

How to Motivate and Engage Your Employees

Are your employees less motivated than you would like? Does some of your staff just get by rather than doing their best?

Well, you are not alone. The majority of managers and supervisors we have interviewed agreed with a recent Gallup Research finding that employee motivation is at its lowest ebb, with more than 50% of American workers feeling "disengaged" from their work.

We can speculate about the "whys," for example, rapid and continuous change, dwindling traditional jobs, or the impact of the millennials' wishes. However, a more useful question is "How do I engage my employees in their daily activities and motivate them to strive for excellence?"

Dan Pink, author of *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, provides an answer on how to engage employees. He writes that a shared sense of purpose and accomplishment drive us. In other words, we all need a shared, compelling vision to see that our work adds up to something big.

The Consulting Team's vision is ***"Facilitating and empowering others to create positive change."*** All of our consultants and staff agree that we want to empower our clients to make the positive changes they need to succeed. We are very motivated by our vision because we love supporting their goals and giving them useful tools for change.

While on site at a hospital we consult with, we asked a maintenance worker if he was satisfied with his job. He said: "I love what I do, because I help make this a safe place for people to get well and return to their families and homes."

How do you create a compelling vision, one that can motivate everyone on your team? A vision statement should reflect your organization's objectives and guide internal decision making. A vision statement is a key motivator for businesses, non-profits, and governmental agencies. Clark County, Nevada has a very motivating vision: ***"A dynamic, vibrant community valuing diversity, opportunity, and partnerships, which fosters a healthy environment where individuals and families choose to live, work, and play."***

Visions offer employees something bigger and more important than their jobs' daily details. It connects people to a picture of success and something to work toward. Habitat for Humanity has an excellent compelling vision: ***"A world where everyone has a decent place to live."***

Robust, practical visions emerge from an effective strategic planning process. The Consulting Team has found when facilitating a planning process for our clients, a stronger sense of teamwork emerges. People buy in at all levels when they are given a voice. We encourage dialog with every team and unit in the organization. We use an appreciative inquiry approach; that is we focus on the strengths and what is working well. We use this as a springboard to identify challenges and gaps.

We recommend these steps in any strategic planning process:

1. Assess your organization's current environment
2. Commit to value-based behaviors that define how you serve customers, stakeholders, and each other
3. Articulate the vision of how your organization will look in the future

Assess your current environment:

Surveying employees, clients, and stakeholders reveals various perspectives about your organization's current environment. Hold an environmental scan session with your leadership team, asking "What's working well and really motivates you?" and, "What is frustrating or discouraging?" Then have every supervisor lead a similar discussion with their teams to answer these two questions. Emphasize that there are no wrong answers and that the results will be anonymous. Have the supervisors record the answers on a flipchart and then summarize themes. Urge top management to sift through and commit to making at least five positive changes in response to all of the input. Publicize the results and thank everyone for their participation.

Commit to value-based behaviors:

The next step is to hold a discussion of core values and expected behaviors with your top management teams. Then have every supervisor and lead discuss your organization's core values with their respective teams. Values are typically lofty principles like honesty, transparency, courtesy, or safety. Perhaps your "Values" are posted on workplace walls and websites, but not fully integrated.

In the team discussions, have employees list behaviors that model the values. Record their input on a flipchart and have each team or unit select their top three behaviors. Next, publicize the results and thank everyone for participating.

Hold a second conversation with all of the teams on how they can model the behaviors in their daily work. Post the top priority values and behaviors throughout your facilities. In every team meeting, encourage peers to recognize those who are modeling the positive behaviors.

Articulate your vision:

Employees' engagement levels will increase when management seeks their input. Our next recommendation is to involve employees in creating a vision statement. A vision statement is a picture, painted in words, of what the organization will be in the future. A vision should be brief and energizing, and it helps if it fits on a coffee mug or a T Shirt. Amazon's vision is a bit long, but it sure is motivating for anyone working there: ***"Our vision is to be earth's most customer centric company; to build a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online."***

In facilitating our strategic planning and visioning training processes, we place participants in groups of three to four people and give them different colored markers to draw pictures of what they want their organization to look like in the future. Initially we get a little resistance, but someone always puts the first sketch on the flipchart. Others join in and by the time the exercise is over, amazing descriptive visuals are completed. Next we give them five minutes to draft a vision statement and then present it to the larger group, where we take a vote on the final winner.

The more employees are included in and contribute to the planning process and the more they share in creating the vision, the more invested and engaged they become.

Please contact Dr. Marilyn Manning, The Consulting Team, M@TheConsultingTeam.com for information of how we facilitate and empower organizations to create positive change through creating compelling visions, facilitating strategic planning and implementation, and increasing workplace productivity and satisfaction.