

# Strategies for motivating employees



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**How to identify unmotivated employees and help them become motivated: Some strategies for managers.**

An employee who is well motivated is able to produce better results quicker and is also much more creative. There are many problems that exist in the workplace. Motivation is a subject that everyone will come across and it is common to be placed in a situation where you will need to work with a colleague or subordinate who suffers from a lack of motivation. It is important for an employer to know how to deal and overcome any issues arising from motivational problems so they can make the most of their most important asset (their employees); this paper will look to analyse and overcome these problems.

The first thing an employer needs to do is have a clear understanding of what motivation is. Wikipedia defines motivation as “ having the desire and willingness to do something” (Wikipedia, 2007). One book states “ Motivation is a state of readiness or eagerness to change, which may fluctuate from one time or situation to another, This state is one that can be influenced” (Motivation, Rob Long 2005). Taking that into account a prominent American Psychologist, Abraham H Maslow (1908-1970) the inventor of Maslow’s Motivation Theory, stated that mans behaviour is controlled by “ Internal” and “ External” forces. This report will focus heavily on the Internal and External forces as they are extremely pertinent to understanding differences in motivation problems. Which leads to my personal definition of motivation as having the willingness, eagerness or desire to change or to do something that you need or are required to do by factors and influences that are not only External (environment) , but Internal (feelings, emotions) as well.

Understanding that motivation also comes down to the individual and how they react and relate to certain situations is very important as well.

Some possible signs that an employee is suffering from motivational problems are that their productivity is low, they have a lot of sick days and they look unhappy. At this point a manager may be thinking about why you should bother about motivating employees that are already paid to do the job that is required of them. A manager needs to forget any negative thoughts towards an employee and do what is best for the employee as they are the most important asset any company has.

One article states that “ a common mistake when dealing with motivation problems is to quickly jump ahead to solutions without knowing what is causing the problem” (Motivation Management, Green, 2000). If a manager has limited knowledge of the employee’s problem you are probably less likely to be successful in helping that employee than if you investigate the situation with the employee. If a manager can see that an employee looks unhappy the best thing for a manager to do is talk to him or her. Any relationship counsellor will tell you how important communication is being it in a professional or personal relationship.

Motivation Management states that there are three types of motivation problems; lack of confidence, lack of trust and lack of satisfaction (Motivation Management, Green, 2000). After researching I have found it valid and essential to add a fourth motivational problem being lack of hope. I will compare these problems with Maslow’s Internal and External forces theory. If an employee has a lack of hope (neither influence) they have no will to

succeed in or do the job. This could stem from any other motivational problem but is to a point where the employee will never (managers opinions may vary) be able to be turned around. Whilst this happens only in extreme cases it is something that can be identified, investigated (sit down with the employee and ask why it has come to this) and prevented from happening again. If a manager is experiencing multiple cases of lack of hope, maybe other sources could be looked at such as Human Resources and Recruitment.

“ All the motivation in the world won't make people stay, if you've hired the wrong people” says Terry Harris President of Chicago Consulting (Motivating Customer Service Employees, Harps 1993). If an employee has lack of confidence (internal influence) he or she does not have enough trust or belief in his or her abilities. This is very self explanatory in this situation you are better off giving the employee some responsibility which in turn helps them overcome their confidence issues. Be sure to be there to assist as they will probably require your guidance from time to time. If an employee has lack of trust (both internal and external influences) they don't have enough faith in something; generally an employee will have a lack of trust in an employer or manager. Empowering Supervisors by Ern Prentice & Gordon Rabey state that an employee's performance largely depends on the competence and effectiveness of their immediate supervisor. Most books on motivation or empowerment tend to agree on the fact that if you have a weak/incompetent leader, that your overall motivation will be low. Managers can also have a lack of trust towards their employees. The most common time this would occur would be in a strict and well disciplined working environment. An American Mill company called Nucor introduced a management style which saw an increase of profit and dividends to shareholders exceed almost 400%.

They ensured managers abandoned the command and control model (charismatic approach) of leadership and go towards a worker responsibility environment. They also ensured that they shared corporate wealth with their employees. (The Art of motivation, 2006). Using the Nucor example we can determine that employees will trust a manager if the manager takes the first step and shows trust towards the employee first. This creates trust for the employee and helps eliminate any mistrust that might have existed. An example for a manager to create trust could be to (where possible) let the employee set their own working hours or days, and give them flexibility with rules in the workplace, and have them aware of repercussions if they fail to meet any reasonable deadlines they themselves set out. If an employee has lack of satisfaction then they are generally not happy with the external influences revolving around their job role. Psychologist Frederick I Herzberg (1923-2000) introduced the Motivator Hygiene Theory, which states that demotivators (Isolation, poor working conditions & continual pressure) need to be reduced and motivators (good pay, controlling own work (empowerment) and varied work) need to be increased. Some ways to increase satisfaction is to have an emphasis on teamwork and helping each other. It is important to ensure that employees feel they are a part of the greater good of the company and that without their input and work deadlines would be missed. Whilst pay and benefits are a good way to increase job satisfaction many surveys and research would indicate it is less important to employees. One study of what motivates 31 000 men and 13 000 women employed in the Minneapolis Gas Company between 1945-1965 shows that pay was not among the top factors but Security, advancement, type of work

and being a part of a company they are proud to work for were. (<http://www.accel-team.com/motivation/index.html>)

Managers should now have a good understanding of how motivation works in the workplace and where to start should an employee have a motivational problem. It is very important however to remember to talk to an employee, as communication is the most important aspect in any working relationship and as a manager you are responsible for taking the first step every time.

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