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LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT



MOTIVATING
OTHERS

The Fourteenth in a Leadership Series

IREM® White Paper

By Shannon Alter, CPM®



Watch just one episode of the television show, “Undercover Boss” and you’ll see what successful (and unsuccessful) team motivation looks like. If you’re not familiar with the show, it chronicles executives who go out into their own employee ranks (undercover, of course) to see how the company stacks up in the eyes of its employees. These company executives also get a bird’s-eye view on what inspires and motivates their employees, and what causes motivation to sink.

For companies today, it’s all about solving a client’s problems and becoming an employer of choice. Smart employers recognize the value in having—and keeping—motivated employees. It’s the key to their business success. It’s true, the way leaders motivate their teams can make all the difference. If you want to improve performance, enhance your bottom line, and attract talent, use these tips and techniques to help you build and develop a motivated workforce from the start.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

You are a vice president for All-Star Development Company, a private firm which has been in business for 35 years. Well known in its small town location, the company has many loyal employees in its headquarters office—some have been there for more than 25 years. Because of the longevity of many employees, the prevailing theme is one of “we’ve always done it this way,” and projects often get stalled. There seems to be a lot of behind-closed-doors talk around the office.

Susan, one of your analysts, is now working in the Acquisitions department. She reports to Jeff, your department head. Because Jeff has been restructuring the department, he hasn’t had a lot of time to spend with her and you have been too busy to check in. Susan has had to learn the ropes pretty much by herself. She has complained to you that Jeff is very unapproachable and his team is unhappy.

WHAT DO YOU DO?

Your grandmother probably told you that it’s difficult to please everyone. That’s certainly true in today’s diverse workplace, where the challenges we often face are many. As our workdays become ever busier, the dilemmas at our door often include a lack of vision and clarity, a sense that nothing can (or will) change, or a collective sense that “management” is not transparent, which result in disengaged employees. It’s not surprising that consulting firm Deloitte’s recent study on culture in the workplace revealed that although 87 percent of executives believe a defined workplace

culture is crucial, barely 19 percent of executives and 15 percent of employees felt it is solidly in place within their organizations.

KICK IT UP A NOTCH

Who doesn’t want to build a better business? Global performance-management consulting company Gallup cites that only 13 percent of employees worldwide are engaged at work. While that does sound dismal, there’s hope. According to Gallup, it starts with putting employee engagement at the top with four key factors that make the best of the best outpace the rest:

- 1 *Strategy*: Develop your own formula for success. How (and who) can you hire to help you solve problems?
- 2 *Accountability and performance*: Focus on outcomes. How will your company measure success?
- 3 *Communication*: Simply put, employees need to see that everyone is on the same train headed in the same direction, each and every time. Strategic alignment is critical.
- 4 *Development*: More generations than ever before are in the workplace together today. The best companies both identify leadership potential and create a leadership path at all levels.

How does this tie in with employee engagement and motivation? Think about your best team and consider their best qualities. You’re likely to describe a great team member as someone who is passion-driven and willing to go the extra mile. You might say they are self-propelling. These are the team members who drive your organization forward—they are engaged.

In fact, Gallup demonstrates that organizations typically have three types of employees:

- 1 Engaged
- 2 Non engaged
- 3 Actively disengaged

“To win in the marketplace you must first win in the workplace.”

—Doug Conant, former CEO of Campbell’s Soup

And too, we all know employees who are *not* engaged. These team members are the ones who seem to merely be putting in their time. When approached with change, non engaged employees may seem indecisive, or may stall on a project. Unsure of their loyalties, these employees sit securely in the middle and on the fence. Further complicating the ideal of a fully engaged team are the employees who are what Gallup calls “actively disengaged.” You know them—these are the toxic employees. Actively disengaged, toxic employees often take out their unhappiness on others through gossip, finger pointing, and undermining others. These are the employees who can have the most drastic effect on the rest of your team.

There’s an old saying that goes like this: In an organization, some people will be in your court from the get go—they will be your cheerleaders. Some may not like what you have to say at all. And the rest will be squarely in the middle, sitting right on the fence. Your job is to convert the fence sitters.

When it comes to boosting your bottom line and increasing your company’s competitive advantage, now’s the time to determine how you can first win in the workplace.

