

Motivating individuals and Groups at work in the 21st Century

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Impressions are the powerful link between thought and action. Strong impressions lead to dynamic actions, and are the most influential way to motivate...Bring positive energy to all your interactions with others. Those around you are always assessing your abilities and a positive attitude will increase your recommendations.

Workplace team building from J.J. Goldwag

Real leadership is when the leader is no longer present and the will of the team stands strong.

The Workforce Has Changed, and So Have the Rules “Differences in the workforce are increasingly being seen as powerful opportunities for strengthening organizational performance ... effective competition will increasingly depend on the creativity and innovation of diverse employees: their skills and competencies, adaptability and responsiveness, new and expanded styles of thinking, and broad perspectives ...” Against the backdrop of a highly competitive, technology-driven global economy, the workplace has been transformed by three powerful trends: increasing employee diversity, the growing importance of knowledge work, and the changing employee employer relationship. Relentless and irreversible, these trends are sparking organizations of every shape and size to re-think how they manage the workforce to achieve strategic goals and ensure lasting financial success.

“Managing diversity involves building specific skills and creating policies that extract the best from each employee. It is based on the assumption that diverse groups will create new ways of working together and that morale, productivity, and profit will increase. It takes account of the fact that the old approach of attracting, selecting, retaining, and rewarding members of the organization who are similar to those already in place will no longer work.”

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How do I motivate my staff? That question seems to baffle most business leaders. Motivating people seems to be more elusive than almost any other aspect of management. For that reason there are countless articles and classes devoted to it. But, in reality, the strongest business leaders don't motivate their employees. That's right, as a business leader, the job is not to motivate. That may sound blasphemous to all. After all, the leadership paradigm that evolved in the late 20th century tirelessly promoted the belief that motivating the workforce was essential to great leadership.

Humans come naturally to hard work and sacrifice; these traits are essential to the survival of our species. Evolution has hardwired us with the desire to do quality work. We may view motivating employees to be a critical aspect of our job, but have we ever had an employee express the need to be motivated? Do we need a boss to motivate us to do your job? Unless we're a very unusual person, the answer to both questions is no. We can be certain that most employees feel the same.

If an employee is truly unmotivated, it's probably time to take him off the payroll. Meanwhile, the critical issue isn't how to motivate but, rather, how to keep people from becoming *demotivated*. And the strongest business leaders understand this distinction.

An employee typically begins a new job excited to be part of the team and pleased to be making a living. Those who promote the need to motivate would certainly agree with that, but they also seem to believe that something must change over time, making it necessary to "remotivate." This, however, should be unnecessary. ***Our species' fundamental desire to do quality work does not change.***

The common problem facing employees at all levels is not their own motivation. It is work environments that demotivate.

When work environments consistently fail to provide the direction, resources and respect employees require, their innate desire to achieve is suppressed or redirected. They experience frustration and a kind of learned helplessness. They become motivated to retain their jobs rather than to perform them in a way that delivers optimal value to the organization. This is a common and predictable problem. Once employees escape such a discouraging work

environment, their motivation to deliver optimal value for their organization reemerges—sometimes as they go over to a competitor.

Most leaders would agree that identifying what motivates all the diverse members of a staff is complicated and confusing. Motivating a group is even harder than motivating an individual. When you lead a team, there's an entirely different dynamic. What you do for one employee can easily demotivate others.

When leaders decide to address demotivation, they quickly see that, unlike with motivation, it's essentially the same for every employee. One can be certain, for example, that everyone on our staff wants the following from us and always will: (1) clear direction, (2) the resources to perform as required and (3) never to be treated disrespectfully. A work environment structured to provide those three things is also exactly what shareholders want and expect. Deliver them, and we will be on your way to leadership greatness. Fail to do so, and we may be an adequate leader but you'll never be a great one.

There are, in sum, two key steps to staying on top of motivation and demotivation.

