

## Get motivated to motivate

Employee motivation is something you need to understand and make time for if you want to be a great leader. After all, leadership is about getting work done through people so imagine how much more successful you will be as a leader if you can improve the output potential of your team. Motivation is key to that potential.

For many of us, motivating employees doesn't come naturally and there are so many obstacles that get in the way. The good news is that most of those obstacles are much easier to navigate than you may realize. But it does take time so the first thing you need to do as a leader is make it a priority.

Here are some common obstacles:

- Who has the time!
- People should be motivated by their paychecks.
- I mean to, but then I get caught up in getting things done.
- I do things to try, but it never seems to make any difference.
- Budgets are too tight.
- I inherited these people and there's just no motivating them.
- Really good people don't need to be motivated.
- I'm not exactly feeling very motivated right now either.
- People are looking for answers that I just can't give them right now.

As you can see, most of these are in the mind of the leader. Assumptions are being made, not to mention excuses. The problem is that most of us became leaders because we were really good at tasks. And without a mentor, coach, or support system, it's very hard to make that shift from task management to people management. We try to manage people like tasks, not allowing for complex human motivations and interactions. Or we expect people to all be like us.

Here are some things to keep in mind when you are faced with obstacles to motivation:

- If you don't find the time, you'll be wasting time. A motivated employee is far more productive.
- People do work for their paycheck, but they are motivated by what inspires them.
- Good intentions show that your heart is in the right place, but you know where that road ultimately leads!
- If what you are trying isn't working, don't change your mind. Change your strategy.
- The most motivating things are free!
- If you've given up on your team, then who is failing?
- Really good people DO need to be motivated. Everyone isn't you.
- If you're not feeling motivated, then it can be tough to inspire anyone else. So do take care of yourself, but also remember that being an inspiration isn't a feeling, it's a choice, an action.

- When people are looking for answers, give them answers. Tell them what you know and what you are able to tell them. In the absence of communication, they begin to draw the worst conclusions and it will spread like wildfire through your organization.

Understanding what people need and how to give it to them is no easy task, but the payoff will be well worth the effort. Remember, your job is to lead people in all their glorious complexity.

## **Sidebar:**

### **Leading ideas on . . . Motivation**

#### **Ask, listen, hear, repeat**

People need to be heard, especially during tough times. Find out what is taking the wind out of their sails and address it. Even if you can't change circumstances, it's important that your employees know that you hear them, you think their ideas and perspective are important, that you are working on the problem, and that you're "all in this together".

#### **Motivation comes from within**

No one is motivated "by" someone else. Our motivation comes from within. We might be inspired by someone and find that motivating, but the motivation itself comes from within. So if you want to motivate, seek to inspire.

#### **We all have a dream**

People want to be an integral part of something important. Help your employees understand how what they do is integral to the important work that your organization does. What is the dream of your organization? How does your employee's dream fit into that larger dream?

#### **To motivate, don't demotivate**

You may not realize it, but you may be responsible for demotivating your employees. Do you let your stress impact how you communicate and what you say? Does your busy schedule mean that you aren't making time to spend time? Remember, people join companies, but leave bosses! The problem with employee motivation might be in the mirror.