

## Don't Try to Herd Cats! Instead, Create a Self-motivating Environment

Picture this: You have been hired to move 500 cats from an enclosed field to a large semi-trailer. No one will be helping you. So, how many cats can you simultaneously hold in your arms?

As a leader charged with moving your organization forward, encountering and overcoming new challenges, do you sometimes feel like a cat herder? If so, there's a better way. Read on.

In the 1970s, Edward Deci and Richard Ryan began work on what became the Self-determination theory which states that people are most strongly motivated by three universal human needs. They called these needs autonomy, competence (herein, "mastery"), and relatedness (herein, "purpose").

- ❖ Autonomy – acting with choice.
  - May be autonomous **yet** happily inter-dependent with others
  - Higher productivity, greater job satisfaction
  - A boss can support autonomy with:
    - Empathy,
    - Meaningful performance feedback, and
    - Encouragement to take on new projects.
  - In 2004 Cornell University carried out a study of 320 small businesses that revealed those offering autonomy grew at 400% over a control group *and* had only 1/3 the employee turnover.

Autonomy within a business setting involves personal control over:

- Task: Organizing your work
- Technique: How you carry out your work
- Time: When you work
- Team: People with whom you collaborate

However, this freedom requires personal accountability within a broader management structure. The four keys for a leader to manage autonomy are:

- Set important goals
  - Keep score
  - Deliver personalized coaching within a relevant framework
  - Give public and private recognition for good results
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- ❖ Mastery (competence)
    - Everyone wants to excel at something because that's an important part of a person's feeling of self-worth.
    - The Return on Investment to help employees excel at their job is obvious (to most people). Expand your thinking a bit and you'll realize that becoming expert at off-the-job activities also makes an employee a better asset to the organization. Encouragement and minor accommodations to support mastery in a person's personal life can yield big dividends, like loyalty and higher levels of engagement because the employee knows that you value him as a person.
  
  - ❖ Purpose. Related, connected to one another, sharing a common vision, etc. At the core, show how your organization's outputs make the world a better place. In some situations, the benefits of the work are

self-evident: teachers, for example. In others, leaders may need to clarify the connection between the products and/or services produced and how they make the world a better place. In any case, people yearn to be part of something noble and bigger than they are.

For example, in 1675 construction began on St. Paul's Cathedral in London. An apocryphal story has the architect asking two stone masons what they were doing. The first replied, "Cutting stone, M' Lord." The second man answered, "I'm building a cathedral to the glory of God."

If your people are cathedral-builders, most of your management problems disappear.