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Motivating people

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Introduction

In a world where organisations compete through client and sales excellence, innovation, and time to market, the edge comes from the inventiveness, creativity and expertise of collaborating individuals. Success relies on those individuals giving their best effort and contributing to the best of their ability. How to motivate others is therefore of major interest to organisations and a key leadership skill for people managers and individual contributors alike.

Organisations and the nature of work continue to evolve. Roles consisting of well-defined tasks performed in highly hierarchical organisations are giving way to highly collaborative work that requires creativity, innovation, conceptual understanding and problem solving. Motivating people in such environments tends to be most effective when it centres on creating in them an inner want to do great work. Driven by such autonomous motivation, people tend to produce better results, derive greater satisfaction from work, and have more trust in company management than in settings where performance and results are driven by control from others.[1]

What prompts an inner drive to deliver great work is always specific to the individual. For most people sustained motivation comes primarily from making and getting recognised for progress in interesting, challenging and meaningful work, and from the opportunity to achieve and grow into greater responsibility.[2] To motivate then is to understand what motivates the person, define a new or enrich an existing role such that its content and context appeal to the role holder, and facilitate a work climate where the person can make progress, attain goals, grow and develop.

1. Understanding the individual

With interesting, challenging and meaningful work among the attributes that determine the extent of motivation, the approach to motivating others will depend greatly on the individual – what is meaningful to one person might not immediately appeal to another. The same applies to growth and development opportunities one finds motivating – everyone has different career aspirations and a different profile of current strengths and weaknesses.

The first step therefore is always to understand what fuels the motivation of each individual in the group or team. This is best done by asking explicitly but can also be inferred from the person's behaviour. Equipped with this understanding, the leader can motivate each person accordingly. The questions to ask the could include[3]:

- Interests: What does the person enjoy doing most? What are the favourite projects they've done? When did they feel most energized at work? The times they found themselves immersed in a state of flow? Their interests outside of work? What do they dislike doing most?
- Work values: What is the most important work-related lesson they learned from parents and the best boss they had? What are they most proud of and what regrets they have about their career? What would have they done differently?
- Skills: What are they best at doing? What do they wish they were better at? What skills are they struggling with and what gets in their way? Ways to incorporate into their jobs more of what they enjoy most? Ways to build on strengths and accomplishments to date?

- Environment preferences: What type of people do they work best and worst with? Do they have a preference for highly organised and analytic environments or more spontaneous and creative ones? What type of organisational culture helps bring out their best self? How do they like to be recognised for work well done?

- Vision for the future: What are their key hopes for the future work-wise? What are their short-term and long-term professional goals? Do they see themselves as an individual contributor or manager of others? How could their current role be redesigned to support their aspirations?

2. Types and drivers of motivation

With autonomous motivation producing better results than the controlling variety, what is precisely autonomous motivation and how to prompt it? Where a person has an experience of choice, acts out of their own will, and considers the task either interesting or personally important, he or she is autonomously motivated. There are three types of autonomous motivation – one intrinsic (related to work itself) and two extrinsic (related to other factors):

- Intrinsic motivation – is related to work itself and involves engaging in a work assignment because it is inherently interesting and enjoyable.
- Values-driven motivation – involves engaging in work that entails or allows the expression of what one believes is important in life, e.g. helping others, collaboration, ethical conduct, integrity.
- Utility-driven motivation – involves engaging in work because of its usefulness to others (e.g. providing clients with a useful service) or to self (e.g. gaining new skills).

In contrast, where a person has a sense of having to produce work and of operating with a sense of pressure, under close supervision, with detailed instructions, or primarily in order to obtain a reward or recognition, he or she is subject to controlled motivation. There are two types of controlled motivation – both of them extrinsic:

- Self-imposed obligation – involves engaging in work in order to satisfy one's self-worth in front of others, e.g. desire to feel worthy or proud or to avoid the feeling of shame or guilt.
- Control by others – involves engaging in work to obtain a reward (e.g. bonus, recognition from a manager or colleague) or to avoid sanctions (e.g. disciplinary process).

