

Helix Top Tips – for Team Motivation

1: Get the knowledge - to *understand* what motivates people. When I'm out and about talking to managers I often experience them trying to motivate people in some very forceful ways. By telling them that they'll 'enjoy it' or that it 'will be good for them', or the old management bombshell – 'trust me... it's a development opportunity'. Sometimes they go down the 'let's have fun' route and coerce people into going to the pub, or shooting each other with paint-balls. All well and good, but firstly, who likes being told what to do? Secondly, some people have other ways of having fun... Do some research. It doesn't take much digging around on the internet to find some well tried and tested models, theories and ideas on motivation. Frederick Herzberg's Motivation & Hygiene factors model was first published in 1959 and is still being tested today. In 1963, Adam's Equity theory supported this and again still holds water. Both can be found on www.businessballs.com Once you understand the factors that *actively motivate*, and the ones that simply *need to be there* and indeed de-motivate if absent, then the rest becomes a little more easy.

2: Fix the quick wins

When you've identified the things that are missing (Herzberg called them hygiene factors), then start looking for the quick wins. They're usually easy to remedy, and people will notice. Think about the ripped carpet, the broken fridge in the staff coffee room, the software that's not compatible, broken printers, slow servers or the on-line expenses form that doesn't work... You know the kind of thing. Sadly these quick wins aren't the big motivational factors. They simply must be fixed, but the feel good factor won't last for ever.

3: Find out what people want - go and ask them Put in place a mechanism whereby your employees can tell you what they like, what they need, what they aspire to, what challenges they would like to rise to. If the mechanism is good, you'll get good stuff back. The mechanism might involve well run team meetings, suggestion schemes, staff surveys or opinion polls and appraisal systems. You might get some flippant ideas and remarks. So what? You'll almost certainly get staff exercising their "employees right to whinge". We all do it, and it's good for us. It's cathartic. The key here is you'll get good ideas too. Ideas on how to sell more, how to be more efficient, ideas on better ways of working. Useful stuff.

4: Show genuine commitment to making changes - if there is benefit to be had. Two things to do now. Firstly, act on the information you get – particularly for those quick wins. When Sky introduced a staff survey process, the state of the toilets came in the top five

gripes. This surprised management, but they fixed the problem and showed that they were listening. More importantly, they listened to everything their employees said and took action way beyond fixing the loos. Secondly, keep at it. Do it constantly. Keep asking, and keep fixing things. Finding things out is only the beginning. All too often an organisation will launch a 'new initiative' or 'roll out' a new project, only to forget about it a short while afterwards in favour of the next 'new initiative'.

5: Manage your managers

Managers are in a position to really influence the motivation levels of the people they manage. They can make the difference between success and failure, between happiness and drudgery - but they need the skills to manage in this way. They need managing, and they need feedback from their own managers, their peers and their teams. Many organisations promote technically excellent people into management positions, and *then* think about their skills... too late. Managers need clear management objectives and the time, skills, knowledge and ability to meet them. An accountant who is promoted to management clearly cannot do as much accountancy if he or she is to manage and motivate their team. Motivated teams perform better. South West Airlines is famously the only airline in the United States that has been in profit every year for over 30 years. There are many reasons for this, and amongst the most critical is the effort and investment they put into management capability. They have more supervisors than most other airlines, and the role of these supervisors and managers is simple – it is to enable others to do their job. They're well trained, and their whole job is to manage.

6: Own and respect your performance management system

Frederick Herzberg asserts that the key motivational factors are: achievement, recognition, the work itself, challenge & responsibility, advancement and personal growth. A good and well run performance management system offers all of these. Well defined objectives which challenge, interesting work and recognition help people grow and advance their careers. If your performance management is 'owned' by HR and not by individuals and their managers, then you're missing a trick. At one organisation I met an employee who had just had their appraisal (after HR had told their manager to get on and do it...). One piece of feedback entered on their appraisal form was "Dorothy is a popular and valued member of the team". He wasn't too pleased - his name is Dave.

Lack of ownership can lead to shocking errors – treat appraisals with respect.

Organisations with good systems generally find that they get better results and happier staff. Staff who contribute, are engaged in the work they do, and are enthusiastic.

7: Be consistent. All the time.

Show consistency in managing people – if objectives aren't met, if policies or organisational

principles aren't followed people should know what to expect. Rewards and recognition should be freely given – to incentivise and encourage. Gripes about management are often linked to inconsistency in management approach.

8: Develop your people

A survey published in The Times interviewed 1000 employees from companies employing 500 + people. Many were bored and looking for another job. Lack of stimulation and no advancement were high on the list of reasons. Investing in staff development doesn't have to involve big training programmes. Much of it can be done locally, and on-the-job. The key point is that if you're going to stimulate people by agreeing challenging objectives, then you need to provide appropriate support.

9: Build a culture that strives for excellence

I've worked with companies whose party line is that their staff are happy and motivated. Ask individuals within that organisation and you'll get a different story. Dig a bit further and you'll find that whilst people are performing ok against their personal objectives, business results don't reflect this. Why? Well partly it will be because the culture of the organisation accepts 'OK' rather than 'Excellence'. People enjoy succeeding and so need to work in a culture where success is encouraged. This kind of culture feeds motivated successful teams. Organisations like South West Airlines, work hard on these cultures. But they can't simply be replicated. You have to create your own culture and this takes effort. Managers are key, and the on-going, unswerving support of senior management is of paramount importance.

10: Celebrate success

We learn from our mistakes, true enough, and we can learn as much from our success – if we just take the time to do so. Celebrate every success, and learn from it. The best teams in the world will freely pat themselves (and each other) on the back and shout about it when they achieve good things.

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If you would like to talk to us about motivation, teams, or management development, please do call or email, we'd love to talk to you.

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