First, hire and keep on your team only people who are motivated to do their jobs well. ***As Jim Collins, author of Good to Great, says, "Get the right people on the bus."***

Second, understand that if they become demotivated, it is because of the environment in which they work. Strong and courageous leaders recognize that such an environment is their own failure. Understanding that can prevent us from misdirecting resources into unnecessary efforts to motivate staff.

We need a new leadership paradigm for the 21st century, with leaders taking a more realistic and enlightened view of the people who work for them. We need to create and maintain work environments that protect employees from the demotivation that has become endemic in modern business

John Roulet -The author of The Supervision Solution rightly quotes: Manage Performance—Not People

Based on more than 30 years of observational research into what drives high performance organizations resulting in highly motivated workforce, I've identified the following 22 factors, broken into six categories that significantly influence (positive/negative) individual/team productivity.

Foundations of Productivity

1. **High-performing and innovative employees are the foundation of productivity** — by far the most impactful factor in workforce and team productivity is hiring and retaining employees with exceptional capabilities and self-motivation. Working together, managers and HR can attract, hire, develop, and retain individual employees who are agile, high-performing continuous learners and innovators. Unfortunately, even the best employees cannot perform without great managers, proper direction, support, tools, and resources.
2. **Effective managers and leaders set direction and execute** — a great manager/leader is the second-most important productivity factor. Leaders and managers play a critical role in defining the direction, purpose, priorities, goals, and roles of the workforce. The capability of the manager (with the support of HR) to develop plans, hire effectively, coach, motivate, and develop employees is crucial to success. Unfortunately, many managers are the weak link in the productivity chain, so HR must accept the role of developing great leaders/managers and identifying/removing the ineffective ones.

Direction and Guidance Factors

1. **A corporate strategy and plan that builds commitment** — a competitive business strategy and strategic plan increases the chances that an organization will be successful and success builds commitment. In addition, if the plan and the strategy are clear and well communicated, not only will your employees be more motivated, but knowing the strategic direction will help them remain focused. Corporate values that are *measured* and rewarded can also align behavior and build commitment.
2. **A defined purpose for teams make roles clear** — every business unit and team needs to understand its role. Managers and leaders need to develop a clear and communicated purpose that is both compelling and that makes members feel important. Understand

that employees are more likely to be committed to the purpose of the unit or team if they are involved in creating it. An unclear mission will result in a lack of focus and a low level of “engagement” and commitment toward achieving it.

3. **Team and individual goals** — having clear operational goals lets everyone know what is expected. If these goals are communicated and measurable, employees will understand precisely what is important and what is not. If stretch but reachable goals are set, employees are less likely to become complacent.
4. **Prioritization for impactful resource allocation** — setting clear priorities helps to ensure that time and resources are allocated to the most important and impactful tasks. Employees must be made aware of both high- and low-priority goals, tasks, processes, and customers. Processes must be developed to ensure that resources are allocated disproportionately to high priority tasks.
5. **Performance metrics for continuous improvement** — having effective metrics and reporting processes reinforces both team and individual goals. Because whatever is measured and reported gets done, metrics provide focus, feedback and result in continuous improvement.
6. **Effective rewards drive performance** — when monetary rewards are tied directly to performance and the metrics for each goal, you doubly reinforce the message about what is important. Individual and team monetary rewards, coupled with nonmonetary excitement factors, can play a major role in ensuring focus and consistent performance.

Support Factors

1. **Team member support increases individual performance** — few tasks in this modern age can be completed by an individual employee working without support. Unless your employees are provided with complementary teammates, as well as the support of managers and employees outside the team, productivity is bound to suffer.
2. **Best-practice sharing and collaboration improve productivity** — learning by trial and error slows progress and leads to mass duplication of effort and higher error rates. Productivity improves dramatically when others who are outside the team freely

collaborate and proactively share best practices and ideas. It is HR's role to develop formal methods to increase cross-function collaboration and sharing.

