

Culture and Motivation Go Hand-In-Hand

By Robert Whipple, MBA CPLP

You have probably asked yourself, “How do people become motivated to perform at peak levels over a sustained period of time?” Perhaps you found yourself coming up with incentive programs that reward based on money, vacations, or perhaps merchandise in an effort to motivate your employees. The reality is, motivation comes from within each of us is not generated by picnics or T-shirts. As a leader, do not seek to motivate your employees; rather, focus on building a culture of trust where individuals make the choice to become motivated.

How can a leader help people to achieve higher levels of motivation? The job of a good leader is to help others find the best way to keep motivated, based on their own motivational styles and outlooks. Leaders also have the responsibility to create an environment that inspires and encourages employees so that they can feel their personal motivational processes are supported and valued. Leaders can help create positive morale and motivation within their team, and within each individual employee simply by creating a corporate culture of trust and affection. By doing so, it will help employees become more internally motivated because they will:

- Feel like a part of a winning team that respects and values all members for what they have to offer. This helps employees feel both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards when they are doing their best work.
- Appreciate their co-workers and seek ways to help them physically and emotionally.
- Understand the goals of the organization better and commit to help as much as they can in order to achieve the goals individually and as a team.
- Enjoy the social interactions with people they work with and respect them as co-workers as well as friends.
- Deeply respect their leaders and want them to be successful.
- Feel like they are part owners of the company and hold themselves accountable.
- Feel appreciated and recognized for their many contributions; this helps to increase self-esteem and confidence levels.

These advantages help generate a culture of respect and trust.

Creating this kind of culture

What is “culture” in an organization? Webster defines culture as the social structure and intellectual and artistic manifestations that characterize a society. For an organization,

“culture” means how people interact, what they believe, and how they create success. If you could peel off the roof of a company, you would see the manifestations of the culture in the physical world. The actual culture is more esoteric because it resides in the hearts and minds of the corporate society, in addition to observable behaviors.

Achieving a state where all people are fully engaged is a large undertaking. It requires tremendous focus and leadership. It cannot be something you do on Tuesday afternoons or when you have special meetings. You need to see evidence of this in every nook and cranny of the organization.

Leaders Create Winners

At work, many people feel forced to endure an unfair world where they feel like a failure. In organizations of exceptional leadership, the exact opposite occurs. People enjoy their work because their leader has created a culture of “winners.” People become bonded together as a winning team, and joy and celebrations replace the drudgery of work. These are the lucky few that work in organizations where the leader understands how to leverage the small win.

Jack Stack, Author of “the Great Game of Business,” wrote:

“Winning is not just a matter of pride, of course. It is also a habit. Unfortunately losing can be a habit as well. When people are in the habit of losing, you won’t see fire in their eyes, only sand. If you want to light the fire, you have to begin by creating wins and celebrating wins – by making a big deal out of little victories and then building on the little victories to achieve bigger victories. It’s a way of putting fun in the workplace – literally. We throw parties and hold celebrations at the drop of a hat. What we’re really doing is creating a team.”

Excellent leaders understand a key mission is to create this type of environment. They know that when they establish a culture of winners, the entire organization will prosper and win.

Personal success is defined, not in terms of wealth or power, but in doing worthwhile things. There are wealthy and powerful people who are utter failures, just as there are many successful people who have no money or fame. It is the journey, not the destination that embodies success. Earl Nightingale in his program, “Lead the Field,” identified success as “the progressive realization of a worthy goal” and later modified it to simply “the pursuit of a worthy goal.” Notice it is not achieving the goal or receiving awards for accomplishing amazing feats. Rather, success is in the pursuit.

Once you have reached a particular goal, immediately set out a course for the next increment of your life. If this new goal is worthy, the simple pursuit will mean you are successful. This process will allow you and others around you to experience the elation of success every day. It is there in the fiber of daily living as long as a worthy goal is being pursued. Teach this insight to everyone in your organization. It will take the drudgery and

pressure away, adding joy in its place and helping with self-motivation and increased morale.

It is important for leaders to avoid trying to “motivate” workers. Motivation is not a magic pill that can be purchased with pizza parties or dress down days. Instead, leaders should focus on creating the environment where workers choose to motivate themselves.

*The preceding information was adapted from the book **The TRUST Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals**, by Robert Whipple. It is available on www.leadergrow.com.*

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