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seeking inspiration

BY SANDRA BECKWITH

**TUNE IN TO YOUR TEAM
TO ENCOURAGE
CONFIDENCE, PROJECT
OWNERSHIP AND LOYALTY.**

24 LEADERSHIP 2007 WWW.PMI.ORG



How employees are treated is the key factor in the energy they devote to their work. Engagement doubles when an employee is treated like a partner but is halved when the employee is treated as a subordinate, according to the survey.

In wielding that double-edged blade, you hold the power to affect your team's outlook and performance.

IT'S INDIVIDUAL

Factors that motivate employees include pride in their work, colleagues they enjoy and a supervisor they can trust, says Steve Morris, founder, Steve Morris Associates, a leadership consultancy in Singapore. "You can work for a great company but still suffer under a miserable boss. Troublesome bosses are insensitive to the needs of others, excessive in their behaviors, and insincere in their words and deeds," he says. "Conversely, you could work for a lousy company, but with a great boss, you will feel that it is worth it."

Organizational culture also can sap a worker's motivation. Incompetent leaders, unclear expectations, office politics, lack of recognition and lack of professional development can discourage employees. To avoid these pitfalls, find ways to tune in to the personalities and your team's work styles to understand what does—and doesn't—inspire them at work.

"I used to take the approach that it was all about money and incentives because that's what motivated

me, so I assumed it worked that way with everyone else too," says Mike Entzminger, CEO of Mach 1 Air Services Inc., Tempe, Ariz., USA. "I've learned that what motivates my employees often isn't money, but recognition in front of the group."

His strategy of paying attention to his employees' personalities is one of the most effective, says John Gray who, as vice president of administration at Mach 1 Air Services Inc., reports to Mr. Entzminger. "Mike knows what motivates me isn't the same thing that motivates somebody else here," Mr. Gray says. "He knows that I like it when he challenges me to push the envelope a little, so that's what he does. And it works."

Getting an idea of what will motivate an individual means opening dialogue and paying attention, says Robert Berger, Dubai, United Arab Emirates-based vice president of Dubai operations

WHAT'S YOUR STYLE?

Whether you're an autocrat or a consensus builder, knowing your leadership style can give you an added level of self-awareness when motivating your team, says Steve Morris, founder of Steve Morris Associates, Singapore. He also is author of *Gloves Leadership—A Holistic Approach to Achieving Personal Mastery and Worklife Balance* (LotusBloom, 2005).

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AUTHORITATIVE LEADERS are self-motivated and garner respect as their key motivational strategy.

AFFILIATIVE MOTIVATORS are afraid to upset people, which means they may end up upsetting everybody by being too passive.

COACHES bring out a person's potential and create opportunities for development. "We have seen that this approach works best in the long run because people are motivated to grow," he says.

GLOBALIZE YOUR APPROACH

Before you try to motivate a global team, make sure you've got a handle on cultural values and their role in the workplace. "Follow the rules of the culture you're working with rather than the rules of your own culture," says Geert Hofstede, Ph.D., author and pioneer in the field of cross-cultural research, comparing both national and organizational cultures. Dr. Hofstede says there are five cultural dimensions that should be taken into account when motivating cross-culturally.

Power Distance Index addresses a country's equality. "If a person comes from a culture with a large power difference, then in general, he expects his boss to tell him what to do," Dr. Hofstede says. "If a project manager who doesn't understand this asks a team member what he thinks should be done in a certain situation, the team member will become confused and disoriented, because he's not accustomed to that work style."

Individualism indicates whether a culture emphasizes individual or group accomplishment. A high individualism ranking indicates that independence and individual achievements are important. A low score means that people are "collectivists"—they are expected to act as members of the group. "To motivate teams in collectivistic cultures, you must get a place in the group," he says. "This takes time. You don't fly an expert in and expect that person to come back with results in a week."

Masculinity Ranking has more to do with assertiveness than with gender. "When motivating people from cultures that don't emphasize assertiveness, talk less about yourself and more about the other person," he says.

Uncertainty Avoidance Index addresses the society's need for structure. "If you have a team with members from cultures that have a low tolerance for uncertainty, motivate them

by setting the rules beforehand," he says. "If they ask for rules and you say 'that's not necessary,' you'll scare the heck out of them."

Long-Term Orientation indicates whether a culture looks to the future in long-term or short-term, or whether it gets direction from the present and the past. "In business, this is about whether you want quick results," he says. Leaders from cultures with a low long-term orientation—or short-term thinking—working with people who are accustomed to a long-term orientation can motivate by incorporating those short-term goals into a longer-term process with more steps. The culture that is comfortable with quicker results will get them, while the culture with more long-term orientation also will see the long-distance goals it needs.

For more information, visit Dr. Hofstede's website at <http://fehwetb.uvt.nl/center/hofstede/index.htm>.

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A manager who isn't sensitive to cultural issues can plunge a team into a demotivating series of conflicts. "You have to be aware of political issues when assembling a cross-cultural team," Mr. Berger says. "I wouldn't put a Greek Cypriot and a Turkish Cypriot together to do the same kind of work—there would be conflict all day long. We see the same thing with different Arab cultures with conflicts among themselves."

