer than those receiving external rewards.

Enthusiasm

In the workplace, the starting point is the hiring process. Identifying keenness and passion for ones work (enthusiasm) should be primary, skill levels secondary. Much easier to train someone in the technical aspects of their job than teaching them to love their work. The latter akin to trying to make a slow horse speed up – it just doesn't happen. Many employers bypass this stage. Often with labour shortages, production demands and not really understanding the *whole person*, we tend to hire anyone that is somewhere near the mark technically, rather than pursuing enthusiasm.

Internal Drivers

One of the key observations to consider when both hiring and working with people is that all of us are motivated by what is most important to us. If we value money and the freedom it brings then money it is. If satisfaction from a job well done, then that is reward enough. If it is time with the family, then that is what drives us. Our workers are no different. Different factors drive different individuals according to what is most important for them. Tap into these internal drivers, adapt the workplace around these and you will have employees more inclined to be intrinsically motivated in their work with both themselves and the company reaping the rewards. Their work then relates to their higher values.

Skill Set and Role Alignment

I have worked with numbers of employees and managers over the years who when I began coaching them were trundling along, doing what they had to in order to keep their job but that was it. Once identifying their natural talents and skill set (and I've found that enthusiasm is partly linked to these) and then working with senior management to either move them into a more suitable role or redefine their current role, their motivation and subsequent productivity increased dramatically.

Purpose

All of us have been designed to contribute to the world around us and the people who work for us need to feel that what they are doing daily is of value. Helping employees link their daily work to purpose is a powerful intrinsic motivator. One persons purpose might simply be to provide for their family and raise them in a loving environment. The person who sits beside them might be driven to free children from sex slavery in Cambodia. Taking the time to understand each of our employees greater purpose, demonstrating interest and belief in these will go a long way to increasing highly engaged, performing staff. The other key here is helping your team see the greater reason for your business. You've no doubt come across the story of the Three Bricklayers. When the first one was asked what he was doing he simply stated the task outlined for him - “I'm laying bricks.” The

second when asked the same question said “I’m putting up a wall.” The final bricklayer declared proudly “I’m building a cathedral.”

What is your cathedral? What is the greater purpose for your company? If you can unravel this and then instil it into your companies mission and values, it will help a greater number of team members jump on board with where you are going. It will also help the wrong people jump off.

Money As A Motivator

I have had many business owners and managers over the years lamenting the poor motivation and low performance of their team. The discussion invariably gets around to creating a bonus structure to lift the motivation of the workforce. My question back to them is always “what if they are not motivated by money?”

I had a staff member in a previous business that while money was important, an extra long weekend to be with her family was a higher motivator. I structured her role and performance criteria around her ability to leave at midday every Friday. She stayed with me for years. Another account manager who worked from home was the principle carer for his children. I structured his work around this primary purpose and also gave him complete autonomy. I took away the need for him to work so many hours per week and created a results based position. His motivation and performance was greater than if I had thrown more money at him.

Incentivise everyone with financial rewards and you potentially will miss the mark much of the time. As Edward L Deci observed: *“If a person who is intrinsically motivated to perform an activity begins to receive external reinforcement for the activity, what will happen to his intrinsic motivation? Previous studies and the present study indicate that money decreases intrinsic motivation, while verbal reinforcements tend to enhance intrinsic motivation.”*

Edward L Deci – Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 1972, Vol. 22, No. 1, 113-120

There is nothing wrong with financial incentives but if you do head down this path, look at incentives based on what drives the individual and also rewarding team performance as opposed to just individual effort.

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