When autonomously motivated, i.e. by intrinsic, values-driven or utility-driven factors, people tend to find work meaningful and derive higher satisfaction from the attainment of work goals. While controlled motivation can also lead to effective performance and goal attainment, it is far less likely to give rise to satisfaction from work, even when work goals are attained. What is more, the effect autonomous motivation has on performance and satisfaction tends to last, while controlled motivation tends to sustain performance only in the short run.[4]

Importantly, the effects of autonomous and controlled motivation are in most cases not additive – emphasising controlled motivation tends to crowd out the autonomous sort.[5] This reduces the degree to which a person finds work meaningful and decreases his or her well-being. The overall effect is likely to be reduced motivation, rather than the intended motivation boost. For example, attempts to drive results through direct instruction and close

supervision are likely to undermine autonomous motivation and may lead to a less successful work outcome. The one exception to the rule are social rewards, such as recognition from a manager, which do not weaken but instead have the effect of reinforcing autonomous motivation and are therefore a powerful motivational tool.[6]

How to prompt autonomous motivation then? A proven way to create in a person an inner want to deliver great work is to make work meaningful for them and to facilitate a work climate where the person can satisfy three basic psychological needs. Meaningful work is work that prompts intrinsic, value-driven, or utility-driven motivation. The three psychological needs are the three innate needs shared by all humans: the need for autonomy, the need for competence, and the need for connectedness. It has been found that for most people and for most work goal types, where a person considers each of these three needs satisfied on an ongoing basis, meaningful work gives rise to continued autonomous motivation. This in turn leads to higher performance, particularly on tasks requiring creativity, cognitive flexibility, and conceptual understanding, to higher job satisfaction and to positive work-related attitudes.[7] Figure 1 illustrates the main motivation types and the ways in which autonomous motivation is boosted by meaningful work and crowded out by controlled motivation.

Figure 1: Types of motivation and ways of affecting autonomous motivation
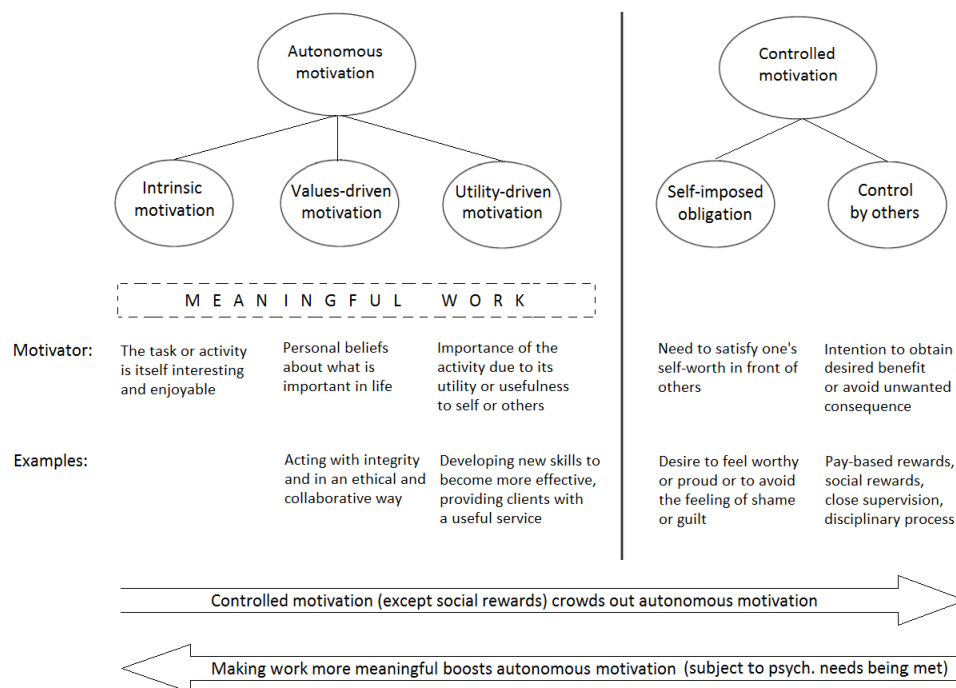
Source: Adapted from Marylène Gagné, Edward L. Deci, "Self-determination theory and work motivation", Journal of Organisational Behavior, 26, 2005, p. 336

3. Boosting autonomous motivation

With meaningful work giving a boost to autonomous motivation subject to the person's three basic psychological needs being satisfied, the question becomes how to make work more meaningful for someone and how to help them satisfy psychological needs.

