



## Motivation: back to basics... one more time

During a recent Leaders Path Retreat, the group of leaders was discussing motivation. The group consisted of four managers and one director from different organizations representing consumer products and defense contractor. They all shared the same concerns and experiences of “trying to motivate employees” across generations.

I asked them to reflect on what they were saying and how they were expressing the concept of motivation. “It sounded like motivation is something you do to someone,” I reflected back to them. I asked them to think about how we might think of motivation differently and what they believed motivated their employees. I suggested that by knowing more about what motivates people at work, they may be more effective in meeting goals and provide a workplace that people wanted to join. I suggested we consider what they believe about people.

## What do you think motivates people?

This is how we approached the issue. First: **What do you believe about people?**

Do you believe?

- Most people are naturally lazy and don't like work.
- Most people lack ambition and need a club over their heads in order to make them work.
- Most people prefer to be told what to do and they avoid responsibility.
- Most people resist change.
- Most people are gullible and not overly intelligent.
- Most people are motivated by money and status rewards.

If you believe the above, then you are a Theory X manager

Do you believe?

- People do not dislike work but may actively seek it.
- People do not need authoritarian leadership and prefer a participative kind of management.
- People prefer setting their own goals rather than have someone set them.
- People do not shrink from responsibility but rather seek it.
- People who understand and care about what they are doing can devise and improve their own methods of doing work.
- People constantly grow and are motivated at work by interesting and challenging tasks.

If you believe that above, then you are a Theory Y manager.

(You probably recognize Douglas McGregor's Theory X & Y)

Theory X may have some validity and be effective in certain situations. Theory X may seem valid to many managers because they forget that their perception of people influences the way they treat employees. However, if people in different workplace environments are treated as being responsible, independent, goal achieving and creative; they become so. It is important to

remember that the X-Y Theory is an assumption that managers make about employees, and not that employees are “X” or “Y” people.

What we learned is that people will react to the way that their managers treat them

## Money has its value

Money has its value. Certainly, money is a motivator and it will vary throughout a person’s life. However, for most of us, most of the time, once we are able to meet our financial obligations, other factors become more significant in our daily work life. However, money alone will do little to get them to do their best or to go above and beyond what is expected.

I asked the group to consider this study of 10,000 workers at Texas Instruments. Supervisors were asked to rank what they believed motivated employees. Their employees then rated what motivated them. Do you see a difference between what supervisors believed is motivating and what employees believed was motivating?

Motivator	Employees Ranking	Supervisor Ranking
Feeling of Being in on Things	2	10
Job Security	4	2
Interesting Work	6	5
Personal Loyalty to Employees	8	6
Tactful Disciplining	10	7
Good Working Conditions	9	4
Promotions and Growth in the Company	7	3
Good Wages	5	1
Sympathetic Help on Personal Problems	3	9
Full Appreciation of Work Done	1	8

When I was in graduate school at Claremont Graduate University, Peter Drucker told us, “Merit raises always are introduced as rewards for exceptional performance. In no time, at all they became a right. To deny a merit raise or to grant only a small one becomes a punishment. The increasing demand for material rewards rapidly is destroying their usefulness as incentives and managerial tools.”

What does this mean to you? **Salary alone is not a motivator.**

Next, the group examined six job centered factors that have a long term effect on attitudes and motivation without regard to generation:

- Achievement
- Recognition
- Advancement
- The Work Itself
- Possibility of Growth

## What do you do?

Recognizing that what the groups of managers believe about people will directly affect the way they treat their employees. In addition, recognizing that salary alone is not a motivator, we

generated the following list of things they could do immediately to create a motivating workplace. Here are the top 11 things you can do to motivate today's employees:

1. Personally thank them. Do it timely. Do it sincerely – verbally or in writing.
2. Be willing to meet with them and listen – as much as they need or want.
3. Observe and provide specific feedback about their performance and job related behaviors.
4. Encourage new ideas and innovation.
5. Work at creating an environment that is open, trusting and fun.
6. Provide information that links people to the organization. Give them information about how the organization makes and loses money. Tell them about upcoming products, competitive strategies, the marketplace, and how what they do fits into the operation's objectives.
7. Involve people in decisions that affect them.
8. Provide people with a sense of ownership in their work and the workplace.
9. Recognize, reward and promote people based on performance. Deal with marginal performers – help them develop so they improve or leave. Recognition creates role models and communicates the standards.
10. Give people an opportunity to grow and learn new skills. Show how personal and professional development can help them meet their goals as well as the organization's goals.
11. Celebrate successes – of the company, department and individuals. Take time to build morale.

You can create a highly motivated workforce by creating a highly motivating workplace environment. By making employees feel valued so they want to do their best work every day you will see increased individual performance. Focus more on how you treat people and pay them fairly.

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