Motivation

“The desire to do something because you find it deeply satisfying and personally challenging inspires the highest levels of creativity, whether it’s in the arts, sciences, or business.” ~Teresa Amabile

Why?

Motivation is important. Pretty much everyone would agree. But it is also incredibly difficult to sustain—particularly in organizations that struggle with member turnover, constant transition, and various goals. Here you will find techniques and ideas that encourage lasting motivation within your group by focusing on what makes people become intrinsically motivated.

5 Reasons Motivation is Important

1. Motivation is the spark
   - Just like having a match, motivation makes starting things so much easier.

2. Motivation fuels
   - Like wood in the fire, motivation keeps you going.

3. Motivation warms
   - Like a fire, motivation keeps you alive in the cold. Life is hard, complicated, and expensive—motivation keeps you going despite the problems.

4. Motivation can change
   - It is important to realize that motivation is malleable. Finding multiple sources of motivation is key to staying excited about your work.

5. Motivation satisfies
   - Thomas Edison believed that he had simply found 10,000 ways that would not work while attempting to perfect the electric light bulb—not because he was initially successful, but because he was intrinsically motivated to reach his goal.
How?

• Finding ways to motivate organization members can be tricky—especially in ways that encourage autonomy, mastery, purpose, and lasting change. Below you will find tips and exercises adopted from Daniel Pink's award-winning book Drive that foster intrinsic motivation within your group.

1. Give Up (Some) Control
   a. Involve people in goal setting.
      • People naturally would rather set their own goals than have them forced upon them. In fact, research has proven that people are far more engaged when pursuing goals they have a say in creating. In other words, bring organization members into the goal setting process, and their motivation to get them accomplished may exceed your expectations.
   b. Use non-controlling language
      • Next time you're about to say "must" or "should," try saying "think about" or "consider" instead. Changing the way you address people can promote compliance and encourage healthy working relationships.

2. Make an Organization “To-Don't” List
   a. Many people, organizations, and leaders have “to-do” lists, but the opposite can be even more helpful. Consider having your organization members sit down and write an inventory of behaviors and practices that sap energy, divert focus, and ought to be avoided. Staying motivated isn't easy. Thus, it makes sense to get rid of time-wasting distractions that stand in the way of productivity and inspiration.

3. Create a Purpose Compass
   a. Give each group member two index cards. On one card, have members write a 1-sentence answer to the question, “What gets you up in the morning?” On the other side of the card, write a 1-sentence answer to the question “What keeps you up at night?” After everyone is finished, have them evaluate whether or not both answers give them a sense of meaning and direction. Encourage members to post the cards in a prominent place and use them as their compass, checking form time to time to see if they’re still true. The same can be done to create an overall organization purpose.

4. Create Your Own Motivational Poster
   a. Visit any of the following website to create your own motivational posters that resonate with either individual members or your organization at large:
      i. Despair Inc (www.diy.despair.com/motivator.php)
      ii. Big Huge Labs (www.bighugelabs.com/motivator.php)
      iii. Automotivator (www.wigflip.com/automotivator/)
5. Create a Purpose Sentence

a. Have group members create an individualized “purpose sentence” to orient and motivate their lives toward a greater purpose. As one of the first U.S. Congresswoman once advised John F. Kennedy: “A great man is a sentence.” She worried that with his attention spread thin between so many priorities, his sentence risked becoming a muddled paragraph. For example: Abraham Lincoln’s sentence was “He preserved the union and freed the slaves.” Another’s might be “He raised four kids who became happy and healthy adults.” Or perhaps yours is “She invented a device that made people’s lives easier.” Whatever the case, have organization members create their own sentence that defines their purpose and directs why they wake up every morning.

6. Have a FedEx Day (Or Meeting)

a. Inspired by the idea that autonomy stimulates creativity and productivity, “FedEx Days” encourage organization members to spend a certain amount of time tackling any problem they want—and then show their results to the rest of the group at the end of the day or meeting. The goal of delivering at the end of the designated time frame keeps members on task, but the freedom of setting their own mini-goal gives them the autonomy they need to come up with groundbreaking ideas. Some of the greatest technological, scientific, and and business solutions for companies around the world have been created during FedEx-inspired periods of time.

Want more great tips and org development resources? Stop by the Center for Leadership or visit http://www.elon.edu/e-web/students/leadership/orgdevelopment.xhtml