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Motivate Others

One of the joys of being a leader is the opportunity to motivate and inspire people to achieve their best, reach for their dreams, and pursue goals that will enable them to grow in both their professional and their personal lives.

By creating an inspiring work environment, you can help people see beyond what they perceive as

their limitations and aspire for more, and you can bring out excellence in them. People respond to leaders who encourage, praise, appreciate, and create an honest approach to opportunities and possibilities. Work becomes more enjoyable and more meaningful, and both the organization and its employees benefit.

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In this chapter, we will cover the following areas:

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 - ▶ Create an environment in which people do their best work
 - ▶ Create an environment that makes work enjoyable
 - ▶ Inspire people to excel
 - ▶ Foster a sense of energy, ownership, and personal commitment to the work
 - ▶ Encourage others to define new opportunities and continuously improve the organization
 - ▶ Adapt your approach to motivate each individual
 - ▶ Convey trust in people's competence to do their jobs
 - ▶ Inspire action without relying solely on authority
 - ▶ Celebrate and reward significant achievements of others
 - ▶ Positively address work environment and life balance issues

Create an environment in which people do their best work

Discuss how people within a team can engage and inspire each other, and not just depend on the manager to do it.

Leaders can create an environment of enthusiasm and excellence by communicating high expectations, fostering optimistic, positive attitudes about people and their work, and ensuring that people feel appreciated and valued for their achievements and efforts. To create a climate in which all stretch beyond what they thought they could do, consider the following suggestions:

- ▶ Meet with the individuals on your team to discuss what is important to them, their goals, and your expectations. This will give you an opportunity to talk about expectations and arrive at mutually agreeable goals that people feel good about.
- ▶ Ensure that people know you are paying attention to their efforts by giving them timely, specific feedback and recognition. Positive words will encourage people, and constructive comments will help them change their tactics and behaviors to be more successful.
- ▶ Ask each individual on your team to identify “stretch objectives” — challenging goals that exceed job requirements but are still attainable. The more input people have in setting these objectives, the more likely they will be to pursue them.
- ▶ When people seem to be experiencing low morale or having difficulty, talk with them to find out what is going on. Sometimes people will not want to say much, but they will appreciate that you noticed and showed concern.
- ▶ When people do talk with you about their concerns, focus on listening instead of finding a solution right away. Help them figure out what would be most helpful. Sometimes just raising concerns is enough; other times people want to find a solution.
- ▶ Advocate the view that mistakes are opportunities for further learning, not humiliating experiences that cost people their credibility.

Create an environment that makes work enjoyable

▼ Excellent leaders show passion for the work they do and deliberately cultivate a culture in which people can enjoy their work. This translates into a higher level of success for both individuals and the organization. Consider the following suggestions:

- ▶ Examine your views toward fun at work. Does it seem like a contradiction in terms? Do you have fun at work? Why or why not?
- ▶ If you think fun is frivolous, think again. Fun does not automatically lead to lower productivity or lack of focus. It can coexist with hard work; in fact, fun on the job can motivate people to work harder and be more productive.

Invite an expert on employee engagement to talk to people about creating a positive environment.

- ▶ Realize that you can't force people to enjoy themselves. Your attempts are likely to backfire if you put people into situations in which they feel they must act as if they are having a good time. Instead, give people the freedom to create their own fun, and ask them to contribute ideas for creating a positive work environment.
- ▶ If people have a vague sense that the environment could be better but they're not sure how, ask them to describe a workplace that they would enjoy. Challenge them to be specific and to bring examples from other workplaces.
- ▶ As a group, generate several concrete suggestions on how to make the environment more enjoyable. Choose some suggestions to implement immediately. Implement a few at a time so you can measure their effectiveness.
- ▶ Identify a unit in the organization in which people consistently enjoy their work. Interview the unit leader and some of the employees to learn more about their approach to work and to working together. Ask them to share their approach with your group.

