



Home

Mission ▾

Services ▾

Testimonials

Clients

About ▾

You Are Here: October 2006

Motivating Employees



The ability to motivate employees is often the difference between business excellence and mediocrity. Managers – I use the term “manager” to reflect a measurement and control approach toward employees - know that you usually get what you measure and reward, and are constantly tinkering with schemes to influence employee behavior. “Leaders” also seek to improve company performance, but include influencing the work environment in their toolkit for motivating employees. The best bosses use a mixture of both control and influence, and realize that different situations call for different techniques. “Different strokes for different folks” is a hallmark of effective human resource management.

The first step to maximizing employee performance is understanding the four distinct factors that motivate people.

Money: Anticipated economic rewards for achieving predetermined goals

Recognition: An employee’s trust that their good results will be appreciated and recognized

Vision: A sense of shared purpose that unites a workgroup or company, coupled with line-of-sight goals that keep the individual focused
Passion: Intrinsic, deeply felt interest in the work

The two most common forms of employee motivation techniques involve monetary incentives and recognition.

Incentives are predetermined rewards established before the results are known. They can be part of the employee’s normal pay structure or be based on a project or other event. Incentives can be cash, prizes, paid time off, or other benefits with a financial value. Simply put, an incentive works like this: Reach goal X, get reward Y.

In contrast, public praise or other forms of recognition are not discussed in advance but occur after the outcomes are known. Recognition is often based in part on subjective factors, and may be unexpected by the recipient. There exists an almost endless range of recognition rewards,

from a private “thank you” to having the employee break room named after you.

The art to maximizing individual performance is achieving the proper balance between incentives and recognition. Once this balance is reached, good leaders add vision to the mix. Passion varies from person to person, and must be

Page Links

Testimonials
 Signup for our free newsletter
 Newsletter Archives

considered if it is a significant motivation lever.

Some people are driven by a passion that comes from doing what you really love or believe in so strongly that you do it without external prompting. A leader can nurture a passion-motivated individual by discovering the underlying drivers of the passion. These may include a desire to see ideas adopted, plans carried out, increased responsibility, freedom to explore new areas, or peer recognition. When passion is a key motivating factor, the most important management advice is, "Don't kill it."

For example, making financial incentives a large part of a passion-motivated employee's compensation package may be counterproductive. For a person who's "not in this for the money," large bonuses (as opposed to a higher base salary) can feel demeaning and "cheapen" their accomplishments.

Another sure-fire way to dispirit a passionate type, especially if they work long hours, is to allow "slackers" to remain on their team or work group. Frustratingly for the manager, slacker behavior is not an absolute performance standard; it's anything the passionate one deems inadequate, when measured to their personal standards.

Finally, anyone designing a reward system to motivate people needs to be alert to the Law of Unintended Consequences

Tom Wagner

We help leaders feel more in control,
do more of what they really love, and
be more effective at work.

Call us at 800 422-1374 to learn more.

[Home](#) | [Mission](#) | [Services](#) | [Testimonials](#) | [Clients](#) | [About](#)

Copyright 2011 Wagner Consulting Group, Inc. - (800) 422-1374