3.1 Making work more meaningful

Meaningful work is work that prompts autonomous, i.e. intrinsic, value-driven, or utility-driven motivation: work that is inherently interesting and enjoyable, work that enables the expression of personal values and beliefs, or work that is important because of its utility to self or others. Making work more meaningful then amounts to enriching it such that it involves more activities the role holder finds interesting and enjoyable, is better aligned with his or her personal values, or such that it becomes more important and useful for self or others. This can be achieved in the following ways:

3.1.1 Increasing the share of activities which the role holder finds interesting and enjoyable

The more time the role holder is able to devote to activities he or she finds inherently interesting and enjoyable, the higher their overall motivation and satisfaction from work will likely be. What type of work the person enjoys most can be established by asking directly, through observation, and also by getting to know his or her interests, passions, strengths, skillset, working environment preferences, and the team roles they typically assume. The person's previous manager will also be a very useful source of insight about the person. For example, depending on whether the person has a preference for generalist or specialist work, creative or analytical, done in a team or mostly individually, in a group/team leader's capacity or as an individual contributor, in a structured and stable environment or one that is dynamic but also filled with ambiguity, he or she will be attracted to different types of roles and assignments. Knowing what each group/team member enjoys doing most will likely allow to reshuffle roles such that every person can spend more time on their preferred type of work and the group/team still delivers all their goals. If people accept that the newly revised roles are more interesting and enjoyable, motivation will likely rise overall. It is useful to keep in mind that as people evolve and develop, their profiles may change over time and so should be revisited periodically.

3.1.2 Improving alignment of work with the role holder's personal values

Personal values are the deeply held beliefs and convictions that a person feels define them as an individual. Some, like integrity, ethical conduct, accountability, and belief in collaboration across departments will be a base requirement to become a member and to be promoted in most organisations. It will be the role of the leaders to set the tone, model such values and enshrine them into group/team norms and organisational culture. Other will differ from person to person, which is one of the reasons why people display different attitudes and behaviours and are drawn to different roles and jobs. For example, one person may value dynamism, exploration, innovation, and change while another will be a big believer in stability, predictability, order, and structure. One may see themself as someone who develops and empowers others, another as the go-to person for complex problem-

solving tasks. All are equally valid but every individual will likely be attracted to different pursuits as a result. Understanding personal values of every member in the group/team makes it possible for roles to be designed in a way that enables each role holder to put his or her values into action. Connecting the person's work assignment to what they deeply care about and endorsing the assignment as such can motivate greater effort and attainment.

3.1.3 Enhancing the utility which the role confers on the role holder and others

Engaging in work which helps advance one's own professional goals or has a positive impact on others leads to greater employee satisfaction and is associated with higher self-reported well-being.[8]

Professional goals could consist of learning new skills, building connections and gathering work experiences required to grow into greater responsibility or move into a different role. Understanding the person's aspirations in this regard and the requirements of his or her preferred next position can help identify the requisite skills, experiences, and relationships. With the person's existing role enriched to enable the acquisition and development of these, work will gain on meaning and motivation will rise.

