



# The How-To of Motivation: A Step-By-Step Guide

Do you ever wonder what makes some people work really hard, while others do as little as possible? Why some need no prodding at all, yet others must be constantly guided and prodded? If you're a manager, how effective are you at motivating your under-achieving employees?

Motivation is not as difficult as you might think. As a manager, you can wield a great deal of influence. The key is recognizing that motivation is an individual behavior, not an organizational one, and as such the focus must be on the individual.

Each has different needs, desires, goals and values. Each has past experiences and psychological baggage that influence his/her perception of the world and the people around them. All of those things affect how you motivate that person.

Throughout corporate America, because of cost-cutting and efficiency efforts, the generic approach to motivating employees continues to get approval. That's unfortunate; there is simply no such thing as a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to motivation. If you're serious about getting better production out of your people, the only way is to approach each of them individually. Because people are so different, the motivational strategies you use must be appropriately different, too.

### Values and motivation.

Motivation is tied closely to values. Values are links to memories and emotions from childhood. They are the qualities, principles and priorities guiding peoples' decisions. They explain why people do what they do. In short, values are the jet fuel that propels and motivates everyone.

Some examples of work values include:

achievement, autonomy, comfort, prosperity / money, recognition, safety, status and learning.

Work values tend to fall into these three categories:

- 1. Environmental values.** These are things like: comfortable working conditions, a secure job, a variety of tasks and fair compensation.
- 2. Social values.** These include things like: the opportunity for recognition and advancement, managing people, helping others or having close social relationships with co-workers.
- 3. Self values.** These include: a sense of accomplishment, the opportunity to achieve, learn, grow, be creative or make decisions autonomously

### Values as outcomes.

Another way to think of values is as outcomes. What does that employee most want to achieve? What is their ultimate outcome? If you know the answer, then you know how to motivate them.

For instance, if someone's highest work values or outcomes are: freedom, accomplishment and continuous learning. Motivate them by giving them a job that will provide the desired outcomes. Superman's values are: truth, justice and the American way. He's happy when those are taken care of. You would motivate the two in completely different ways.

Here is a step-by-step process for improving motivation:

### 1. Recognize individual differences and develop individual strategies.

The first step in developing individualized strategies is to determine either what outcomes each employee wants, or learn their values. In other words, what drives the employee? Once you determine that, then you can individualize the rewards. If for example, you determine that someone values recognition, then you can determine ways to ensure they get the recognition to keep them motivated. For example, a two-hour lunch or a gift certificate to a restaurant where they can take their family.

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The simple way to discover what someone values is to ask. "In terms of your work, what are the most important things to you?" Simple, but not necessarily effective. First, because you're the boss, most employees may not feel comfortable having such a sensitive conversation with you at first. Second, since outcomes are linked to values, they are locked in the subconscious; and the subconscious is not normally accessible through a direct question. However, there are several low-tech surveys and tools available that you can use to elicit values.

## **2. Match people to jobs that enable them to use their natural strengths and talents.**

When people are properly matched to jobs that provide them with an opportunity to regularly use their natural strengths and talents, they will be naturally motivated. Think about it - the things that you do the best are typically the things you love to do. Which might be, solving problems, helping people, making sales or maintaining order. When you're doing something that you love to do, you don't need any external motivation. Typically, you don't need much training either. When you implement a 'right person/right job' initiative, it gives you motivated people and lowers your expenses.

## **3. Determine what kind of behavior you want and articulate it clearly.**

Things like good performance and working hard are often talked about, but are not specifically defined. You assume everyone knows. However, someone may be highly motivated, but motivated to do something completely different from what the organization wants or needs. Think of the people you know who work hard but are not effective. They think they're doing the right thing. You can't fault the employee if you haven't specifically defined what you want.

Describe the goal, the outcome. Be specific about how the job is to be performed. What will the successful outcome look like? What will the numbers be? Most people are visual, so, if you can, provide an example, a sample or a model. If you're not explicit in your expectations or if you micro-manage, you could drastically undermine and sabotage your own efforts and demoralize your employees.

## **4. Link organizational desired outcomes to individual desired outcomes.**

Perhaps, the toughest part of the motivation process is to synchronize the organization's desired outcomes with individual desired outcomes. How

do you accomplish what you need to accomplish as an organization, while at the same time make sure the employees get what they need?

There's actually a pretty easy way to do that. If your company has mission, vision and values statements, extract the core values from them. Match that to the values possessed by your employees. Then, share the commonalities with the employees in one-to-one conversations. Explain how the firm and the person are both working for the same goals.

Although it seems like a daunting task, motivating all your employees is not as difficult as you might imagine. If you've done a good job hiring people whose core values match those of the organization, you're already half way there. If you've done a good job at matching people to work that they are naturally inclined to do, then you're three-quarters there. The rest is simply the result of how well you perform as a manager to motivate them.

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