

## Motivating Our Team Members

To be our best as a boss, to be a highly effective leader, we must be able to motivate our people.

Some may say that people should motivate themselves; that it is their responsibility to want to do well and to succeed.

It is important for us to realize that we can help our people by inspiring them, and is our responsibility as a boss. Isn't that what leaders do?! And it is important that we understand and commit to what people want and need from us as their boss. It goes a long way in helping us heighten their motivation.

Here's what people want:

- To feel appreciated
- To feel that they are an important member of the team
- To feel they are heard
- To know their ideas matter
- To have the assurance that their boss and senior management are helping them advance and succeed

There is a quotation from Vicente Fox, the former President of Mexico and now a successful businessman:

"The job of president is to motivate, to inspire, to be side by side with people making sure that they develop all their capacities."

Think about that, being side by side with our people – what does that mean? It means getting out of our office, off our floor and walking the halls to have conversations with the people doing the work of our company – all of them – at all levels. This is how we help our people truly engage with our work, our mission and our team.

There is a story about President John F. Kennedy visiting the Space Center at Cape Canaveral in the early 60s. He was walking past a janitor, stopped, and asked what he was doing, to which the janitor replied, "I am helping to put a man on the moon."

That is the attitude and spirit we want, that everyone is positive and pitching in, with enthusiasm and pride!

In order to foster this corporate spirit, we need to realize that as a boss, as a leader, we need to demonstrate to our people that we genuinely care about them. We do this by getting off the phone, away from our computer, and not spending too much in meetings. We need to spend time in conversations, even short conversations with our team members. We need spend more time asking questions and patiently listening to the answers. We need to pick up

the phone when travelling, letting people know we're thinking about them. They will do their best if they believe we care for them.

We should also share information as much as possible. This helps people feel trusted and valued. If they sense they are in the dark that could cause them to feel a lack of trust and lessen their enthusiasm.

Other principles and practices to bear in mind are:

- Be kind. Kindness helps us gain and maintain the respect of our people.
- Thank people for their dedication and good work.
- Celebrate successes, even small ones, without seeking credit.
- Give away responsibilities and definitely do not micro-manage.
- Do what you say you will, even the small things.

In my work as a leadership consultant and coach, I so often see top executives who are simply too busy to engage with their people. I encourage them to give away some of their work and responsibilities so others may learn, grow and advance, and to slow down and patiently listen to their people, to truly hear their ideas and what they think.

My wife Leland suggested that I think of those who have motivated me, who have made an impact on my life and career. There have been many. To choose just a few, I think of Bill Dunn at Johnson & Higgins, who clearly had faith in me. In his kind yet strong manner, he encouraged me to take initiative and to build a strong team with great people and true teamwork, people who shared ideas and helped each other. I also think of Kate Ebner, my faculty member in the Georgetown Leadership Coaching Program, who softly assured me during the program that I am a caring person and an attentive listener, and I could be an effective leadership coach.

Although I only mention Bill and Kate, there are many others, including a number of clients I am privileged to work with, my favorite teachers, several athletic coaches, a long distance running partner, and a great many colleagues who shared these same qualities of quiet confidence, an encouraging nature and they genuinely wanted to see me to do my best. They are givers.

I always wanted to do my best for them and not let them down.

I would like to close with these take-a-ways:

- Slow down, truly connect with people.
- Treat people as team members.
- Be appreciative and respectful.
- Help team members bring out the best in themselves.

It is true that we cannot be the sole source of motivation for others, yet we can help inspire a positive commitment to their best.

To have this influence, we have to connect with them. This is our responsibility as a leader.

Leadership is influence!

## About The Author



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