

Why my people are not motivated to work? 3

Part Three / Final



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There are many methods that organizations practice believing that they are motivational methods. The fact, however, is that some of these methods are motivators for few individuals and great de-motivators for the rest of the team.

One of these methods is 'The Employee of the Month' method. Unless the management does this method correctly, it is a de-motivator.

I have seen organizations that announce the employee of the month because he/she was a 'Very Hard Working', a 'Team Player', a 'Loyal Person', or a 'Positive Attitude Person'. What about the rest of the team; were not they - or at least some of them - hard working, team players, loyal and with positive attitude too? Those employees will not share the happiness that the employee of the month has. The impact on them will be negative.

Choosing an employee to become employee of the month, must be for a very specific reason, announced, and explained by the management. Thus, the rest of the employees know specifically why the management selected that individual. However, many organizations fail to do that.

One of the management biggest mistakes is recognizing only the top performer. Imagine the following scenario as an example.

You are a salesperson in an organization that had planned to achieve One Million Ringgit sales in the following month. You and the rest of the team (consider there are 10 of you) planned and work hard to achieve that goal. At the end of the month, the team has achieved more than one million sales. The amount that each individual made was different (It varies between RM Ninety thousand and one hundred and fifty thousand).

You brought the sum of 130 thousand and one of your team – Mr. ABC brought 140 thousand.

Now, at the management meeting, your boss announced his thanks and appreciation to Mr. ABC, give him bonus, and a holiday ticket, and nothing for the rest of you. How do you all feel?

The American novelist, Edgar Watson Howe said, “The greatest humiliation in life is to work hard on something from which you expect great appreciation, and then fail to get it”.

Every employee contributes to the organization’s success; therefore, every employee deserves recognition for both individual accomplishments and team effort.

If you walk into IBM’s New York Financial branch, the first thing greets you is a massive floor-to-ceiling bulletin board with glossy photographs of every person in the branch hung under the banner:

**“IBM NEW YORK FINANCIAL,
THE DIFFERENCE IS PEOPLE.”**

I have recommended this idea to one of the organizations here, and, according to the management, it increased the motivation level among the employees.

One of our personality needs is to be significant and to feel important. Therefore, recognition is the most important method to help employees to be and keep being motivated. This recognition must be done on the spot and in a regular basis.

Do you remember, as a manager, when was the last time you dug deeply trying to find the good in one of your employees, found it and then reward him/her? Do you remember, as a manager, when was the last time you made a list of the people who work for you and spoke to each of them personally of how much he or she has contributed to the success of the organization and how much you appreciate his/her effort?

Do you remember, as a manager, when was the last time you wrote a note and personally placed it in one of your employees’ table thanking him or her for the task accomplished?

If you have not or if you do not do that, do not wonder why your employees are not motivated to work.

Tom Peters, the great economist, and the father of performance excellence, put forward remarkable questions for any given manager. I love these questions and words of Tom's. He asked,

“Have you, as a manager, thanked an employee for a small act of helpfulness in the last **three days**?

Have you, as a manager, thanked an employee for a small act of helpfulness in the last **three hours**?

Have you, as a manager, thanked a frontline employee for carrying around a great attitude **today**?

Have you in the **last week** recognized –publicly - one of your employees for a small act of cross-functional co-operation?

Have you personally in the **last week/month** called/visited an internal customer to sort out, inquire, or apologize for some little or big thing that went awry?
(No reason for doing so? If true—in your mind—then you are more out of touch than I dared imagine.) “.

Recognition is the best way to increase productivity, cooperation, morale, and keeping people motivated. If we want to bring out the best in people we must appreciate what they do, and then reward them accordingly, regardless how big or small the accomplished task was. All it takes from the manager is just a few words and they cost almost nothing; “Thank you! “Well done”. *Please refer to my article “Managing People – Part Four”, which published on Wednesday, July 8, 2009 in New Sabah Times for more information about recognition.*

Managers can keep their employees motivated by showing that they care, being good listeners, providing direction, being good leaders, and practicing delegation. These methods and practices will create lasting intrinsic motivators in the individual. Thus, he or she will be enthusiastic, responsible, caring, and willing to learn and improve. He or she will be happy to help others and fulfill his/her need for significance, for meaning, and to contribute to the team and to the organization.

Focusing on the external motivators (money, formal reward, etc.) will make the organization's management keep on increasing these rewards and the employees will be more demanding and they will perform poorly when they are not watched.

In his celebrated book, “Motivational Management” (which I recommend every manager) Alexander Hiam said,

“Managing people based on extrinsic motivation is a thankless task. You have to keep providing external pressure to make them perform. You can hold threats over them, you can offer rewards for performance, or you can try any combination of both. However, no

matter how you do it, you are providing all the motivation and they are doing what you want because that is how they can earn the reward or avoid the punishment.

When you turn your back for a moment, extrinsically motivated employees will stop working. They will come in late, and do less work on days when you are not there to watch them. They will try to sneak out of work or do a poor job when they think you will not notice; pilferage and dishonesty are common among such employees too. You will always feel like you have to work extra hard just to keep them working at all.”