3. **Support for innovation can dramatically increase productivity** — in most industries, the yearly increase in the level of productivity that is required to maintain a dominant position in the industry has increased dramatically. The new reality is that productivity increases of between 10 and 25% are now required each year. What is needed is a continuous level of innovation both in products and in business processes. Increased efficiency for continuous improvement processes are not sufficient to provide that level of double-digit gain, so HR must develop processes, training, measures, and incentives that result in continuous innovation workforce wide.
4. **Control and authority can enhance or hinder decision-making** — a lack of control and excessive freedom can result in waste, duplication, and a lack of focus. In direct contrast, micromanagement and excessive rules can slow decision-making and employee development. Productivity is maximized when there is enough balance so that employees have enough control, authority, and permissions to make most operational decisions.
5. **Non-monetary factors can also excite employees** — in addition to formal rewards, managers, leaders, and teammates can provide nonmonetary factors that increase employee excitement, energy, motivation, and loyalty. These factors can include praise, recognition, exposure, challenge, feedback, and learning opportunities. It is HR's role to ensure that managers know how to effectively use these nonmonetary factors.
6. **Not having the appropriate inputs can hinder productivity** — in most cases, team and employee work is dependent on the inputs provided from other processes. It is the manager's role to ensure that these inputs are provided on time and of the right quality. Make sure that the team's output meets the standards set by the team responsible for the next step in the production process.
7. **Barriers to productivity can limit success** — often, even when every one of the positive productivity factors are present, productivity can be slowed or stopped by real or imagined barriers. These roadblocks can include individuals resistant to change, corporate politics, personal jealousies, corporate rivalries, as well as powerful people. In addition, there may be perceived or imaginative barriers that keep employees from even

attempting any effort aimed at increasing productivity or innovation. In both cases, HR needs to work with managers in order to develop processes for identifying and eliminating any real or imagined barriers to productivity.

Skills, Communications, and Information Factors

1. **Employee skills and knowledge must be continually updated to maintain productivity** — global competition has created a rapid pace of change which means that current skill sets must be continually updated. It is the manager's job to identify employees with less than optimal skills. HR's role is to develop processes to continually increase employee learning, knowledge, and skill development, while minimizing the amount of time that employees are away from their work.
2. **Effective communications and feedback reduce errors and frustration** — a lack of communications can frustrate employees and make them feel unimportant. Failing to provide effective feedback can lead to wasted efforts, increased error rates, and lower productivity. Communications and feedback mechanisms need to be developed in conjunction with employees to ensure that they fit both the needs of the manager and the employees.
3. **Providing the right information improves decision-making** — managers and employees need access to all relevant information and data in order to be productive and to make effective decisions.

Resourcing Factors

1. **Insufficient budget resources can hamper productivity** — even a great team with a great manager will produce lower levels of productivity when with insufficient budget to complete the job.
2. **Technology, tools, and equipment can limit or bolster productivity** — even highly trained, motivated, and engaged employees can't be very productive when they are provided with insufficient tools and equipment to do their job. In an era where technology dominates almost every function, a failure to provide the technology, updates, or sufficient training can dramatically slow productivity.

Miscellaneous Factors

1. **Integration can increase productivity** — when business processes operate independently and not in unison, it can inhibit the work flow and increase delays and error rates. Part of any productivity effort should include integrating interdependent processes, breaking down the silos and barriers, and making interconnected processes appear “seamless” to those involved.
2. **Outside-the-workplace factors** — although most factors that impact productivity are internal to the organization, on occasion, employee productivity is negatively impacted by things that happen outside of the firm. These factors could include changes in employee’s personal life and external economic, social, political, and even weather-related factors. Excellent productivity processes need to be flexible so that they can adjust when these external factors begin to impact individual or team productivity.

Final Thoughts

Organisations do not motivate people, it's people in organizations that motivate people