DECIDE WHO YOU ARE

If you’ve ever worked for a company with a great culture, you can attest to the fact that it’s an overall *feeling*, an atmosphere that is prevalent throughout an organization. Consider who are on *Fortune’s* 2015 list of the most admired companies—Apple, Google, Berkshire Hathaway, Amazon, Starbucks, and Disney among others. There’s a reason these companies are at the top—they have a clearly defined culture, they recognize that their employees take priority, and they know that getting there is only half of the battle. Staying on top is a 24/7 job.

It’s true that the sense of culture and motivation in your company starts at the top—with you, that is. The hard part, of course happens when other players enter the picture. Defining a clear culture may take some time, and it isn’t always easy.

Take Jack, for example. As President of a local management firm, he was confident he had taken time to establish his company’s culture and vision as a leading provider of management services. Because he was considering restructuring his team, he invited a consultant in to assess it. As part of the assessment, team members were surveyed to find out their thoughts on the company. Jack was surprised to learn that several

employees felt that the firm was more of a marketing company and others thought it was not a “leading” company. The vision and culture that he thought was clear, wasn’t. Here’s the rub: the culture you want is the culture you reinforce, and it’s our job as leaders to do that.

In your next executive or managers’ meeting, try a little brainstorming session. Break out a white board or a flip chart and a few markers and ask your team the following four questions:

- 1 *What kind of company do we want to be in five years?* This may sound obvious but it often isn’t. As a leader in your firm, it’s essential to (a) decide where you want your company to be in the future, and (b) to determine how you can develop the best team and resources to get there. This is flexible. If five years sounds like too much of a reach, start with three years.
- 2 *What service level do we provide for our customers?* Your team needs to know what they are expected to deliver. It can be difficult for managers to be required to provide A+ service for some customers, and C-level service for others. Outlining your expectations is important.
- 3 *Who’s driving the train?* This is crucial because it relates to accountability. In any type of service-driven organization (and that’s all of us, in some way) it’s essential to understand who has to deliver to the client, and who has to support that goal. Someone has to be the conductor and make sure that everyone is going in the same direction at the same time.
- 4 *What attributes do the best companies have?* Pull out the list of *Fortune’s* top 10 and ask your team to deconstruct what they think are the best attributes of these companies—their answers may surprise you. Once you have these, use them by including these ideas in your next company newsletter, or in a good morning e-mail to your team.

CONSISTENCY IS KEY

Remember Susan, our analyst? She recently took on a new assignment with Jeff, your department head. Because the organization is going through some changes, things are a little chaotic and Jeff hasn’t spent much time with her. Forced to learn her new job on her own, Susan is not entirely clear if she’s doing the right things, or that she’s doing them the right way. She has tried to seek help from her peers and other supervi-

sors, but she has found that they all have a different way of doing things and there does not appear to be a clear plan for training her in her new job. Forms are not only different but appear to be stored in different places, depending on the department, and general deadlines are hazy. She is getting frustrated and the energy and excitement she had for her new position are rapidly dissipating. Susan is on her way to becoming a disengaged employee.

For the most part, our employees really do want to do things the right way. They just need to know what the right way *is*, and they want it to be consistent. Give consistency a start in your office with these two tactics:

1 Fix what's systemic: Sometimes, the challenges we have with motivating our employees begins with what is systemic in our organizations. Take policies and procedures, for example. When policies and procedures aren't in place, your employees are left to determine their own methods, which may or may not be what your company does, and almost certainly won't be consistent.

This doesn't mean you need to have a procedures plan the length of a Russian novel, but it does mean you should have basic policies and procedures, as well as any applicable forms or exhibits, available in one place. Somewhat surprisingly in our Internet age, people also like to have procedures in a notebook that they can refer to as needed.

2 Set clear channels for communication: Figure it out. With an estimated 200B (yes, that's *billion*) e-mails traveling the airwaves today, clear and timely communication can definitely be a challenge. The key here is to create consistency within your organization and get everyone on the same page.

Here's what's important: coach your team to choose the type of communication suited to the circumstance. You may feel as if you're going back in time, but sometimes the easiest, clearest way to communicate with team members is to just pick up the phone.