Inspire people to excel

▼ Many people build their expectations on what they think is possible. As a leader, you have the opportunity to help people see what's beyond their current horizons. Consider the following suggestions:

- ▶ When you have confidence in people's ability to excel, say so. But say it only when you mean it—not just to make people feel good.
- ▶ Find out what people believe is blocking or hindering them from outstanding accomplishments. Work together to remove the barriers.
- ▶ When you encounter people whose aspirations are not as high as you think they could be given their skills, experience, and talents, tell them your perceptions. Tell people what you see in them and why you believe they have a lot of potential. Some people have not had support from others to dream or to have high aspirations.
- ▶ Learn about the personal hopes and aspirations of your direct reports. Ask each person questions such as:
 - ▷ What unique skills and attributes would you like to capitalize on? What skills do you wish to develop further?
 - ▷ What do you hope to accomplish at the organization?
 - ▷ If you could create your ideal job, what would it look like?
- ▶ During career discussions, listen carefully as people describe their career goals. You may find that some people have lower aspirations than others, especially those who have or are perceived to have unique challenges in their way. When it's appropriate, redirect them. For example, people who are not native speakers of English may aspire only to one or two career promotions above where they are, whereas you see much greater potential for them.
- ▶ Meet with your direct reports as a group and talk about the group's hopes and aspirations. Ask questions such as:
 - ▷ What aspects of the team's vision and mission inspire you?
 - ▷ If we could remove all constraints, what would we like to accomplish? What do you think we can accomplish?
 - ▷ What do you think the organization will look like in two years? In five years? How do you see yourselves or the team fitting into that picture?
- ▶ Once you know what people think is possible, compare their views to yours. As a leader, you have access to information that not only *allows* you to see the bigger picture, but *requires* you to do so. For example,

Brainstorm ways to support high-performing individuals.

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the organization might be planning to start a new line of business that would expand your group's responsibilities.

- ▶ Identify the characteristics of a culture in which people can dream big dreams—a place where people encourage questions, feel comfortable talking about options that don't currently exist, refrain from cynical and negative comments, and know how to try out new ideas in a pragmatic way.
- ▶ People are encouraged by stories of others' successes. Tell stories about individuals and teams who had high goals and were determined to do what it took to achieve them. You will often find that the people weren't any more talented than your group, but they were willing to take a chance.
- ▶ Help people on the team see themselves as winners. Set goals to be the best and celebrate accomplishments.
- ▶ If people have low expectations and minimal hopes, learn why. You may be dealing with a history of low expectations, a series of flops, cynicism, a lack of resources, or a perception of impossible odds. These issues will always stand in the way until you address them directly.

Foster a sense of energy, ownership, and personal commitment to the work



When individuals have an opportunity to meet both professional and personal needs within the same environment, they often achieve optimum performance. As a leader, you can help create this environment for each person on your team. Consider the following suggestions:

Discuss why it is important that a team take action on a vision instead of continue to discuss hypothetical situations.

- ▶ Develop strong relationships with your direct reports. Learn about individuals' personal and professional goals, what work they want to do, and what roles they want to play in helping the team achieve its goals and vision.
- ▶ Make explicit connections between the team's goals and vision, each person's needs and motives, and personal and professional goals. Watch for opportunities to link people with work, situations, or experiences that will help them to meet their goals.

- ▶ Show your excitement as you talk about the team's goals and vision, and indicate how pleased you are that people are willing to pitch in and work together. Your personal commitment to the team will inspire others to strengthen their commitment.
- ▶ Capitalize on people's competitive spirit and sense of pride. Provide benchmarking information about your external competitors or other teams within your organization. Also, work with the team to set goals to become the best.
- ▶ Understand that with some individuals, recognition can play a positive role in inspiring work commitment. They will perform at a high level so that they get visibility for their contributions. Also, they may put pressure on others to get on board so that the team will be more successful.

Encourage others to define new opportunities and continuously improve the organization

▼
 Ask people to identify ways that they improve and contribute to a productive workplace.

