

How Good are Your Motivation Skills?

Discover key factors for building a motivated team

Managers everywhere want teams that are effective, focused, and committed to organizational goals. With a team like this, just think of the performance and results you could deliver!

Teams only perform like this if their managers are motivating them effectively.

This is why you need to be able to motivate your team if you want to create a productive work environment. By combining good motivational practices with meaningful work, the setting of performance goals, and use of an effective reward system, you can establish the kind of atmosphere and culture that you need to excel.

The better you are able to link these factors together, the higher the motivation levels of your team are likely to be. That's a win-win for you, them, and the organization.

The interactive motivational skills quiz in this article helps you identify the aspects of team motivation that you can improve. From there you will be directed to specific tools that will help you improve your motivation skills.

Take the test and apply the things you learn from it. You could well see the performance of your team soar!



Motivate your team for real success!
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How Good Are Your Motivation Skills?

Take the online test below, and click the 'Calculate my total' button at the foot of the test the assess your motivation skills.

Instructions:

For each statement, click the button in the column that best describes you. Please answer questions as you actually are (rather than how you think you should be), and don't worry if some questions seem to score in the 'wrong direction'. When you are finished, please click the 'Calculate My Total' button at the bottom of the test.

	Question	Not at all	Rarely	Some times	Often	Very Often
1	When faced with a performance problem, I take care to establish whether it is caused by lack of resource, lack of motivation, or lack of skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2	I establish clear performance standards and expectations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3	The rewards and discipline I use are clearly linked to performance and defined behavioral objectives.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4	I structure work so that is interesting and challenging,	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	and allows for appropriate autonomy.					
5	When I give a reward I make sure it is one that the recipient values.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6	I am consistent in the way that I discipline people for sub-standard performance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7	When I see good work, I praise it immediately.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8	I make sure people have the tools, resources, and training to achieve the results I expect.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9	I try to understand what motivates each individual member of my team.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10	I make a major effort to ensure that I offer competitive wages and other forms of compensation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11	In order to be fair, I use the same rewards for everyone when recognizing good performance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12	I help people establish performance goals that are challenging and specific, and that are linked to organizational objectives.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13	I make sure I know what is going on in the real work environment before taking any remedial or disciplinary action.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14	I encourage people to set their goals high, and make their achievement measurements challenge them fairly.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15	I try to combine and rotate job assignments so that people can learn and use a variety of skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="button" value="Calculate My Total"/>						Total = 0

Score Interpretation

Score	Comment
15 – 34	Ouch. The good news is that you've got a great opportunity to improve the way you motivate others, and your and your team's long term success! However, to do this, you've got to fundamentally improve your motivation skills. Start below !
35 – 52	You're good at some aspects of motivating others, but there's room for improvement elsewhere. Focus on the serious issues below , and you'll most likely find that your team's performance will increase.
53 – 75	You're probably motivating your team very effectively! Still, check the sections below to see if there's anything you can tweak to make this even better.

As you answered the questions, you probably had some insight into areas where the motivational practices you use could use a pick-me-up. The following is a quick summary of the main areas of motivation that were explored in the quiz, and a guide to the specific tools you can use for each.

Providing Productive and Challenging Work

(Questions 1, 4, 15)

The first step in building a highly motivated team is providing interesting work, which is well organized to meet the needs and desires of team members. No matter how self-motivated a person is, how challenging the goals he or she sets, or how wonderful the rewards, if the work is badly designed, it will be hard to motivate people and work will be less than ideal.

Effective motivators understand that work design has a strong impact on performance. When a person finds a job inherently unsatisfying, there's not much you can do to motivate him or her. Job design and enrichment combine to match characteristics of the job with workers' skills and interests: The more variety, challenge and autonomy there is to a job, the more intrinsically satisfying it will be.

Our article on **Job Enrichment** details how to set up meaningful work assignments. Other articles of interest include **Pygmalion Motivation**, which addresses the impact that your work assignments have on conscious and unconscious motivators, and **Dealing with Poor Performance**, which outlines steps that you can take to ensure you have a good fit between the person and the job.

Setting Effective Goals

(Questions 2, 3, 12, 14)

When you are confident that the work you provide is well organized, the next thing to do is to ensure that workers have clear and attainable goals that they're working to achieve. Managing the goal setting process is essential for creating a highly motivating environment. The effectiveness of goal setting in motivation is a well-recognized fact, and by making goals specific, consistent, and appropriately challenging, you can set goals that are powerfully motivating. As such, the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound) acronym helps you define effective goals.

