



Management and Performance Associates – October 2011

Motivating without money

Peter had been rated outstanding in all previous performance appraisals. His new boss couldn't believe it, as his experience with Peter was very different. He was not meeting his goals, didn't seem to be interested in his job, and frankly, he seemed to be disconnected from the office environment. The boss decided to have a conversation with Peter, and he was not surprised when Peter mentioned that he was not feeling motivated. When the boss probed *a little*, Peter replied that his salary was not in line with the market. The boss discussed the issue with the Human Resources generalist, and to his surprise, the generalist mentioned that Peter was way above the midpoint for his salary level, almost at the maximum for his pay grade. The generalist made it clear that she was against a salary increase, and an exception to the policy would have to be approved by the president of the company and the HR Director. Peter's boss walked out of the meeting blaming HR and its policies that do not recognize market dynamics.

The HR generalist decided to invite Peter for a coffee to discuss the issue. The explanation she received was very different: Peter was extremely unhappy with the leadership style of his new boss. Peter complained that the new boss was a "task master," a coercitive, and he felt that he could not put his skills and experience to use, as the boss only demanded obedience to his methods.

This story is corroborated, constantly, in our leadership workshops, where participants complain about their human resources policies which prevent them from throwing money at their employees, so they can get "motivated." Many times, participants are not convinced by evidence presented in countless studies and books on the theory of motivation, which state that:

- a) Motivation is an internal driver; therefore managers can only influence its outcome.
- b) We are energized (motivated) by the satisfaction of our needs. David McClelland, the late Harvard psychologist,

- c)
- d) identified three "social motives" that explain why we behave the way we do: we get pleasure from achievement, we get pleasure from affiliation and we get pleasure from impacting others. Think of it as three ingredient cocktail, with a unique recipe for each individual.
- e) Frederick Herzberg's studies brought the concept of motivators (satisfiers) and 'hygiene' factors (dissatisfiers, used mainly for maintenance). Although developed in 1959, the theory can be applied nowadays in the following sense: A decent compensation – hygiene factor – should, of course, be offered to every employee, taking into consideration the job responsibility, the market (and where the company wants to position itself) and the employee's performance. This takes the issue of compensation off the table. **Now, let's talk about what can be done so that the employees feel motivated (satisfiers):**

- **Start right, from the beginning**

Special attention should be placed during the interviewing phase (both to internal and external candidates). What did the candidate like and dislike in previous positions? What are their reasons for leaving previous jobs? Do not

take the candidate at face value. Listen, probe and look for inconsistencies. A month or so ago, we were observing a job interview where the candidate mentioned, very candidly, that he really could not stand the constant changes in his previous job. The interviewer smiled and said "I don't think you will be happier here . . ." "Next!"

- **Remember that leadership is situational**

In his article for Harvard Business Review, "Leadership that gets results," Daniel Goleman (famous for his Emotional intelligence books) describes six leadership styles, including two which produce a negative impact in an organizational climate (when used out of context or for an



extended period of time). He uses a great golf analogy. Before heading to the golf course, you better be sure that your bag includes all clubs, suitable for the different demands of different shots (back to corporate life, the situation, the competence and maturity level of self and staff). There is nothing more de-motivating for competent, creative and mature staff than a boss that insists on “my way or the highway.”

- **Know your employees and their motivational profile**

Talk to them. Observe their reactions when performing a task. What seems to cause pleasure and displeasure? Do you notice a different level of energy being displayed when Mary is in a charge of a challenging project? When Jane has a chance to work with her team? When Joe has to make a presentation to the directors?

- **Delegate according to their motivational profile**

Ideally, using the example above, you will delegate your challenging projects to Mary, team tasks to Jane, and presentations to Joe. Sometimes corporate life does not present an

opportunity to do so, since goals are non-negotiable. You can still adapt what you say (and how you say it) to their motivational profile. For instance, if Joe gets the project instead of the presentation, you can “sell” him on the idea by saying it will give him great exposure to senior management, which is true.

- **Adapt your strategy to their experience and maturity level**

Clearly, if you have hired competent and creative people, stop telling them what to do. Start asking them for suggestions, get them involved. Motivation comes from the sense of contributing to a greater goal. Managing them by objectives, not by tasks, empowers them. Now, careful, when they are new to the organization, or to a job, or to a task, don't be afraid to give them the needed direction, so that they can translate their potential into performance.

By following the above suggestions you will be addressing your employees' motivations, which in turn will impact on their engagement and performance. Much more effective than just money, and better for your budget.

Sharing Best Practices

We would like to share a Ted **Talk** (*) by Dan Pink, the author of four books that focus on the changing workplace, all of them New York Times bestsellers, including “Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us.”

Watch this video by clicking the icon in the left column (you have the option of selecting subtitles in other languages). Yes, it is 18 minutes long, but it does present a compelling case, which could change the way you think about the topic, especially considering these difficult economic times. In the video he gives several examples of financial rewards producing exactly the opposite impact on performance.

http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_pink_on_motivatio.html

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