

# Motivating Your Sales Team

Money is not necessarily the only, or best, way to motivate your sales force.

Getting sales people motivated. Surely it's a matter of money? After all, the assumption is that most sales people get into the selling game because it pays well in comparison to many other careers.

And yet the evidence coming from valid research and anecdotal conversation paints a different story. It seems that money is often only a short-term motivator, but it is not the main factor to drive an individual's success over the long term.

Of course, all this does depend on the person and their circumstances at any given point in time. Got no money? Then a job that provides mainly 'fulfilment' probably won't cut it. We all need to pay the bills and eat. We'll move up Maslow's hierarchy later thank you.

The first thing any manager needs to do, whether we are talking about sales people, call centre staff, marketing, indeed any business function, is to have a good look at the people they are trying to inspire and what drives them. Ultimately there is only one person who can fire up somebody and that is the person themselves.

That fact alone runs counter to what many managers and people think to be the truth. Management workshops often include sections on motivating people and the very expression suggests 'doing it' to someone else. OK, let's run with that idea.

If you as a manager are solely responsible for firing up your team, what happens when you are not there to play the cheerleader? Despite the many sporting analogies, work is not like team sports where the captain is on the field to gee people up. Field sales people especially, tend to work alone for much of the week.

Asking people what motivates them may not initially get a true response. The knee-jerk answer is money. But if we were all just in it for the money, most of us have chosen the wrong jobs or paths to our goal. Who makes the most money? Drug dealers, criminals - the dishonest. I know that's provocative and that comment normally gets the response that we want to stay within the bounds of the law, if only because the risk outweighs the reward.

And that is just the point. We say money, but when we think about it it's much more complex than that. We want it legal, fulfilling, flexible, stimulating and social. We want autonomy, recognition, satisfaction, meaning and purpose. Ultimately, some or all of these things matter more in the long run than just money.

## Thinking laterally

So how do you fire people up? A recent case in Melbourne showed that when people were offered the choice of more money for longer hours or staying the same, they chose to decline the money and stick with the shorter working hours.

That may be an idea for a cash strapped manager who can't afford costly incentives. Discretionary time off. And there are a myriad of ideas that cost little and get great results. Having the team meeting at the beach or the park, it's different and energises people.

I've seen people in a sales office really stretch themselves to win the weekly sales award. What was it? A huge pot plant which sat proudly on the person's desk for the week. Barking mad, I know but it worked for them - for a while at least.

And there's another clue. Firing people up is often about utilising short-term ideas that create excitement, fun and results. Many of you may have heard of or seen the training video, Fish! It's a film of a group of guys that work in the fish market in Seattle and display the most amazing passion and motivation for what they do, despite the fact that the hours are long, the pay fairly low and career prospects minimal. These are certainly not the most inspiring conditions and yet this is a team of people who are fired up every day, every week.

The owners, managers and staff of the Pike Place Fish Market operate some simple principles - having fun, making people's day, being there, choosing their attitude - but the lesson for other businesses is that this motivation attitude can be created anywhere. As the owner says, "it just takes some commitment".

Here's a quick list of actions that any manager could take to set them on the road to a more motivated team:

1. Establish some specifics on what motivates individuals and the team as a whole. What do people really want to achieve this year and in the longer term? Dig deeper than the simple 'to be happy/successful'.
2. Get some ideas by looking at workplaces that seem to have fired up people. Start with your own contact network, watch the Fish video, talk to your industry body for ideas.
3. Consult with the team about ideas (on a budget) and see what you get.
4. Talk to your boss about funding some small initiatives over the year to give you some room to move. Consider funding it yourself if no money is available (your reward may be sooner than you think).
5. Buy a book of energisers/games from a bookstore and spice up your team meetings.

Richard Pratt once said that as a manager you should expect people to be fired up with enthusiasm, otherwise you should fire them, with enthusiasm. A comment that suggests that it's up to the individual to motivate themselves. I agree, but as a manager there is so much you can do to help them and create an environment where people have a spring in their step and passion in their actions.

Author: Richard Wentworth-Ping is the Managing Director of Wentworth Training Pty Ltd, a consultancy that specialises in media sales, negotiation, and publisher training for the print media and related sectors. Richard can be contacted on Phone: 02 9954 6656, Email: richard@wentworthtraining.com.au or visit the Web Site: [www.wentworthtraining.com.au](http://www.wentworthtraining.com.au)