

How to (not) motivate others?

Motivation is a topic that has been catching more attention lately. One of the reasons for that is the pandemic we've all been dealing with. Teams had to face new challenges, priorities and goals needed to be reformulated, new ways of cooperation had to be found. Widely adopted remote working influenced the progress of our carriers and the motivation of all workers.

Every manager's duty is to motivate their subordinates to achieve goals, both business and self-development related. The question "How to motivate others" has been asked frequently, but what about how not to do it?

The term "motivation" means body's readiness to fulfill certain tasks. Some incentives activate complex psychological and physical processes, which enable the body's functioning. It's a unique mechanism, making survival, development, and achieving great results easier. If used wisely in business environment, it can become a powerful tool for building employees' engagement and increasing the productivity of the whole company.

Why the most popular motivation tools, employee benefits and salary, are not enough? The problem is that they rely on external motivation, which is based on carrot and stick approach. Many people experienced it in their childhood. It does lead to certain behaviours and actions, but only due to expected consequences.

Limiting motivation down to awards and praises is not beneficial, especially in the work environment. Many researchers (e.g., Harry Harlow [1] and Edward Deci [2],[3]) showed that external motivation lowers the employee's internal motivation. That affects how they perceive their effectiveness and agency.

Internal motivation affects the actions basing on their meaning and the importance of the set goals. Here, our curiosity, dreams, and effectiveness play a huge role. Now, we're more creative and encouraged to find solutions that would boost our development.

And so, we reach a significant term - inspiration. It's a special kind of motivation, a call for action, coming from within us, encouraging us to achieve goals that fit into our system of values and desires. Such experience can not only shape our professional journey but also influence our whole life.

Why inspire, instead of just motivating? Motivation is truly powerful when it comes from within. Inspiration is deep, it shows the entirety of the mission and the direction of actions. We cannot force others to engage. But as leaders we can inspire - ignite the willingness and the need for fulfilling important goals, honing our talents. A strong leader makes his actions exemplary, gives prompts, asks questions, and makes his employees wonder. A strong leader sees past business goals and notices the talents in his team.

We cannot forget that inspiration is just a wave of afflatus and success comes from daily efforts - diligent work, responsibility, and discipline. As Pablo Picasso said:

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Inspiration exists but it has to find you working.

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[1] H. F. Harlow, Learning and satiation of response in intrinsically motivated complex puzzle performance by monkeys, “Journal of Comparative Physiological Psychology”, 1950 r., 43, s. 289-294.

[2] E. L. Deci, *Intrinsic motivation, extrinsic reinforcement, and inequity*, “Journal of Personality and Social Psychology”, 1972, 22 (1), s. 113-120.

[3] E. L. Deci, *The effects of contingent and noncontingent rewards and controls on intrinsic motivation*, “Organizational Behavior and Human Performance”, 1972, 8 (2), s. 217-229.