FOUR MYTHS ABOUT MOTIVATION

Sam is a division head at a medium-sized firm. The company's new HR manager is rolling out a new training program for your customer service reps and everyone is required to attend. Although you have not reviewed the new training program, you feel your buy in is required because the HR manager personally stopped by your office to ask for your support. From

what you have heard, the training program is very generic and you think it may not directly apply to your customer service reps or meet their needs. At your recent department meeting, one of your reps, John, angrily announces that he hates training, feels it's a waste of time, and that no one cares what he thinks anyway. He has e-mailed the CEO to complain.

What do *you* think motivates John? You think it could be money. Clearly, it isn't training (he thinks). Before you decide what inspires your employees, take a look at these four myths about motivation:

1 Money is always a good motivator: True, safety and security are important. After that is in place, money can help people from becoming *less* motivated but the reverse often isn't true. Motivation often comes from the unexpected. Consider Kaylie, a junior employee at a management firm. Working hard on an upcoming pitch, Kaylie volunteered to stay late several evenings in a row, even taking work home to complete the assignment on time. The next day her boss surprised her with a gift certificate to a favorite local store, along with a thank you note. Was the money important? Sure. But the 'thank you' is what Kaylie remembered.

2 Your employees are motivated by the same things that motivate you: Before you say yes, think about your employees' jobs and their lives. An employee who lives in San Francisco or Chicago and takes public transportation may be incentivized by a months' train or bus pass, while another may appreciate extra time off.

3 An in-place team doesn't need training: All too often, we forget that people need to brush up on their skills or learn the newest techniques. And even if they want it, sometimes they feel pulled from their jobs and are reluctant to participate or take the lead. That means you'll have to be persuasive and show your team how the training you have in mind will apply to what they do, and how they can use it.

4 Recognition isn't necessary: After all, people are *lucky to have jobs!* Welcome to the Dark Ages. This isn't your grandfather's workplace anymore. Think about John, the employee who said he didn't need training. What else did he say? He said no one cared what he thought. To a great leader, that might be a cue that John's manager could listen a little more, and it's a great idea to consistently recognize your team for their hard work. Say "thank you" to your team; it's an easy, no-cost way

to provide a little recognition, every day. In your monthly or quarterly employee meetings, say it in front of their peers. You'll have a home run on your hands.

How can you find out what motivates an employee? Here's one easy way—Ask them!

MISTAKES LEADERS MAKE

You've hired Katherine as your new client relationship manager. From the start, Katherine seems to be a great employee—self-motivated and enthusiastic. She has lots of good ideas and has already planned several initiatives, which you both discussed when she was hired. You are excited about the changes Katherine will bring to the team, and to your company. She is taking her time getting to know the employees, and they like her. Katherine is ready to roll, but there's one problem: you are reluctant to introduce her to your clients because, well, you have always handled them. And although you both discussed the need for her to add a senior member to her team, you are hesitant to spend the money. If this continues, what do you think will happen with Katherine?

Consulting firm Towers Watson estimates that 29 percent of employees think that critical stumbling blocks at work impede their ability to effectively do their jobs. This in turn can lead to frustration, demotivation, and ultimately lack of retention. What are the biggest mistakes leaders make?

Not listening: It's tough, but sometimes it's best to talk less. It's a fact that people are naturally inclined to do more when they buy into your overall leadership vision. This, however, doesn't mean that you should spend all of your time doing the talking. Instead, ask a few questions and see what happens—you'll likely learn something. The next time you're in an employee or managers' meeting, try this tactic—figuratively (not literally) sit on your hands for 10 minutes and just listen to your team. You may be surprised at the results.

Not paying attention: To your employees, that is. As Richard Branson, Founder of the Virgin Group says, "If you look after your staff, they'll look after your customers. It's that simple." Paying attention to how you create and develop top leaders within your company will help you attract top talent and outperform your competitors.

Lack of autonomy and authority: If you've taken the time to hire a high performer, give them a reason to stay. Everyone needs a little flexibility, and empow-

erment to do their job. Help these high performers thrive by allowing them the opportunity to shape their work and the authority to make changes *and* implement them.

WHAT DEMOTIVATES US?

Susan, our enthusiastic analyst, is becoming increasingly more frustrated. If we want to ensure that she doesn't spiral into the "not engaged" group of employees, we need to make sure that our efforts to motivate her don't backfire. In other words, we need to support her ability to be a high performer.

