Motivating Factors

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Spring has sprung, waking up the motivation in all of us after a long winter. The weather is warming and days are longer. It is a refreshing and invigorating time of the year. So how about employee motivation? As a supervisor, have you ever asked yourself the question, how do I motivate my employees? Giving all due respect to traditional compensation incentives, there is another crucial motivator.

LET’S LOOK AT SOME OF THE RESEARCH.

One of the best known writers on motivation is Frederick Herzberg, an American psychologist. Back in the 1960’s, Herzberg got management thinking with his motivator-hygiene theory. The most important part of this theory is that the main motivating factors are not in the environment, (think compensation, benefits, office space) but rather in the intrinsic value and satisfaction gained from the job itself.

More recently Professor Teresa Amabile and Steven Kramer wrote in detail about how progress can boost performance in their 2011 book, “The Progress Principle.” In their research, they asked 238 people (from 26 project teams in seven major organizations) to keep an anonymous diary, so that they could track their experiences on a daily basis. Receiving more than 12,000 separate diary entries, they analyzed people's “inner work lives” – their perceptions, emotions, and motivation levels – and then explored how this affected their performance. They found that when people consistently take steps forward – even small steps – on meaningful projects, they are more creative, productive, and engaged, and they have better relationships. This, in turn, has a positive influence on their work performance.

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HOW DOES THIS RESEARCH TRANSLATE INTO WHAT YOU CAN DO AS A SUPERVISOR?

Budget constraints are a reality for most organizations, so the good news is that as a supervisor you have within your power some important levers for improved employee motivation.

1. Reviewing and designing jobs that challenge and hold a high level of interest for the employee is one approach you could tackle; and as much as possible include the employee in the conversation to hear what they love to do. Is there a project they could be included on or a piece of work you could delegate to that role?
2. Ask employees about what barriers they are experiencing as they try to get projects done and accomplish their work. Are they having trouble getting access to information or need some piece of technology? Is there a communication issue that you pulling together a meeting would help solve? Work to remove those barriers as a way to help the work move forward and improve the employee motivation.

References:

As a supervisor what has been the best employee motivator you’ve found?

1. I involve the employee in decision making especially those decisions that directly affect them.
2. I celebrate successes and use team meetings to give praise to individuals or teams.
3. I work to remove barriers that are getting in their way of getting work done.
4. I use “thank you cards” as a way to recognize good work and motivate employees.
5. I have intentional conversations about how their work contributes to the overall mission and goals of the organization.
6. The motivator I use isn’t listed, but I would love to share it...

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Our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is designed to offer face-to-face counseling and consulting to those that voluntarily reach out to us. We are not simply a phone counseling service or online tool type EAP. Thousands of professional counselors form a worldwide Sand Creek network available to deliver personal care and support to you in your community. Our services are administered nationally, but delivered locally.

Sand Creek supports the relationship between individual health and overall organizational health. Our Organization Assistance Program (OAP) service extends the reach into the organization and provides work teams with a systemic approach to improve the health and well-being of an organization.