How to Motivate Your Team

As a leader or manager, motivating your team is likely to be high on your agenda. Your team members’ motivation levels can have an impact on their productivity, the quality of their work, their engagement, morale and their relationships with others. It is vital, therefore, to create the conditions for motivation to thrive within your team. In this guide we show you how.

Communicate openly and honestly

Communicating regularly, openly and honestly with your team members can help make them feel valued, involved and more secure. When it comes to communicating with your team, be sure to:

- **Be open and approachable.** Let team members know that you want to communicate with them and that you value their input. If you can, why not have an ‘open door’ policy so team members can talk to you face-to-face when they need to?
- **Be as honest as possible.** If you are delivering important news, be realistic in terms of how it might affect the team, and be honest about what they should expect to happen, both in the immediate and long-term.
- **Keep team members up to date.** If something in the organisation changes that affects the team, let everyone know as soon as you can. Be as clear as you can about the reasons behind the change, and let the team know when a further update will be available.
- **Create opportunities for your team to communicate with you.** In your regular team meetings, give team members the chance to raise any issues or questions they might have. If more personal or sensitive topics need to be discussed, it may be more appropriate to hold one-to-one meetings with the individuals in question. For more straightforward issues, you may wish to invite your team to email you, although you may want to follow this up with a face-to-face conversation at a later date.

Be an inspiration

From the way you respond to problems or challenges, to how you manage your workload and conduct your relationships, your approach to work can have a big influence on your team. Starting the day with a lacklustre attitude and a gloomy outlook will do little to boost your team’s motivation. But a positive, upbeat approach can help to energise your team and encourage them to adopt a similar mindset. As a leader or manager, the way you approach your role can also have an impact on your team members’ motivation; if you put in 100%, your team should be inspired to do the same.

Seek involvement and gain buy-in

Involving team members in planning and decision-making processes will help to ensure that they are motivated to follow through on the outcomes that they have helped to shape. This need not necessarily mean involving the team in lots of dedicated meetings or discussions, although you may wish to do this, depending on the situation. In some cases, simply asking team members to email you their thoughts and ideas, or to share them with you as part of regular team or one-to-one meetings can help to make people feel involved.

However, there are likely to be some decisions in which you can’t involve your team members, perhaps because the issues in question are strategic or confidential. In these situations, it is vital to gain your team’s buy-in to the decision that is made. This means being honest and upfront about the reason for the decision, and explaining what it means for the team. Taking the time to secure your employees’ buy-in will help to ensure they continue to feel involved and are motivated to support the decision, even if they haven’t been able to influence it directly.

Boost team morale

Team morale and employee motivation share a close relationship. Employees in enthusiastic, committed teams with good working relationships are far more likely to be motivated than those in groups that are deflated or disconnected. There are a number of ways in which you can influence team morale. These include:

- Encouraging team members to **collaborate** and work on tasks and projects together, where appropriate.
- Holding **team-building exercises** every so often to help team members bond and work together more effectively.
- Conducting regular **temperature checks** to establish the mood of the team. You could ask team members about this face-to-face, or distribute an anonymous questionnaire. These temperature checks can offer particularly important insights during periods of change or uncertainty when morale often takes a hit.
- Organising an occasional **team lunch or night out** so everyone can spend time together and get to know one
Help team members to grow and develop

Providing team members with opportunities to grow, develop and use their skills in new ways will help to ensure that motivation levels remain high. It’s important, however, to offer individual employees challenges and opportunities that are appropriate to them. Assigning a task or project that a team member is unable to take on, or for which they do not feel ready may cause them to feel stressed and even de-motivated.

It’s therefore advisable to spend some time with each team member to find out how they would like to develop, and what types of tasks, challenges or additional responsibilities they would like to take on. To support these objectives, there are a number of actions you might be able to take. These could include:

- setting challenging but achievable targets for team members who want to develop in a specific area
- giving team members extra responsibilities, perhaps by delegating some of your own tasks
- inviting a team member to shadow you or someone else in the organisation, such as another leader or manager
- offering coaching, mentoring or training where appropriate

Offer praise and celebrate success

Recognising and celebrating success in your team is one of the most effective ways of inspiring everyone to keep up the good work. Saying a simple ‘thank you’ or ‘well done’ to team members can help to boost motivation on a day-to-day basis and will reassure them that their efforts have not gone unnoticed. In addition, it is good practice to:

- Be specific when offering praise and positive feedback. Let team members know exactly why you are pleased with them and what aspects of their performance have impressed you.
- Review progress regularly with team members who are working on long-term projects or initiatives, and recognise interim success (e.g. completing a key phase of a project).
- Acknowledge milestone achievements (e.g. meeting a challenging deadline, completing a project,) as well as day-to-day ones.
- Let the rest of the organisation know about your team’s success; you could announce it in your leadership or management meetings, post an announcement on the intranet, or even write an article in your company newsletter.
- Consider providing a reward to acknowledge outstanding team or individual performance. This needn’t be expensive; you could offer team members additional holiday entitlement, time in lieu or simply the chance to take a longer lunch. Other cost-effective reward ideas can be found in the article It’s Intrinsic: a Motivation Exercise.

Identify individual drivers for motivation

When it comes to motivating your team, it’s important to remember that different people have different drivers for motivation. Although many employees are undoubtedly motivated by the prospect of reward, this is not necessarily the case for everyone. Some of your team members might value praise above anything else, while others may be driven by the prospect of growth and development.

If you haven’t done so recently, have a conversation with each of your team members about what motivates them. You might also find it useful to run a team exercise such as Non-Financial Reward Initiatives to help uncover your team members’ individual drivers for motivation.

However, you may find that despite your best efforts, there are one or two team members who remain unmotivated. If this is the case it’s important to speak to these individuals on a one-to-one basis to try to get to the bottom of the problem and identify and agree on an appropriate way forward together.

Summary

Motivating your team is an important aspect of your role, and one that requires continuous attention. But it’s not about making elaborate gestures or offering costly incentives. It’s about taking simple steps to create the right conditions for motivation to thrive and tapping into your team members’ individual drivers for motivation. Do this and you will help make your team an inherently motivating place to work.

Related Items

Related Resources
- It's Intrinsic: a Motivation Exercise
- Non-Financial Reward Initiatives