

# How To Motivate Unmotivated People

All it takes is an understanding of the appropriate steps to take and a willingness to do them. This article contains the steps. The willingness is up to you.

If you walk around a Walt Disney World resort or theme park, you are likely to witness something that in most other settings would seem bizarre. Not the presence of a large animated character, although you may witness that also. Rather, at any given moment, a person in dress clothes will be walking from one destination to another and will stop, pick up a piece of paper, a cup, or other piece of trash someone dropped, and throw it in a trash can. Executives do it, front line managers do it, hourly employees do it, everybody does it.

There is no special monetary compensation for this behavior. No point system exists where \$5 bonuses are given out for every fifteen pieces of trash that someone picks up. There is also no special monitoring system in place which watches for people who don't do it and then issues penalty points or demerits. Yet, people are motivated to do it anyway.

Now picking up trash may not be your top concern, but are there other things in your department, division, or company that you would like your employees to do? Are you looking for ways to motivate your people?

The answer is not pixie dust or magic. The key is being very good at employing five essential motivation steps.

To some leaders these steps can seem intimidating. First time managers in particular, who were promoted because of their individual skills are often uncomfortable with these ideas. Many times they feel people should just do what needs to be done "because that is what they get paid for". Or they believe the only way to motivate people is to give them more money.

Successful motivators don't think that way. They know that by following the five steps, people can be motivated far beyond what they get paid for, and far more effectively than when money is the only incentive.

## **Step #1 - Clearly Articulate What Needs to be Accomplished and Why**

Often the problem with getting people to accomplish things is not that they are unmotivated, it is that they are uninformed. Leaders discuss goals with their peers and superiors on a regular basis and are therefore intimately familiar with them. Because of this familiarity, they mistakenly assume all of their employees also know them. Usually this is not the case.

Take time to explain to all of your employees exactly what needs to be accomplished and the reasons why. Don't forget the "why?" Knowing that enables people to make educated choices in their day to day decisions. For example, the output from a team at a market research company whose goal is to launch three new products, will vary greatly, depending on if they know that the "why?" is because the company is losing market share to competitors with products that can be downloaded from the Internet.

Goals should always include specific numeric objectives and timelines. A goal of "Improve Customer Service" is nebulous and people won't know how they are doing in their efforts to achieve it. However, "Decrease customer wait times to 10 seconds by June 1st" is something people can visualise and work towards.

## **Step #2 - Involve People in Finding the Solutions**

People are more motivated to succeed at something if they personally choose to attempt it. Therefore, managers should involve their people in choosing the goals the group needs to accomplish. If this is not possible, then involving people in the creation of how to achieve the goals is the next best thing. Their involvement will generate buy-in and also opens up the opportunity for an optimal solution.

Successful coaches use this technique on a regular basis. While it is true they watch hours and hours of game films looking for weaknesses in their own team as well as their competitors, they also involve their players in finding the best way to win. They do it because no matter how much film they watch, or how close they are to the game, they aren't in the game. The perspectives of players or employees who are in the midst of the action can be drastically different from a coach or a manager who is near the action.

If those perspectives aren't incorporated into the solution, two things will happen. First, those in the midst of the action will feel that no-one is listening to them, and they will become unmotivated. Second, decisions will be made without incorporating all the relevant data. Both of these will negatively impact progress toward the goals.

## **Step #3 - Explain the Rules of the Game**

Have you ever played a new sport or game against people who are experienced players? In the early stages of learning how to play, every few minutes you do something which you think is correct only to be told that it is illegal, or against the rules. It can be exceptionally frustrating.

This scenario often plays out in the workplace. Employees are given a task, but are not told all the parameters or rules. Weeks into a project they present their work to someone, only to be informed that they need to change direction because of something they were never told about.

This is particularly demoralising and should be avoided at all costs. People can find solutions to almost any problem, but they need to know the rules of the game.

#### **Step #4 - Link People's Personal Goals with the Organisations Goals**

There is a reason that each employee goes to work. Successful motivators know what that reason is for every person who works for them. Each day they help their employees fulfill those reasons. Really successful motivators understand not only the reason, but how the reason ties into the person's bigger life goals. When necessary, they help their people think about and articulate those bigger life goals. When a person no longer thinks "I work so that I can make money," and instead thinks "I work so that I can enable my daughter to attend a school that will give her a chance to go do what she wants in life," there is a significant mental and motivational shift that occurs.

Understanding that someone comes to work because they thrive on personal interaction, are trying to gain experience so they can run their own corner deli, or whatever is their personal goal, enables a manager to talk in that person's language. It also enables the manager to assign responsibilities in that person's area of interest, and remind them how what they are doing is tied to their bigger goals.

Managers who enable people to fulfill their life goals through work never have to worry about how to motivate their people. The act of fulfilling their life goals is enough to keep them motivated. All the manager has to do is find the links between those goals, and the organisation's needs, and match the two up.

#### **Step #5 - Move Negative People off the Team**

Nothing can halt progress like someone who is discontent simply for the sake of being discontent. It is demoralising to others and it draws energy and time from the tasks being attempted. That doesn't mean you don't want good "counter-point" people on your team. Someone who says "Look, I know what we are all trying to do, and I think there is a better way," can be a valuable resource to help make sure the team is on the right track. However, someone who just regularly says "We'll never get there," will just hold everyone back. Move them off the team, and bring in someone who will assist and support the group's efforts.

Whether you are trying to motivate people to help create a clean environment for guests, or something more pertinent to your organisation, remember that anyone can be a great motivator. Now that you know the steps, all you need is the willingness.

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