



The Coaching Manager

A Question of Motivation

A former manager that I had in my early days as a sales manager noticed that I had the ability to enthuse and energise the sales team that I had and to that end he asked me how I managed it. I hadn't really thought about it and it was only until I started to analyse what I was doing did it occur me what I was doing right. There were a number of things I was doing wrong and we will come on to these a bit later!

I asked my team what I was doing right in terms of motivating them to work harder and smarter. These were some of the replies:

- I took time away from the tasks of the everyday job to sit down with people.
- I listened to, and tried to understand what their hopes and fears were.
- I asked their opinions on work related matters
- I asked what their motivators and de-motivators were.
- I managed to link the tasks of the workplace to the benefits to be gained by the individuals.
- I lead by example in attitude and behaviour
- I was trusted and trustworthy due to my honesty and accountability.

I also asked what did they think I was not doing right in terms of motivating them:

- I wasn't very good at outlining boundaries. People sometimes didn't know where they stood.
- I trusted people too much.
- I tended to rebel against senior management as opposed to "manage" them effectively.
- I tended to give advice and tell people what to do as opposed to getting them to come to their own conclusions. I had a "blanket" approach with regards the way I dealt with people. In other words I wasn't really coaching.
- I wasn't very good with administration!

So, what's all this got to do with motivation? I started to look at this feedback and the feedback told me that if I continued some behaviours and adapted and changed others I would be fully able to motivate all individuals in the team, together with being able to sustain that motivation. The motivation for me was that I would have a motivated, responsible and accountable team who would be successful. This would enable me to spend less time on "fire-fighting" team/individual issues and concentrate more on strategy to move the business forward. I also tried to link this feedback into the various models of motivation.

To go into all the various models of motivation in this small e-zine is not possible and it is my belief that some of models only confuse as opposed to enlighten. I have found two models very useful in helping me understand what it takes to motivate an individual.

1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. This is a well known model that you will find in any textbook on coaching / motivation. Basically Abraham Maslow described a basic set of needs that people need. These are:

- Physiological - food, water, sleep, warmth.
- Safety/Security - Freedom from fear and violence, shelter, order.
- Belonging - friendship, being in a family, group or team. Social acceptance.
- Self-Esteem - self-respect, status, being valued by others.
- Self-Actualisation - the need for challenge, variety and growth.

Most people on the work situation will be above the physiological and safety/security level and most people in work aspire towards self-actualisation. I have seen people fluctuate between the Belonging level and the Self-Actualisation level where new people to the company, although operating at a self-actualising level at their previous employers are now several steps down the hierarchy at Belonging. To motivate these people you would not start to give them challenging tasks as that would potentially demotivate them. What they need is a chance to become accepted. They need to be introduced to work colleagues and superiors. They need to know "the ropes" basically. Once they are established with peers etc and their work commences they will need to have their general work recognised and praised before you can move them to the next level, the Self-Actualising level. This is the level all organisations should be aiming to get their employees in - and then keep them there! I have noticed that my previous employers have lost a number of top quality people, people who were in the self-actualising level. These people slipped down the hierarchy towards self-esteem and in some cases to the Belonging level. This happened because they were being left alone and the management (which was going through a major transition after a merger) had assumed that because they were "top class" they would "just get on and continue to perform". The management had missed a vital step in motivating employees by making assumptions about people's level of motivation.

2. The Motivational Triangle. This simplistic model was introduced to me by Brian Whittle. the former Great Britain Olympic 4 x 400 metres Gold Medallist, who I had the pleasure of sharing a stage with recently. It is a simplistic model which, for me, perfectly summed up motivation and I now use this model routinely in my coaching sessions. There are three points;

1. Freedom to Choose. In any role there will be guidelines and boundaries. Once people know exactly what they are then it is the role of the manager to enable and support the employee to make decisions themselves within these. Giving people choice will enable "buy-in" and hence motivation. By continually telling people what to do and not giving choice will soon result in demotivation.

2. Understanding and Being Understood. How many times have you had an employee, despite you telling them what to do, go away and do something different? You then have to pick up the pieces. You are demotivated and so are they! It is vital that you take time as a manager to fully understand your people and their circumstances. If something goes wrong, do not blame. Seek to find out exactly what went wrong and how best you can prevent it recurring. I have come

across numerous examples of where the root cause of an issue is not what the employee has or hasn't done but lies more with the communication of the manager. So, as well as understanding your employees ensure that they fully understand you!

3. Being Valued. Praise is the most powerful form of feedback and as managers we do not use it enough. We seem to have an attitude that says "why should I praise someone for doing a job that is expected of them?". Pathetic. What does it cost to say two small words - "thank you"? I mentioned this on a recent course I ran and one manager said, "what happens if you are observing a salesperson and nothing goes right at all. How can you start to praise?". My answer was firstly a challenge to the manager in that how sure was he that absolutely nothing went right? Secondly, did the salesperson not make an effort to get the sale? Of course he did. So why not praise him for making that effort and then help him explore what didn't go as well as it should have and what the potential reasons for this were?

We all need valued in some form or other and it does not take very much for the manager to say "thank you" or "well done".

Motivation is a huge subject but I hope that I have given you some practical pointers into what perhaps you, as a "coaching manager" might do in order to motivate your employees.

Allan Mackintosh
Professional Management Coach
Office 2008, Aviation House,
Glasgow Prestwick International Airport,
Prestwick, Scotland. KA9 2PL

Tel: + 44 (0) 1292 318152
Fax: + 44 (0) 1292 511327
e-mail: allan@performance-am.com
web: www.performance-am.com