Effective leaders challenge their people and teams to ask questions and to look at old problems in new ways. Together, they identify what is working well and what is stalled, and develop ideas that will improve performance. Consider the following suggestions:

- ▶ Discuss with team members how the team or organization can improve. Ask people to challenge assumptions, identify root causes of problems rather than symptoms, and think through all the implications of the solutions they propose.
- ▶ Ask your direct reports what you can do to be a better leader or a better boss for them. Implement some of their recommendations to show that you take their input seriously.
- ▶ Encourage people to think beyond current customer needs. What will be important to your customers tomorrow, next year, and in five years? What is going on with *their* customers? How will that affect what your customers want from you?
- ▶ Observe how people on your team react to issues and problems. Your team's ability to generate new ideas and challenge the status quo will depend to some extent on the preferences of your team members.

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Some people are curious by nature, while others are more likely to accept things the way they are. Take advantage of the ingenuity of team members who enjoy creating new things and the resourcefulness of people who like to improve things. Both approaches have value.

- ▶ Ensure that the team's vision is aligned with the organization's. Then people will be confident that they are spending their time and energy on areas that the organization values.
- ▶ Focus attention on the areas where you'll get the most leverage. Too many changes may make the work environment unstable, and people may find it difficult to focus because they're trying to do too many new things.

Adapt your approach to motivate each individual



Effective leaders realize that the hopes and aspirations of people vary. They learn about their employees and adapt motivational strategies to each individual.

Six broad categories describe what energizes and motivates people. When you want to motivate a team member, review these categories. Consider how specific types of work or assignments could meet an individual's needs or motivators:

- ▶ *Achievement Motive: Driven to personally accomplish significant goals.* This person takes risks, pushes himself or herself, achieves challenging goals, subjects others to stress, and seeks visible results.
- ▶ *Balance Motive: Driven to seek work environments that place equal emphasis on nonwork activities.* This person wants flexible hours, enjoys nonwork activities, dislikes overtime, likes time off, and may like to telecommute.
- ▶ *Autonomy Motive: Driven to act independently and to express creativity.* This person prefers to do his or her own thing, wants independence, takes initiative, contributes to and enjoys the beauty in the world, and develops new ideas, materials, and methods.
- ▶ *Power/Influence Motive: Driven to seek out opportunities for recognition, prestige, authority, and/or control.* This person seeks success in others'

eyes, seeks to lead and set direction for others, prefers tangible recognition, focuses on getting ahead and advancing his or her career, and wants visible signs of prestige.

Examine situations in which attempts to motivate people failed. Discuss why the actions were unsuccessful.

- ▶ **Security Motive:** Driven to seek work environments that provide security and stability. This person prefers stability, job security, and predictability; seeks comfortable, clean, and safe working conditions; and prefers a regular income.
- ▶ **Relationship Motive:** Driven to seek out opportunities to build strong relationships and/or to be of service to others. This person seeks to relate to and help others, fosters harmony, provides service to others, emphasizes giving to others, and works with and lives by strong values of religious, racial, social, ethnic, or cultural groups.

Convey trust in people's competence to do their jobs

Smart leaders surround themselves with competent people who can do the work well. They are not afraid to hire people who are more capable than they are in particular areas. Once they've hired people, they trust them to do the work. Consider the following suggestions:

- ▶ First, hire people you trust to do the work well. Create a clear role description for each position, including the knowledge, skills, abilities, experience, and approaches the person needs. This will help you identify the type of person you would trust in that role.
- ▶ Work with your human resources people to develop an effective selection process that reliably results in the right people being hired for jobs in your part of the organization.
- ▶ When you delegate a decision or an assignment, explain the issue and your ultimate goal. Communicate the result needed, but let your people figure out how to get the results.
- ▶ Check in periodically. Make yourself available to answer questions. Talk through issues or decision options, but don't make decisions for people. This will give individuals opportunities to learn how to evaluate the options and deal with the consequences of their decisions, both positive and negative.

Discuss how people can rebuild trust in individuals who have made mistakes.

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- ▶ Support others' decisions as often as you can. If you second-guess people, they won't approach decisions seriously because they won't feel responsible for them.
- ▶ Develop an understanding of each person's decision-making process and experience. Structure work so that you delegate what you know a person can do, and work together in areas in which the person needs more experience.
- ▶ Resist taking over if things go wrong. Instead, coach people on how to correct mistakes. They will learn more and develop greater confidence in their ability to handle problems.