Positive impact on others can include providing a useful service to clients, colleagues, the community or the wider society. Demonstrating to a person how their work contributes to the wellbeing of others will make the assignment more meaningful and the participation in it more rewarding. For example, testimonials from clients who benefited from the firm's service could be shared with non-client facing members of staff to bring to life the impact of their work and convey client appreciation for it. Or, the person could share their work product with the users directly and see for themself the impact it has. Work will also gain on meaning if it serves a broader purpose, e.g. supports the mission, vision or strategy of the firm. Helping everyone understand how their individual output directly contributes to this broader purpose can therefore have a powerful effect. Making sure the person's everyday work serves a purpose for someone or something they value or for the organisation as a whole and endorsing it as such can thus lead to greater motivation.[9] Regular discussions with the group/team and periodic assessment of all work to ascertain that this continues to be the case will help drive motivation. A group/team member raising a concern related to the meaningfulness of work is an opportunity to discuss how work could be made more meaningful. On the rare occasion when there is little scope to vary the work assignment, an empathic acknowledgement of the person's perspective and a meaningful rationale for why the work is required and what purpose it serves can enhance the perceived utility of the work.

3.2 Helping satisfy three basic psychological needs

For meaningful work to boost autonomous motivation and for the person to stay autonomously motivated, it is vital that the person's three basic psychological needs are continuously satisfied. The three needs include the need for autonomy, competence, and connectedness with others.[10]

3.2.1 Granting people autonomy

Autonomy involves acting on one's own volition and having a choice. It is a universal need that applies to every person and one that is present in individualistic and collectivist societies alike.[11] In the organisational context, granting autonomy means creating opportunities for people to take initiative, set themselves challenging goals,

take responsibility for complete units of work, organise their resources and choose their work methods. It also means providing a commensurate degree of authority and giving non-controlling informational feedback to allow people to make the necessary decisions in their work and participate in decision making in the wider organisation.

The resulting ability for people to self-direct their work, experiment with various approaches, exercise their own judgement, make full use of their skills and abilities, and become accountable for results creates a sense of control, ownership, and responsibility, infuses work with meaning, motivates persistent effort and achievement, and leads to higher satisfaction from work. Responsibility for complete units of work, i.e. the entire task, deliverable, workstream, project, process, product, area, or function, rather than just for a part of it, conveys a sense of importance and makes more visible the connection between one's personal contribution and the results of the organisation as a whole.[12] In contrast, when people are given detailed instructions, operate under close supervision, and are not involved in decision making, their need for autonomy is not satisfied. Feeling controlled and unable to utilise their full potential, work loses its meaning and people's motivation and satisfaction from work wither.[13]

It is important to note that autonomy does not mean emphasis on independence, individualism, detachment, or selfishness. These would clearly be detrimental to performance. Instead, autonomy stands for self-initiation, self-directedness, and self-governance as a means to fuller and more effective utilisation of organisational resources, to improved motivation and enhanced performance.[14]

On those rare occasions where it is not possible to grant a person the usual degree of autonomy, the way to communicate about it in a way which does not adversely affect their motivation is to hear out and acknowledge the person's perspective, thoughts, and feelings about the situation and provide a comprehensive and meaningful rationale as to why a particular course of action is necessary.

3.2.2 Helping people feel competent at work

A belief that one possesses the skills required to attain a goal is a prerequisite for engaging in effort aimed at reaching it. Furthermore, seeking mastery in a skill or activity is rewarding in and of itself. Feeling competent and having opportunities to enhance one's competence further are therefore important enablers of autonomous motivation.[15] Giving people opportunities to hone their skills and expertise and to experience feeling competent at work is part and parcel of motivating others.

Providing ongoing feedback and regular coaching helps people become and feel more competent, leads to improved results and has highly motivating effects. Feedback serves to recognise and reinforce strong performance and to help the goal holder notice areas where they can become more effective. Coaching is the opportunity to empower the person and to help them grow and develop. Offering feedback and coaching on a regular basis serves to reaffirm the person's competence and demonstrates the manager's commitment to their success and growth thus motivating their continued effort.

With feedback and coaching provided regularly throughout the year, the more formal periodic evaluations of performance and results will mostly restate what has been discussed and shared already and can be used as an opportunity for the person to reflect on how their competence enabled progression and achievement and for the manager to motivate them further towards strong performance in the future. Requesting that the person prepare in advance will create more opportunity for them to reflect and will boost the competence effect. Bringing to the person's attention to how the contribution he or she made required and relied on him or her drawing on a wide

range of different skills and abilities will help him or her notice his or her competence. When handled as an open two-way dialogue, evaluations of performance and results can also reinforce mutual trust.

