

Trust and Motivation

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP

When managers use the word “motivate” as a verb, it is as if motivation is something they can “do to” the workers. This approach shows a lack of understanding of what motivation truly is and where it comes from.

Over fifty years ago, Frederick Herzberg taught us that the strongest motivation is created intrinsically, not by some extrinsic factor, like money. The only person who can truly motivate you is you. It is the role of leaders to create the environment such that people freely elect to become motivated. Here is a quick story of a manager who knew how to create motivation.

In 1993, I asked Alice to take over a production department with about 120 employees. It was a tough assignment because the prior leader was competent but not a good builder of culture. Some workers were apathetic and just floated along without much focus. Others were angry and verbally hostile most of the time.

I have never witnessed such a turnaround in my life. Within six months, the department had doubled productivity and the employees were really turned on and having a great time smashing the aggressive goals they had set up. How did Alice accomplish this amazing turn around? She simply worked to drive out fear and replaced it with trust.

Most managers try to find ways to “motivate” the workers, but Alice was more of a leader than a manager. She focused on creating a culture of trust where the workers decided to motivate themselves.

Exercise for you: Pay attention to the words you use when describing motivating people. Notice how many times you use the word “motivate” as a verb. You may utter phrases like “We have to find a better way to motivate the team.” This error in leading people is very common in most cultures, and that is why motivation is typically low. A culture of trust avoids the problem.

Always use the word “motivation” as a noun, like something that will occur within people when they are well led. You will find your track record of producing exceptional results is greatly enhanced.

The preceding was derived from an episode in “Building Trust,” a 30 part video series by Bob Whipple “The Trust Ambassador.” To view three short (3 minutes each) examples at no cost go to <http://www.avanoo.com/first3/517>

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