Inspire action without relying solely on authority

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Talk about leaders who led their teams to accomplish challenging goals. Have people figure out skills that were used and try them out with their teams.

As a leader, you know that using your authority is not always the best lever to generate action, and often it does not work. Instead, it's better to use an influence strategy that fits the situation. Consider the following suggestions:

- ▶ Inspire people. Craft messages and approaches that appeal to their values and beliefs. Encourage people by expressing your confidence in their abilities. Convey your trust in people's abilities through your words and actions.
- ▶ Persuade people to your point of view by appealing to what is important to them. The key to this approach is finding out how to meet their needs and concerns. Sometimes this means only that you need to communicate how your plans will meet their needs. Other times, you may need to modify what you want so that it is more appealing to others.
- ▶ Persuade people to your point of view by using your expertise. Apply your knowledge, exchange information and ideas, and work cooperatively with people. This approach works best if people share the goal and an understanding of its importance.
- ▶ Assume that a person or group wants to help you. Discuss the project or initiative in a way that assumes the person wants to be involved and wants to help. (Of course, this approach works best when you have an existing relationship.)

- ▶ Make a personal appeal. Solicit support and help from friends, colleagues, relatives, and other people with whom you have a reciprocal relationship.
- ▶ Compromise with others. Make an agreement that allows both parties to meet some of their needs. Even if neither of you gets everything you want, it will keep the project or initiative moving forward—and create some shared history that you can build on later.

Celebrate and reward significant achievements of others

Recognizing people's contributions and rewarding their effort and results will improve their performance. Consider the following suggestions:

- ▶ Recognize strong performance quickly. Research shows that the sooner a reward is delivered, the more impact it will have.
- ▶ Be specific. Don't just say "great job"; let people know what you are recognizing in specific, tangible terms. Emphasize the impact—on you, the team, the organization—so that the person can see the positive consequences of his or her performance.
- ▶ Help people increase their understanding of their strengths and what they do well. This is one of the most helpful things you can do to develop others' skills.
- ▶ Make your employees' successes visible. Communicate their achievements to the organization, showing pride in and support for them.
- ▶ Guard against taking people for granted. To assess whether you're overlooking people, think of employees who make your life easier, who support the team with extra effort whenever it's needed. Thank them for their efforts and praise their work.
- ▶ Observe the common ways that performance is rewarded within your organization. Talk to your peers to find out what rewards they use for their teams and employees. Also, meet with your human resources representative and discuss ways to reward and recognize performance.

Talk about the best ways to show appreciation.

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- ▶ Find out when and how people prefer to receive recognition for their work. For example, some people may appreciate frequent encouragement and recognition throughout a project, while others may prefer to be recognized when the project is complete.

Positively address work environment and life balance issues

▼ Encouraging people in your group to maintain an appropriate balance between work and life will help them achieve consistently positive results. Consider the following suggestions:

- ▶ Recognize that work/life balance needs differ between individuals. Some like to focus on their careers, while others focus on important activities outside of work. The balance may shift over time as people change their focus.
- ▶ To assess the current environment for work/life balance, review the norms and expectations for work hours. How do they fit with the needs of the work? With the needs of your employees? How many hours do people put in each week? How do people treat team members who put in more or fewer hours?
- ▶ What messages do you want to send about work hours? About balance? Consider the messages you send by your behavior. What type of role model are you?
- ▶ Ask people to evaluate their work/life balance. Balance doesn't mean that things will always be 50/50. Sometimes work requires more time, and sometimes personal life requires more time. It's a matter of understanding the trade-offs and making appropriate decisions.
- ▶ Work with your team to figure out how to honor the preferences of team members while meeting the needs of the work. If people express frustration with current expectations or excessive workloads, hold group discussions to resolve these issues. Encourage the group to come up with solutions: redistributing work, training additional people, borrowing people from other groups, developing more efficient systems.

Observe people's work/life balance, and suggest ideas for positive adjustments.