

UNDERSTANDING MOTIVATION

improves more than results.

You hear talk of motivation all the time. From the boardroom and conference room to the classroom and even the family room, motivation is a common topic. It's usually a one-dimensional conversation focused on some carrot or stick approach to cultivate achievement. However, the most effective motivation goes beyond that, to a more personalized approach based on understanding each individual's own internal drivers. When leaders understand those personal motivators, they can coach to them and realize better outcomes.

Understanding Motivation to Make Better Decisions

If you wait until a new hire's first day on the job to uncover what's important to them – their motivators – it's too late. You need to learn that in the recruiting process. Understanding motivators is a powerful tool to help you identify who has the potential to be a top performer before you make an offer.

Identifying and Triggering Motivators

Everybody is different. Understanding each person's unique inner drive is extremely important and critical to being a master motivator. Effective leaders see each team member through a uniquely personalized lens. That enables you to more effectively coach and guide each person's performance – individually and as part of a team with common goals.



Focus Your Efforts Where You Have the Greatest Potential to Win

Every team has a hierarchy of performance – top-tier, middle-tier and bottom-tier employees. An effective leader's time is best spent focusing on the top- and middle-tier performers. Achievement is part of their make-up and motivation can maximize it.

There are commonalities of motivators among employees on each performance tier. If you think the main motivator is money, think again. Study after study confirms that many effective motivators are outside of the wallet and in the mind. That's not to say money isn't important. It certainly is – especially in a sales environment.

But long-term motivators that go beyond the “me” to the “we” can drive results and cultivate a culture of winning and striving for organizational goals.

I recently conducted an extensive study into the motivators across the performance spectrum. An overview of the results is below. As you review the chart, you will see that it's more than just the motivators that are different. Just as important are how different levels of performers view those motivators through their individual lenses, and what triggers their desire to achieve

Motivators and Point of View Across the Employee Performance Spectrum

	Top-Performers	Mid-Performers	Actionable Insight
Financial Incentives	See money as something that brought financial security to their families, created a safety net and a reserve for them individually.	See money as a means to maintain a lifestyle and pay for things like college, mortgage, and retirement.	What motivates your talent? Understanding how talent views financial security may help you identify ways to connect their incentives to the bigger goals in their lives.
Drive to Win	Drive to be number one.	Work to avoid being last.	The volume of activity is rarely the issue with mid- and top-performers, but rather the productivity of their time. Introduce tools and best practices that help ensure the team is making the most productive use of time spent.
Aspirational Goal Setting	Set higher personal sales goals than those assigned by their management teams and often have longer-term aspirations.	Set personal goals that are sometimes lower than assigned goals and tend to avoid thinking about longer-term plans.	Take time to understand long-term goals and make connections to how their performance this year can help them achieve their longer-term goals. This will help ensure focus on achieving and exceeding annual performance expectations.
Consistency	Motivators remain the same throughout their career. Knowing those motivators early can help drive performance.	Motivators remain the same throughout their career. Knowing those motivators early can help drive performance.	Resist trying to get mid-performers to be motivated by the same factors or in the same way as top-performers, you are likely to have the opposite effect. Instead, seek to understand motivators and be willing to flex your management style to help get their best.

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Let's take a deeper look at what the results and motivators mean to top and mid performers. How can you identify and capitalize on what inspires achievement?

Drive to Win



A key difference between average performers and top producers is an inspired competitiveness – a desire to be number one.

Uncovering ways to ignite that drive will help you motivate performance and get the most from people – especially in a sales environment. Top performers want to come out on top and continue to do better. Leaders can mine this desire by encouraging a competitive environment and openly sharing results among employees.

Unfortunately, not everyone is a top performer. Many lack that drive. With those employees, the motivator may be a drive to be “better than last.” While not ideal, it's still okay. Not everyone is a Jerry Maguire. That said, an effective leader can play off that personality trait as effectively as playing off the **number one** dreams of top performers. In both situations, clear, open communications and a competitive culture fuels motivation and success.

Aspirational Goal Setting

Setting goals isn't good enough. Setting aspirational goals, however, can make a huge difference in motivation. Working with a team to create high-level, yet attainable, goals sets a target to aim for – individually and organizationally. You can be the leader who helps craft individual goals that collectively enable a team to go above and beyond.

Taking goal setting a step further, you can set “stretch goals.” These goals are clearly above what a team would expect to be able to achieve. By honestly characterizing them as stretch goals, you set an even higher standard to aspire to and an even greater level of motivation. When a group or individual does actually achieve a stretch goal, motivation soars.

Consistency

People change, but individual motivators and inner drivers remain consistent throughout their careers. An effective leader develops the ability to identify individual motivators early, to enable more productive coaching over time. Understanding someone's motivators can also assist in selecting the best future top performer for your team.



To Some Degree, it is About the Money.

Money is more than money. To top-level performers, it's security for their families. Money is the safety net that creates financial freedom for the individual. To mid-level performers, money is about keeping up with the Joneses – paying for college, a nice home and a comfortable retirement. In each case, understanding how money motivates an individual can help you frame more effective compensation packages for each employee, keying off what's important to them. Start by connecting financial incentives and rewards with an individual's viewpoints. Then you motivate performance by connecting cash with employees' lives, lifestyles, families and their financial security expectations.

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