Specific goals are measurable, unambiguous and behavior-changing. They outline exactly what needs to be accomplished, and when it will be considered as "achieved". Having goals that are consistent with other personal goals as well as organizational goals is also important. If goals are inconsistent, the resulting confusion and incompatibility would like cause the person to do nothing rather than work in different directions.

For more on goal setting, read our articles on **Locke's Goal Setting**, which explains the principle of setting SMART goals; **Management By Objectives**, which details how to align personal goals with those of the organization; **Performance Management and KPIs** and **Performance Agreements**.

Finally, challenge is important, due to the observation that we get what we expect. Up to a point, the more you expect from someone, the harder they will generally work. This has been shown time and again, and is explained by the idea of Expectancy Theory: The idea here is that you need to link high effort with high performance, and high performance with a positive outcome. With those two linkages established, people are motivated to work hard to achieve a positive outcome. Read more in our article on **Expectancy Theory**.

Tip:

Think carefully about the goals you set, and make sure you adapt them to circumstances in a reasonable way. If you're too rigid with your goals, you may motivate members of your team to "cut corners" in order to reach them.

Understanding Individual Differences in Motivation

(Questions 5, 9, 10, 11)

Motivational techniques should bring out the best in people. That means they should build on an individual's strengths and minimize his or her weaknesses.

There are certainly some common denominators in motivation, like fair wages, decent working conditions, a sense of camaraderie with co-workers, and a good relationship with one's supervisor. Abraham Maslow and Frederick Herzberg are two famous motivation theorists who established that even if these sorts of things are not necessarily motivating in themselves, they have to be present in order to even think about enhancing motivation.

However, the assumption in most modern workplaces is that these lower order, "hygiene" factors are being met, and that people are seeking the things that provide real motivation. These are things like challenging work, control, growth opportunities, and recognition for a job well done.

To decide which motivating factors to provide you need to look at the individual employees. Some will be motivated by more time off, while others may prefer to gain status and recognition in the company. Understanding these individual needs is mandatory for building a motivating workplace, and is why question 11 above is a "trick question": if you try to motivate everyone in exactly the same way, you're likely missing plenty of opportunities for motivating individual members of your team.

Meeting peoples' needs, providing challenge, using a variety of rewards, and matching them to the right people are issues discussed in the following articles: **Using Maslow's Hierarchy**, **Herzberg's Motivators and Hygiene Factors**, **Alderfer's ERG Theory**, **Theory X and Theory Y**, **Adam's Equity Theory**, and **Expectancy Theory**.

Providing Rewards and Recognition

(Questions 6, 7, 8, 13)

When you know what you want to provide in terms of reward and recognition, it's important to establish an effective system. The primary focus of a reward system is fairness. Both reward and discipline have to be perceived as fairly distributed according to clear guidelines. This is why setting specific performance expectations is so important. ("Fairness" doesn't mean that everyone has the same reward package – it means that differences between people's reward packages need to be clear and understandable.)

It is equally important to make sure you give your team members the tools they need to be successful. If you're setting goals, then you need to make sure that they are attainable, and you do that by providing the necessary support, tools, resources, and training.

It's also important that you get to understand the challenges your team faces. This way you can appreciate the small victories that lead to the major accomplishments. Motivation is all about encouragement and appreciation.

When you are part of the team and not simply an "observer from above" you will have many opportunities to thank people and recognize good work right on the spot. This is a really important factor in successful recognition. You have to be in a position to show or tell people everyday that you appreciate their contributions. **Once or twice a year in formal review process is not enough!**

To help you understand these key concepts and develop a great reward system, learn to use the following tools: **Management By Walking Around**, **DILo (Day In The Life Of)**, **Expectancy Theory**, and **"A Bit of Perfume" – Giving Praise**.

Key Points:

If you want to build a high performance team, then you absolutely have to learn how to motivate team members. Side benefits of this include high levels of team-member job satisfaction, and good staff retention.

You can stimulate high performance through providing interesting and challenging work, helping people set and achieve meaningful goals, and recognizing and rewarding high performance in ways that are valued by each individual.

Making a point of motivating people is a challenge in and of itself. Once you decide you are up to it, however, you too will reap the rewards and benefits. This creates a momentum that will help you and your team achieve great success.

To explore how you can apply some of these techniques in your work situation, take our Bite-Sized Training session on **Motivating Your Team**.

This is just one of hundreds of skill-building tools and resources on this site. Click [here](#) for **more articles**, subscribe to our **free newsletter**, or **become a member** for just US\$1.

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