Making steady progress in meaningful work is one sure way to feel more competent and derive greater satisfaction from it. People often report that their "best days" at work were associated with making good progress or achieving a breakthrough. "Worst days" are typically considered those when a major setback leads to frustration. This illustrates the powerful effect making progress has on motivation and satisfaction. It is not necessary to achieve a major breakthrough every day to feel competent and motivated however – small regular wins and steady incremental progress is all that is needed.[16] Equally important is avoiding interruptions and delays, as these can be disheartening. That is why making sure that each group/team member is set up for success, enabling their progress, removing obstacles and bottlenecks that might prevent it, providing support, and helping everyone notice the progress they are making will help the group/team feel competent and stay motivated. People will appreciate and recognise this as something which directly contributes to their success.

Other than from making progress, the experience of feeling competent can also come from the nature of work itself. Where the task is complex or goal challenging, successful completion of the work assignment can lead to higher perceived competence and a greater belief in one's ability to handle even more challenging assignments in the future.[17] What is more, engaging in work that is challenging can allow the person to experience it as more meaningful and thus prompt satisfaction and autonomous motivation.[18] Ways to achieve this include enhancing the scope of a person's role in terms of the breadth of activities it covers or increasing the level of accountability and autonomy built into the role through greater inclusion of activities such as planning and decision making.[19]

Competence can also be enhanced via training and through assignments aimed specifically at enhancing it. Depending on the role and the person's interests, these could involve building expertise through specialised work such as exploring a specific topic in depth or creating a knowledge repository for others to use, thus facilitating their work.[20] Opportunities to develop skills and expertise are important enablers of autonomous motivation.

Finally, it is a known phenomenon that positive expectations of competence and performance held about others have the effect of materialising. By expressing confidence in someone's abilities, we motivate the person to live up to the high expectations, and we motivate ourselves to dedicate time and effort to that person's development. This is particularly effective early into the person's role, as with time the way they feel about their competence will be increasingly affected by their actual track record. Faith in someone's skill and ability can be demonstrated overtly or implicitly, i.e. by setting high goals and expressing a conviction that these will be met. Expectations thus play an important role in helping people feel competent and in enabling their success.[21]

3.2.3 Promoting connectedness

The need for connectedness is satisfied when a person enjoys close personal relationships with others, experiences a sense of belonging in a group, feels valued and respected, and can count on the group to provide social support. Such conditions enable optimal functioning and well-being for the individual in the organisation.[22]

Being respectful towards and concerned about each member in the group/team and in the wider organisation, helping others integrate socially and form effective relationships, as well as providing them with support, information, opportunities for visibility with management and opportunities to share their views all serve to create emotional comfort and facilitates affiliation. Structuring work to promote interdependence and identification with

cross-functional teams as well as encouraging collaboration between individuals, groups, teams, and departments creates conditions in which people can connect and autonomous motivation can arise.[23]

The need for connectedness is further satisfied through psychological safety and a culture of trust. Where a person knows that others will welcome his or her contributions and will support his or her learning and development, he or she will feel free to share a thought, ask a question, propose an idea, take initiative, seek feedback, ask for help, or admit a mistake. Psychological safety and a culture of trust are thus conducive to collaboration, participation, and learning.[24] Promoting group/team norms that enable psychological safety and a culture of trust serves to boost motivation across the board.

A fair and equitable environment is key for people to be able to satisfy the need for connectedness. The rewards system in place in the organisation, hiring and promotion decisions as well as staff arrangements need to be considered from the fairness perspective in order to ensure an equitable environment. Any perceived inequity in the way rewards are allocated could distract and demotivate.

Connectedness also plays an important role in helping people experience their roles as meaningful. Where people identify with the values and behaviours espoused by another, they are more open to accepting another person's endorsement of a role, task, or undertaking as one that is interesting or personally important for them.[25] Such acceptance is a highly important element of making work more meaningful for another person which can only succeed if the role holder accepts it as meaningful.

4. Setting goals that motivate

Skilfully crafted goals are one of the most effective tools for motivating strong performance and allowing people to derive satisfaction from work.