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Although different leaders use different motivational styles and tactics, most employees—no matter what country they're in—respond positively when they're treated with respect. A combination of the following methods will reach the greatest number of employees.

Offer praise. There are some people who can be motivated for weeks by two words—"good job" or "thank you," Mr. Berger says. For employees who respond well to praise, consider putting it in writing. Mr. Entzinger employs. To keep employees motivated to write articles for the company newsletter, he sends the writers thank-you notes telling them what he liked the most in their current articles.

Open the lines of communication. Project teams need to understand the organization's vision, how they fit into it, how they can help the organization reach its goals and what is expected of them. In addition to offering guidance, make sure to listen. "Seek their input on a regular basis," Mr. Stewart says.

Touch base. Mr. Entzinger requires his managers to give what he calls "touches"—notes, e-mails or conversations that keep people in contact. "If we've got a project going and

we're trying to get specific results, I'll ask the manager to send out an e-mail or give a personal call to the people on the team on a regular basis," he says, adding that this tactic is especially important when team members are in different locations.

Show empathy. Mr. Berger offers flexible work hours whenever possible and tries to accommodate all vacation requests. "A vacation leave request is one of the few times of the year when an employee asks for something from management, so I try to be accommodating, even when it puts a strain on the team," he says.

Provide education and training. This is especially important for an employee who feels unprepared or too inexperienced for the job, or the individual who is motivated by opportunities for professional development. "I think you get more motivated people when you train them thoroughly and it's not indoctrination by fire," Mr. Entzinger says.

Give feedback. Christopher Kummer, Ph.D., junior research professor at Webster University in Vienna, Austria, suggests providing job performance feedback as part of the training process. "It should be built into the project plan," he says. That feedback, Dr. Kummer says, helps benchmark performance for improvement and determine whether further training is needed.

Share appreciation. When Mach 1 instituted a policy that encouraged employees to report the good work of team members, Mr. Entzinger saw dramatic differences in motivation levels. Employees not only became more motivated when they were praised by peers in other departments, but communication and rapport between departments improved as well.

Understanding what motivates individual team members takes effort, but it pays off in the form of employees who are more satisfied because they see the positive impact of their work. ■

ENTZINGER: PAGE 30 >>

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To facilitate the listening process, Mr. Morris uses focus groups in which he asks people not what motivates them, but what takes away their desire to perform. Team exercises and assessments also help because they reveal individual work styles, says Bill Stewart, president and CEO of Project Management Leadership Group Inc., a global project management professional services and training firm in Atlanta, Ga., USA. "By understanding the work style of

each team member, the leader can adjust his or her approach," he says.

CROSSING BORDERS

A leader who can motivate cross-culturally knows that a "one size fits all" approach does not work. "Managers who are working across cultural boundaries and don't understand cultural differences often demotivate their employees without ever becoming aware that the trouble is actually the manager's lack of awareness instead of the employee's ineptness," says Geert Hofstede, Ph.D., associate professor at Wageningen University in Wageningen, the Netherlands, and co-author of two books about the relationship between national

CASE Columbus Life Insurance Co.'s sales grew at nearly 12 times the industry average in the past five years, thanks in large part to employee motivation levels. Under the leadership of CEO Larry Grypp, who joined the Cincinnati, Ohio, USA-based company in 1999, staffers get clear direction, scheduled evaluations and consistent feedback, and they understand how their work contributes to corporate objectives. Mr. Grypp's expertise in motivating employees has not only boosted his company's success, it has earned him leadership positions throughout his career.

PHOTO BY
MARC
BOWEN

MOTIVATION

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"When combining two failing insurance agencies in Indiana in the early 1980s and working to turn the remaining operation into a single successful office, I learned that I couldn't motivate people without helping them discover the right goals for their personal circumstances, because of my success, I was asked to lead one of the company's top 10 local offices."
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- 1990-1991** Senior Vice President
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"My work with one client, Summit Financial Resources, included influencing the corporate culture into one that allowed for more motivated employees. We used focus groups, attitude surveys, off-site retreats and strategic refinement exercises. Pleased with the outcome, Summit asked me to be its president and CEO."
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"While leading Summit, I continued to consult with other companies, including Western & Southern Financial Group, had a reputation for developing a company-wide strategy and helping employees understand, accept and support it. When a Western & Southern company, Columbus Life, needed that expertise at the top, the CEO of Western & Southern Financial Group selected me."
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"My first responsibility was to help develop and communicate a new growth strategy. I knew we needed the commitment of our employees, so I made sure they understood our goals and how their work would support them. Communication tactics included employee meetings, a special issue of the employee newsletters, and a mission and strategy booklet. A reward allowed employees to measure their contribution to its successful execution. As a result, our profits from 2000 through 2005 more than doubled. During that time frame, our life insurance sales grew at 35 percent compounded annual growth rate, while the industry average was three percent."

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Seeking inspiration by Sandra Beckwith

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CASE – MOTIVATION

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