



## You Can't Motivate Anyone!

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Motivation is commonly misunderstood by most people and a source of much frustration for managers. In the simplest terms, motivation is a need that makes people engage in behavior to satisfy that need. For example, if you are thirsty, you will be motivated to get something to drink. While this example is simple, most motivation problems are not because the majority of our needs are unknown to ourselves and others. Additionally, people have multiple and often conflicting motivations across time.

Another major aspect of motivation is the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivators drive people to do things because they like to do a particular task; no external incentive is necessary. For example, someone who is intrinsically motivated to meet challenging objectives would likely do well in a sales position with challenging sales goals. Extrinsic motivation on the other hand drives people to do things to get an external reward. For example, someone does a job, even though they do not like it, so that they can earn money.

### Motivators at Work

Managers and others often think of motivation in general terms, e. g. “they are a very motivated group.” Such usage leaves the effective manager wondering, “what are they motivated to do?” One must think about what people are motivated to do and whether it is consistent with what one wants them to do. For example, a manager may conclude that one employee is motivated to socialize and the other to innovate. The behavioral implications of these two motivators are quite different. The manager of the innovator will likely have an easy time getting creative ideas and products from that employee. It might be harder to get innovation from the one who is motivated to socialize. In fact, this example illustrates the value of selecting employees who are motivated to do the job; they are easier to manage. They will do their work well and with less managerial effort. They are also more likely to improve the processes involved with their work. Therefore, having a fuller understanding of motivation is of value to managers who want employees who are motivated to do what management wants done.

### You Can't Motivate People

Most managers think that they can motivate their people and probably think they can motivate anyone to do a job. The truth is that you cannot motivate anyone to do anything, although you can make them do things. There is a big difference.

With self-motivators, their intrinsic motivators make them perform. When you make people do something, you have to watch, monitor, and *push* them to do what you want. Think of a drill sergeant getting recruits to perform. While a work situation is not that extreme, pushing is similar because it involves a lot of management effort. Pushing is no way to work with people in a creative environment where you want people to take ownership of their work. Leaders do not want to engage in a struggle to get people to perform. They want to support people who like to do what their job requires.

### Matching Employees to Jobs

The best that you can do is match people to the right job. It sounds easy, but as with most management issues, it is easier to say than to do. It requires that you first really know your people, which most leaders do not. For a sales position, you would want someone who likes people. The best person for an analyst job is probably a numbers oriented introvert. This all sound logical, but it is not common sense because it is not done as commonly as one might think. The main reason is that leaders usually don't really know who they are selecting and what motivates them. Additionally, they often are mistaken regarding what is required to do a job. Given these two conditions, there is often a mismatch between the person and the job.

The trick to matching employees is to know what motivates employees. Really understand people before you hire them and/or place them in a job. Know what the job requires in terms of behavior and personality. Once you know both, you can effectively match people to jobs.

### Matching Motivation Tips

- Select personnel who are already motivated to do at least part of the job, if not the whole job.
- Understand what is required in a job and what kind of people are motivated to do it
- Really know the individuals who you hire or place in a job
- Learn what intrinsically motivates your followers to perform exceptionally.
- Use psychometric measures, team selection,
- Find out what employees value (e.g., time off, money, status, etc.).
- Expectations formed over life can have a significant effect on what motivates people, so learn what they expect from work. Use this information to help you hire personnel who have expectations that you can satisfy.

Therefore, rather than hiring people and then trying to motivate them, which is ineffective, hire individuals who will be motivated by the job itself. Doing so will allow you to focus on leading them rather than pushing them to do their work. When you focus on leading, you will be able to move the organization toward fulfilling its vision and securing competitive advantage.

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