Think of motivation like a chain-link: everything is absolutely intertwined, and the weak links will definitely show up. According to Deloitte, high performance support in organizations should include these five key areas:

1. Appropriate training
2. Well-functioning equipment
3. A good fit of workers' skills and roles
4. Positive working relationships
5. Adequate resources

Next, think about what your employees really do want. Experts say that employees today want a sense of purpose, meaningful work, great organizational fit, and a chance to contribute. Even though all team members may not be in a decision-making capacity, nothing discourages an employee faster than a work arena where input is not allowed, or supervisors are indifferent.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

If you're wondering what to do first to get your company's motor running, here are three tactics to turn the wheels:

- 1 **View the big picture:** And be sure to translate your view to your employees. Everybody wants to contribute and to be connected. Especially important to today's prospective talent is the opportunity and the ability to make an impact—people want to know what your company's purpose is, and they're not afraid to ask. Include your valued employees in your vision—make sure they know and embrace your compelling purpose. What does your company do and why do you do it?
- 2 **Foster personal development:** Want to avoid burn-out in your team? Create movement—or the perception of movement, at least. In a large company, the feeling of movement may be literal—perhaps you already have a leadership development pro-

gram in place where team members experience other departments. It's a funny thing—people often want personal development but may be reluctant to embrace it. It's your job to help them do it. Demonstrating that you have an inclusive culture where people learn from their mistakes is an integral part of encouraging your team to grow.

- 3 *Try a stand-up meeting:* Hotels do it, restaurants do it, and you can too. Want to get all of your team in one place (including your remote or virtual teams)? Give a stand-up meeting a try. "Stand ups" are exactly what it looks like—a short huddle, a to-the-point meeting to get everyone on the same page. And, it's so short that you stand, not sit. You don't have to do it every day, but a biweekly or monthly stand-up meeting can help leaders communicate what's happening in the company and reinforce what you want to focus on.

Companies with engaged employees are able to retain top-tier talent, deliver exemplary customer service, and build better businesses. If you want to boost your marketplace power and outpace your competition, focus on motivating your team—now is the time.

MOTIVATING

Enhances others' commitment to their work.

KEY BEHAVIORS

1. Acknowledges achievements and contributions
2. Helps others identify their wants and needs
3. Promptly recognizes and tackles morale problems
4. Helps others see the value they provide in their job
5. Shares ownership and visibility
6. Looks for and uses new, creative ways to motivate others
7. Uses a variety of approaches to energize and inspire others
8. Communicates a vision of excellence for others that motivates them to improve

DEVELOPMENT TACTICS

1. At least once per week, I will choose and present a topic that will help build morale in the group.
2. At least twice a month, I will ask someone questions to help identify their wants and needs.
3. Each Friday, I will decide on an action for the

- following week that will energize the rest of my team. I will record the action I took the past week.
4. Every week, I will take at least one action to encourage others to do their best.
5. I will ask my manager, my peers, and others to describe my strengths and weaknesses regarding motivating others.
6. I will inventory my strengths and weaknesses regarding motivating others. I will decide upon at least one action to improve my ability to motivate others.
7. I will keep a "learn-and-grow" log. What have I learned about motivating others? How have I grown in my ability to motivate others?
8. I will keep a log of actions and ideas to encourage others.
9. I will keep a log of times when I help others see the personal benefits of doing their jobs well.
10. I will talk with an expert on motivation to obtain ideas for motivating others.
11. Once a month, I will create a new motivational program for the team or department. I will implement the program and note the success of the idea. At the end of the review period, I will create a list of the most successful motivational programs or incentives and why they were successful so that others can benefit.
12. Once a month, when I give a talk or presentation, I will focus on how well I energize the group. At the end of the presentation, I will get feedback on how well I energized the audience.
13. Once a month, I will have lunch with and interview someone who is excellent at motivating others, and ask them how they became good at it. I will ask for examples of different ways they have encouraged others, what skills they use, and advice they have to help me improve my ability to motivate others.
14. Once a week, I will acknowledge an employee for an achievement or a contribution made to the organization or work team. I will record to whom I gave the acknowledgment.
15. Once a week, I will choose an employee to coach on personal vision and role in the company. At least once during the week, I will meet with the employee to give my vision for him/her and help him/her identify their own personal vision.
16. When I recognize a morale problem within my workgroup or department, I will promptly act to address it, and record what I do.