

PERSONNEL NOTEBOOK

For Your Most Important Resource—The Human Resource

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MOTIVATING EMPLOYEES Part I - Can Employees Be Motivated?

For most of the 20th century, leaders and business owners have been debating the issue of Motivation. The classic business innovators like Taylor, Mazlow, McGregor, Deming and Drucker, among others, have studied analyzed, designed methods and some have even debunked the whole concept of Motivation.

There is even one theory that says you cannot motivate anyone to do anything, they have to do it themselves. Although that theory makes a good point, That is, you cannot force an individual to be motivated if they decide not to do so, that's like saying "You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink". However if you let him become thirsty enough or put a few apples in the water, he will likely be more motivated to do so.

In reality, we have all motivated someone to do something. Many of us have motivated our spouses to marry us, our children to mind us, and our employers to hire us. And all of us have been motivated to do something, to accept this job, to buy a certain car, to order that desert after dinner or to come to work even when we don't feel like it.

It's pretty clear that all employees, indeed all people, are already motivated, but not necessarily at work.

A Gallup poll showed that 19% of all 1,000 employees surveyed said that they *actively disengage* at work! Their motivation is all tied to things off the job. When they go to work they shut down! They go about the business of processing things, not engaging in results focused work. The employees stated that they don't know what is expected of them and their bosses don't listen to them.

Gallup said, "Actively disengaged workers cost employers \$292 billion to \$355 billion a year". Such employees also miss more days of work and are less loyal to employers.

Many people have been very successful at motivating others and we can learn something from them. First let's understand what we are talking about.

What Is Motivation?

The Oxford Dictionary says that motivation is the action term for motive. Motive is defined as "That which moves or tends to move a person to a particular course of action". For our purposes it's "How can I, as an employer, get

employees to move forward in the direction, and to the results, I need?

How Can I Motivate My Employees?

1. First Remove De-Motivators.

The first step is to remove the barriers and obstacles that will make motivation difficult. Most companies have some de-motivators in their workplace. Some of the more common de-motivators are:

- An Atmosphere Of Distrust.

Assuming that employees are basically lazy and untrustworthy makes employees feel that you're not all on the same side, that, in fact, you may be enemies. There is no desire to participate or to contribute.

- Having Low Expectations Of Your Employees.

Design Scapes Inc. of Sarasota Florida is a multiple award winning Landscape Company. Ski Giczewski, President and owner, attributes much of the high performance his staff and crew are known for, to his philosophy, "I have high expectations of our people, I expect superior performance". You will usually get what you expect.

- Too Many Demanding And Restrictive Rules And Policies.

There are companies with 20 employees who have a 200-page policy manual full of small print and legal jargon. Keep rules and policies to just what you need. Don't design them for the 2 or 3 employees you have trouble with. Design it for the best employees and deal with the others as exceptions. Word them so that employees understand and are not intimidated by them.

- Failure To Communicate.

Let employees know what's going on in the company. What are your long range plans? Any new products or services planned? Many companies will give more information to the newspapers or to strangers than to their own employees. Don't make them the outsiders.

- Create The Physical Environment That Is Conducive To Productivity.

A dismal, dirty or unpleasant place to work makes people feel dismal, dirty and unpleasant. Prisons are designed to be harsh and colorless, made of concrete and steel, full of lifeless sounds and sights, with expected regimentation. That's because they want from those prisoners just the opposite of what you want from your employees. They want intimidation, obedience and no action. You want trust, self-starters, participation and productivity.

- Don't Let Problems Fester.

Respond to complaints, resolve problems, don't try to wait them out in hope that they'll go away. They'll only go out of sight, not out of mind. Be fair and ethical. Employees will long remember any ignored complaint or unresolved problems. They will grow and become a constant ache.

When unions set out to unionize a company's employees, they don't do it by promising higher wages or better benefits. They do it by seeking out and listening to problems. Problems! They offer solutions that will be achieved by joining the union. That's what they build unions on, finding the problems that you didn't resolve. Seek out those problems yourself and resolve them early. Be fair, be ethical.

