

Do They Know They Really Matter?

Motivating Your Employees



Workplaces where management gets the best performance from their employees are usually workplaces where someone understands how to effectively motivate employees on an ongoing and consistent basis. This is not always an easy task as what motivated a person today may not be what motivated that person tomorrow.

Motivation and Your Employees

Motivation is what moves people to take action. A sense of motivation activates, directs and sustains our goal driven behaviours, from a basic act such as obtaining food to a more sophisticated act such as obtaining a job or seeking a promotion at work.

At their core your employees, like all people, are motivated by biological/physiological, social, emotional and cognitive needs. Initially and frequently our biological needs motivate us before our emotional, social and cognitive needs. But as our biological needs are met and we begin to gain experiences and from bonds with other people we are motivated by other factors. Without a full range of motivations it would be difficult for people to sustain personal relationship or excel in most work settings. As we build our life's experiences we add more factors into the motivation puzzle, which is why people are fascinating and frustrating all at the same time.

Your employees are complex and while providing them with the financial resources can be a viable motivational factor it is generally not enough to consistently gain their top level of performance. If money is the only motivation you are employing it is easy to lose a performer to someone with more money.

If money alone is not enough the question then becomes what can you do to motivate employees on a consistent basis. Depending on each employee's different circumstances there will be variations in what motivates them on a given day and over time and to what degree something motivates them. That is why being agile and understanding core motivational factors is useful when trying to motivate people.

Satisfying Employees Needs

We are familiar with the idea of using a reward system, such as a financial reward, to motivate people. But when you motivate people only to receive rewards then when

the rewards become common or if the reward stops or fails to grow the motivation can stop. Money is a blunt instrument and is often unsustainable, often leading to winners and losers and an ever-increasing need to increase the reward. If you are providing your employees with appropriate financial compensation then using additional financial rewards can have an impact but it is not enough. Rewards motivate people to work towards the rewards where you want employees to work because you want them to meet the needs of your customers/clients or your organization.

Research does show us that in a workplace people are motivated by more than money and demonstrates to us that when you show people that you value them they can be motivated to work for you and your business more consistently and strongly compared to when money is the only motivating factor

People Are Often Motivated When They Feel Valued

Once basic needs are met most people are more motivated by social, emotional and cognitive factors over basic biological ones. Motivations can be sophisticated in their nuances but often they do come back to a desire to fit in, be accepted and avoid being alone (social), to avoid afraid, sadness and to be satisfied and happy (emotional) and to learn, challenge oneself, become adept and masterful at something (cognitive). Employees that feel valued are more likely to work hard and work happy.

5 Strategies for employee motivation

- Keep 'Rewards' to a minimum: Certainly you can provide some rewards and incentives but in addition to financial rewards consider recognition and opportunity. Enable people to gain skills, knowledge and mastery, send them on a course, train them and help them grow as an employee.
- Emotionally engage them in the business: Share information and invite involvement. . Allow them to make a contribution to the challenges of the organization.
- Focus on the present and then future: Performance reviews focus on the past. Let employees see how they can have an impact on their teams/departments and the organizations growth and future opportunities.
- Listen and Talk: Ask for their suggestions and provide them with opportunities to hear what is going on. Let them play a role in shape the business and taking ownership of their contributions and understanding where they fit in.
- Be An Agile Leader: By definition Individuals are not alike and what motivates them changes. Re-evaluate your messages, actions and options regularly to identify what motivating factors may be more engaging to your employees.

Valuing and engaging your employees and letting them see this can go a long way towards motivation during times when you cannot provide financial rewards and incentives and can contribute to a happier and higher performing workforce.