

7 Methods of Motivating Employees to Perform at Their Best



By Otto Schmidt

In our new age of creativity, being the best will be the only way individuals and companies can survive. For much of the population, gone are the days of staying in a job for decades, moving up the corporate ladder in a systematic way, and letting others do the most difficult work. Creatively motivating employees to be more than what they are is key to rising above the ordinary in anything that a company or organization does.

Look around and notice the constant change and dramatic pushes to new heights of creativity that give companies the “edge” over others. Creative management is part of their secret. Motivated employees is the result.

Because of increasing global trade and competition, instant world-wide communication, the internet and heightened human mobility, there is very little that we don’t know or can’t find out about almost any company on the planet. This is good and bad. On the one hand, it is easier to determine if one’s own products/services are competitive. On the other hand, it means constant change and upgrades to keep up. If employees are not managed creatively and motivated to be part of this, there is a great chance of the company’s “dinosaurification.” Look at the companies that made the earliest handheld calculators and see which are still surviving. Everybody must be on board to keep companies and businesses afloat. It is not just the responsibility of the owners or executives anymore. That means different, creative, new ways of operating.

Here are some suggestions that can improve overall management of employees and also increase motivation:

1. Get rid of the “carrot and stick” approach. Rewarding good behavior and punishing behavior you don’t want just doesn’t work well any more. Highly experienced professionals that know exactly what they are doing

can go to other companies instantly. It may be okay for simpler and easier jobs but not in situations where high levels of creativity and imagination are desperately needed. Management training centers need to take a serious look at this and replace it with something more viable.

2. Replace performance bonuses/sales commissions with salaries and profit sharing. People feel they contribute to a community instead of competing individually. Profit sharing can lead to increased motivation and more effort because everybody knows they affect the overall performance and rewards. Automatic base pay raises may not be necessary.

3. Assign jobs according to expertise. In a hierarchy of responsibility, job titles often determine who gets what job - plum, highly creative, or otherwise. That doesn’t make sense if the person who is “supposed” to get the job is not an expert. Reducing individual job titles and instead forming teams that develop their own expertise and approaches increases motivation and a sense of belonging. Management becomes decentralized but applies more directly to the workers. Many years ago, Volvo made the only cars built by small teams instead of on assembly lines. Imagine the teamwork needed for that task. Look at the Toyota socio-technical system for car manufacturing. Workers need to be valued for expertise, not position.

4. Let the team decide. This may be a little uncomfortable for some senior people in companies but beyond setting deadlines, it might be highly motivating to let members take command and ownership of a segment of the operation and decide on what to do, when to do it and who will do what.

5. Provide staff development that is mainly personal skills training. Encourage people to become experts and specialists at their jobs. Get them to stretch into new territory. The

more they know about the different areas of a company, the more valuable they become. Get employees to learn the details of other jobs and cross-reference and share expertise. The more people know about their own jobs as well as others, the greater the motivation to be more creative and imaginative. Personal skills training in creativity, researching methods, higher-level thinking, communication, leadership, self-awareness add value to employees and motivate them because of a sense of empowerment. Knowledge and facts are not as valuable as they used to be. Applying them in new and creative ways is the new need. That can only come from skills training.

6. Arrange a workplace that strives for a common goal. Invite people to become part of something that is bigger than the individual. There is greater purpose in what they all do. Everybody will benefit and share in the success. That will only happen if everybody stays focused and motivated to do and be the best they can be.

7. Provide an environment that draws out creativity. One of the goals of formal brainstorming techniques is to allow for diversity and breadth of ideas and have them presented in a safe and non-judgmental environment. When people are made to feel safe and free to think and share ideas, no matter how bizarre in some cases, creativity will flourish. When creativity is nurtured and accepted, motivation follows almost automatically.

The workplace has changed dramatically over the decades. Motivating employees to keep a company at a high level of success is vital to business success in the age of creativity. The best ways of motivating people is to nurture their abilities, talents, and skills and then create an exciting environment in which to unleash them.