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Create a Climate for Team Performance

People in leadership positions often speak of the need to "motivate" people, meaning that you do something to get them to work harder. In one sense, no one ever "motivates" anyone else. Real motivation is internal; it comes only from within. But with a better understanding of the principles of human motivation – the desires and situations that move people to action – you, as a team leader, can create a climate that encourages the development of motivation and maximizes individual and team performance.

Self-motivation does not develop in a vacuum; rather, it is generated in the context of a comprehensive, continuous training and development program. When your team members experience the exhilaration of improving their skills and abilities, their self-motivation increases. In turn, they desire to grow and develop as individuals. A comprehensive training and development program is the foundation for improving the self-motivation, and thus the overall productivity of your organization.

An "exchange system" – the mutual giving and receiving of effort and benefit – supports a climate for maximum motivation. The exchange system establishes a relationship in which each contributes something to satisfy the needs of the other. The organization's requirements for effort and productivity are met by team leaders and team members. In turn, the needs of team leaders and members are met by the organization. This fair exchange between an organization and all its people is as old as organized society.

When you and your team members develop success attitudes to both improve on-the-job performance and increase work satisfaction, you are using the exchange system at its best. People act to gain a benefit or to avoid a loss. Because understanding and insight precede change, talk to your team members and listen to them to find out their needs and ambitions. Understanding what benefits they seek to gain and what losses they desire to avoid enables you to improve on-the-job performance and increase work satisfaction even more.

Developing a Motivation Plan

If 20 people report to you, you need 20 motivation plans. Since motivation depends on individual needs and is developed internally, any effort you make to encourage the development of motivation must be done on an individual basis.

How well do you know the people you count on to get your work done? Could you read the list of names and say with certainty what each person needs to be better satisfied on the job? Resist the temptation to say, "They all want a raise." Of course, not one in a thousand would turn down a raise, but some employees might be less satisfied after the raise – not better satisfied. To be self-motivated, people must feel worthwhile and productive. A raise is not a motivator when it is awarded merely because the employee has managed to stay on the payroll for another year. Such a raise is seen as a function of the passing of time – not as an indication of individual merit. Use some of these techniques to encourage the development of self-motivation in employees who have a need to feel productive:

- Delegate a task, stating clearly your confidence that the individual can successfully accept this new responsibility.
- Take note of some action demonstrating initiative and express your appreciation for that action.
- Find ways to let the rest of the organization know who is doing a good job; post the name and/or picture of the person on a departmental bulletin board or print an accolade in the monthly newsletter.
- Make it a point to speak personally to those who have been absent as a result of illness or vacation. Tell them how glad you are to see them back and how their presence contributes value to you, the client, and

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the organization.

- Ask team members for their suggestions about how to solve problems that arise. Even though you cannot use all suggestions, you communicate respect when you ask for suggestions and seriously consider them.
- Learn about the families of your team members. Compliment them on the achievements of their children when you see reports in the newspaper, or inquire about the health of a family member who has been ill.
- Use visual reminders to build pride and cooperation among the members of the team. For example, if you are in sales, hang a poster that tells how many days the team has met or exceeded the sales quota. Update the graphic daily. Whatever the goal of the team is, a way to track progress can be devised which will encourage the development of self-motivation.

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