



MOTIVATE YOUR MOTIVATION!

It's easy to stay motivated when you're on a winning streak and you can see the rewards rolling in on all sides. It's a lot tougher when you're in a slump, business is slow, and frustration hits you like a wall of bricks.

How can you keep yourself motivated through the down times? Even harder—how can you keep your people motivated?

Here are a few winning tips:

KNOW THE REAL MOTIVATORS

- **What floats your boat?** Everybody responds in a different way to the various motivators they encounter. The things that inspire one person to heroic effort may evoke an indifferent shrug from someone else, and vice versa.
- **Money isn't everything.** For a lot of people, the prospect of a raise, a bonus, or a cash prize can be a powerful incentive, and as long as they think they have a realistic chance of achieving it, they'll put in whatever effort it takes to do so. Even in sales organizations, however, where monetary rewards have traditionally been paramount, a majority consider themselves more responsive to other motivators.
- **Other sources of motivation include:** verbal praise and recognition, competition, peer pressure, opportunities for flexibility, autonomy and independence, ambition for greater status, responsibility, or

power, the wish to spend time with family, the desire to help others through the work, and the drive to achieve for its own sake. Some of these are external factors, others arise within the individual but can still be affected by external pressures and rewards.

- **What's the best way to find out what motivates someone?** Ask them. It's that simple. And be honest with yourself about your own real motivators—it's hard to keep up your spirits when you're aiming for a goal that's not really meaningful to you.
- **Personalize incentives.** Don't take a generic approach—one-size-fits-all incentives usually don't inspire the best from anyone. Use your knowledge of yourself and others to tailor the rewards to fit each one. Then they'll have goals they're willing to go all out to achieve.

KEEP THE INCENTIVES FLOWING

In many organizations, prizes and bonuses are awarded at long intervals, even annually—huge prizes, sometimes, and substantial bonuses—on the theory that people will put in extra effort over the long term if the reward is large enough.

The downside of this thinking is, you have to wait a *long* time to get the reward, and if you've hit a bad patch during the year, or one of your competitors just had a really stellar run of success, you may find yourself out of contention for the

prize way before the time is up. So what's going to keep you motivated for the rest of the year?

- **Bigger may not be better.** Sure, a fabulous vacation or other massive prize is nice to win—but so is a month of free cappuccino and mention in a newsletter for someone who's hit a short-term target. Small rewards, offered on a frequent basis, can do more to improve morale and jumpstart performance than big ones that only a few can realistically hope to win.
- **Novelty is its own reward.** Things that used to be exciting and inspiring may fizzle out if they're repeated too much. A changing variety of programs can motivate more people more powerfully than another repetition of the tried-and-true.

WORK YOUR MOTIVATION

A few more tips from successful managers:

- **Set long-term and short-term goals for yourself.** Keep track of your progress, and what you can do to improve it.
- **Strike the right work-life balance.** That can recharge your energy when it flags, and give you the focus you need to achieve the rewards you want.

APEX

Performance, Inc.

*Improving Employee
Performance*