



Simple Ways to Move People to Action

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Your could hear the frustration in her voice and see the tense muscles in her jaw. 'He's just not motivated,' she said. 'I've tried pushing, pulling, and almost begging to get him to do what I need. It doesn't get me very far. Sometimes I'm so frustrated, I want to scream!'

Common words, common feelings when dealing with people, whether it's your staff or your children.

That word motivation is tossed around quite a bit. One thing is for sure. We all want it. . . from ourselves and from other people. What does it mean, anyway? According to our reliable friend Daniel Webster, the word motivation simply means to move, to take action.

But can you really motivate another person? I regularly ask that question to my audiences. 'How many of you think you can motivate others?' I ask. About 40% of the group raises their hand. 'How many of you think you can't motivate others?' Another 40% raise their hand. (The rest return a blank stare, so maybe they aren't thinking yet that day!)

We could go round and round on whether or not you can motivate others, but I don't believe you can. Oh, sure, you can force a person with threats (no bonus if you don't make quota. No car if you don't clean your room). You can even move them, to a certain extent, with rewards (a trip, or those coveted car keys). But as soon as the desired action is accomplished, back they go to their old ways. Then oftentimes, the threats need to be stronger and the rewards bigger.

True and lasting motivation comes from within. It's a force from inside the person that makes them want to take action, to achieve, and to excel. It's an inner need or drive that cause us to act.

So, if you can't motivate other people, what can you do to move them to your desired action? You create an environment in which people will motivate themselves. Sounds simple, doesn't it? Well it is. It's just isn't always easy.

All people are motivated. Yes, they are! (Some of you are thinking of a certain team member and challenging me on this one). However, the reality is, people are motivated and take action for their own reasons, not necessarily your reasons.

The challenge, then, becomes one of understanding people and their differences. 'Forget the business degree. What leaders need today is a psychology degree,' a client once said to me. There's certainly some truth in that statement!

The first thing many people identify as a motivating factor is money. While that's probably true for some people, repeated research indicates that pay is actually number three or lower on the list of what satisfies or motivates staff. It also indicates that the positive feelings created by an increase in pay last only three weeks. Ah, the bigger carrot syndrome!

While each person is unique, there are common actions leaders can take that are universal to moving or positively motivating people. Here are five simple ones.

- Help people feel good about themselves and what they do. Communicate often. Make sure they know what's expected of them, and how what they do fits into the overall organization and its goals.
- Develop people's strengths and help them to improve their weaknesses. People want to do a good job. Show them how. Provide ongoing coaching and training and hold them accountable for outcomes.
- Pay attention to others. Be mentally present to conversations. Listen, ask questions. Show interest. Everyone has a need to be liked and respected for what they think. When 'Yes, but...' is a regular part of your communication, people quit giving their best.
- Give recognition and praise. In his book, 'How to Get People to Do Things,' Bob Conklin states that 90 % of what people do is prompted by the desire to feel important. Remember, lack of attention is the same as rejection. Without a doubt, the behavior that gets rewarded gets repeated.
- Apologize when you are wrong. It builds respect and opens the door for fixing the problem instead of fixing the blame.

Dealing with people is really very simple. It's just not always easy. A philosophy that has worked for many is to remember that by giving others what they need, you will get what you need. If you aren't sure what people need, why not ask them?

It's what leaders do.

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