

Management Checklist

Motivating the unmotivated

This is an excerpt from a [Chartered Management Institute](#) checklist providing practical advice and guidance enabling managers to check out how to do a range of tasks quickly and efficiently using concise, tried and tested information.

Introduction

Some would argue that people are not unmotivated; it's just that the right motivation triggers have not yet been found. It's largely a question of identifying what you have not been getting quite right and working on what makes the apparently unmotivated tick.

Definition

Motivation is defined as the creation of stimuli, incentives and working environments which enable people to give of their best in pursuit of organisational success. Unmotivated people seem to need constant pushing despite the general stimuli in place.

Action checklist

1. Find out what does motivate them

The better you know your colleagues/employees the better you can manage them. So get to know them. This doesn't necessarily mean sharing evenings out, or endlessly having chats about what happened at the weekend. But it does involve trying to form an objective view of what matters to them, of what drives each individual. You may have been trying the wrong things.

2. Use their own words

Once you have identified what's important to the other person about their work, take the words they have used and show how they can be motivated in their work. You also need to find out what they enjoy in order to discover how you can help them to enjoy their work.

3. Have clear goals

Often people who are unmotivated don't have goals. This could be because none have been set for them or they are unable to set goals themselves. Finding it hard to set goals is often a consequence of stress. It can happen because the part of your brain that performs the function is simply switched off.

It can also happen because a person sets themselves goals that are just too big and frightening that they can't see the steps in between that will help them to achieve the goal.

5. Offer help with planning

Similarly, once you have got the goal clear then you need to help the individual work out small steps in order to achieve the goal. Do this by asking them what they need to do. If they come up with large-sounding or daunting factors, then help them again to break down the larger steps into smaller, approachable and manageable ones.

6. Take time to explain

It may also be a question not so much of being unmotivated as being uninformed. Some leaders may operate under the illusion that because they are so familiar with the organisations goals and targets, they assume that all their team members know them as well. Usually, this is not the case. Having clear

goals is one thing; making sure that they are effectively communicated and understood may be quite another.

Take time to explain the 'what' and 'why' of goals and make sure that everyone has understood and assimilated their role and contribution towards achieving the goal(s). Knowing the reason(s) why often helps in daily routines when you have to make choices.

Identifying personal drivers and incentives means that you can allocate responsibilities in that person's area of interest. Linking personal goals and contribution to the organisation's objectives is a double success.

7. Involve the unmotivated in coming up with solutions

You may well ask an unmotivated person what it is they want or need; they may well tell you what it is they don't want. The negativity may come from a number of origins but try to follow up negative remarks by finding out what they do want.

8. Try to get buy-in

If people personally decide to attempt something, then generally they are far more likely to be motivated to achieve than if a task is imposed upon them or if they are instructed to do a task. Involvement generates buy-in and ownership. Conversely, if people's views and ideas are not reflected in the way forward, they will either feel that no one is listening, or that solutions are being generated that do not make use of everybody's contribution and experience. Either way demotivation can set in.

9. Consider alternative action

Having tried the above and quite probably some other strategies too, it may be that you have someone who is negative by nature, who is awkward for the sake of it. Such people might not respond to any triggers therefore having a demoralising and detrimental impact on the whole team. Apparently negative by nature, such a person may well find an alternative working environment is more suited to them. So it may be appropriate to suggest that they "move on" for their own benefit as well as for that of the team.

The full Management Checklist is part of a series 'CheckPoint' service offered by the Chartered Management Institute. Focusing on issues relating to people management and personal effectiveness, further information can be viewed at www.managers.org.uk/checkpoint or by calling (0)1536 207 373 to request a sample of what Checkpoint has to offer.