2. Create The Participative Environment.

Bring employees into the process of creating a program of Motivation. It's hard to trust your business and your revenues to employees that your not sure can handle them. But your company becomes the people you have chosen to work with. They *are* the company. When people change, the company changes. Trust them; *expect* them to do the right things.

Employees who help create the ideas and are part of the founding of these new things are buying into the program. You are not doing it for them or to them, they are. They become responsible for making it work much more so than you. Expect them to make the decisions that will improve their work. Let them recommend motivating ideas, environments and rewards. Tell them that you know they are competent and that you expect superior results.

- **Use Employees To Create Or Review Rules And Policies.**

Allow employees to discuss and participate in the creation of the employee handbook. Never start something new like an attendance policy by posting it on the board before employees know it exists. It should come from the employees. At least review such things with them before they're initiated. Most new rules or policies should be announced a few weeks or months before they start.

- **Share The Vision.**

Let employees know what your vision for the company is. Often the best leaders don't make people do anything. They paint the picture and show it to everyone. They communicate the vision.

One of the best examples of communicating the vision was in 1961, when President Kennedy in his Inaugural address stated his vision that we will send a man to the moon and return him to Earth. And we will do this within 10 years. He expressed a very clear and bold vision and with a time frame. He didn't run the programs or make the decisions. He created and communicated the vision and expected them to make it happen and they did.

Communicate the company's vision, it's mission, it's values and it's goals.

- **Instill Confidence.**

Recognize people's contribution of ideas and achievements. Never ridicule or punish someone for a suggestion. Encourage ideas.

If your employees keep coming to you for answers, solutions and permission, respond by asking them what they would do. Let them resolve problems. Like your child leaning to ride a bike, it takes courage and a little risk to let go of the bike and let them go it in their own. That's what you have to do to encourage, develop and motivate your employees. But also ask yourself "What am I doing that makes them afraid to proceed on their own"? Instead of always giving answers, ask questions like a coach. Train them to act on their own.

3. Two Forms Of Motivation must be included.

Although there are many ways to motivate employees, they all fall into 2 forms, Internal and External.

A. Internal

This is the motivation each individual has within them self. It may come from a passion or interest that satisfies something within. Most companies when

concentrating on Motivation miss this one altogether. They tend to concentrate on the “Pay For Performance” principle. That’s an excellent principle. But by itself, it’s only half the story, half the results. Internal Motivation can be developed in the following ways:

- Vision.

Try to instill the vision, mission and values of the company in your employees. See if they can identify with those values.

- Products.

Help your employees see the value of your products or services to people. How your company provides something good to customers and the community.

- Passion.

Try to match employee’s passions to their work. People with a passion for detail might be assigned to work that can gain from that detailed analysis. Or maybe their job can be redesigned to include that passion. If you can identify what people like and are also good at, it would be far more likely that they would be successful doing work that matches that. (To help in matching people to specific jobs see the Personnel Notebook “People Dynamics I and II)

If people have a passion for some kind of activity they will exercise it. If it’s not in their job they will do it at home. Can you integrate their passion into the job they do for you?

B. External

This is the Motivation that comes from recognitions, rewards and pay.

- Customize.

Customize rewards to fit the individual. There are ways to identify the Hot Button on each of your employees.

- Recognition.

Recognize and applaud success and good work immediately. Monthly, quarterly and annual awards are great but make some form of recognition as soon as possible. Training and development are also forms of recognition.

- Promotion.

Create opportunities for advancement. That doesn’t always mean managing other people. There are many ways to promote someone without assigning people to them. Create rewards visible to all other employees.

- Pay.

There are many ways to award cash, gifts and vacations. But competitive compensation is a strong motivator. Overpaying a few employees is a great demotivator to other employees.

“All we do is done with an eye to something else”

Aristotle

In Part II of Motivating Employees we will show types of successful Motivation programs.

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