4.1 Mechanisms affecting performance

Goals affect performance through the following three mechanisms:[26]

- Goals bring the person's attention towards activities relevant to goal attainment.
- Goals motivate the amount and persistence of effort required to attain the goal.
- Goals encourage the discovery and use of effective approaches towards attaining the goal.

4.2 Selecting the correct goal type

Effective goal setting involves considering the nature of the task and the current level of ability of the goal owner and then selecting a goal type that is consistent with both. The higher the difficulty or level of challenge built into the goal, the higher typically the goal owner's level of effort (and performance overall) will be. This holds true until the point where the person reaches the limits of their ability in terms of current knowledge and skills relevant to performing the task. What this means is that where a person already has the knowledge and skills that the task requires, a higher and specific "attainment goal" (i.e. one that targets a specific end result), if accepted by the

person, will lead to them working harder towards achieving it. In contrast, urging people to just do their best is likely to result in lower attainment in this case. This is because "do-your-best" goals lack a reference point and so are not precisely defined. When working towards a "do-your-best goal", different people may find vastly different levels of attainment equally acceptable.[27]

Where the nature of the task, on the other hand, is such that it exceeds the person's current level of knowledge and skill, setting a high "attainment goal" is likely to lead to subpar attainment. This is because where current ability is insufficient, success relies less on working hard and more on discovering effective ways to attain the desired outcome. In such circumstances emphasizing the required end result may lead to anxiety which can prevent this discovery, and so setting "do-your-best" goals instead may yield better results. This will take some pressure off and will allow the person to explore the technique aspect of goal attainment as well.[28] The more effective way to proceed however is to explicitly set a high "learning goal" instead of a high "attainment goal". Attainment goals focus attention on the challenging end result while learning goals on the discovery of effective ways to attain the desired challenging result.[29] As such, the former are more suited to familiar tasks which rely on an established practice and the latter to novel and more complex endeavours.

Where the organisation has the ability to do so, the alternative or complement to setting learning goals is to provide the person with relevant training. Another approach might be to set a high longer-term attainment goal and accompany it with shorter-term sub-goals which gradually raise the required attainment level. This gives the person the opportunity to check their progress at regular intervals and course correct if necessary.[30]

When a goal calls both for results that are significantly beyond previously attained levels and for the discovery of novel paths and approaches to bring that goal within reach, it can be called a stretch goal. Stretch goals are effective motivators in a situation when the individual, team or organisation (as applicable) has had a period of strong attainment *and* also has spare capacity available to tackle the new challenge. Then, the recent wins will facilitate optimistic attitudes and there are resources that can be committed towards the goal. When either element is lacking, it may be difficult to secure commitment to the goal.[31]

The characteristics of the four goal types are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Comparison of goal types

Goal type	Objective			Nature of the task		Person's or team's knowledge and skill	
	Achieving incremental results	Discovering effective ways of achieving incremental results	Achieving exceptional results	Familiar task that relies on established practice	Novel, complex or challenging; no established practice	Person has requisite knowledge and skill	Current level of knowledge or skill not sufficient
Attainment goal	X			X		X	
"Do-your-best"	X	X			X		X
Att. goal + sub-goals	X	X			X		X
Learning goal		X			X		X
Stretch goal*		X	X		X		X

* To be effective, stretch goals require strong attainment in preceding periods and availability of spare resources that can be assigned to the goal.

4.3 Motivation and commitment to the goal

Other than by the selection of the correct goal type and the three mechanisms noted, performance is affected by the various types of motivation discussed earlier and the goal owner's commitment to the goal. Setting a goal should be based on the knowledge of the goal owner as a person and should be done in a way which he or she finds motivating. This will be the greatest contributor towards the person's commitment to the goal. Commitment can then be enhanced further. One way to achieve this is to obtain a voluntary public commitment from the role holder. This makes delivering on the goal a matter of personal integrity. Another is to have the person set the goal themselves or to set it in a collaborative fashion. That way the person will feel greater ownership of the goals and, what is more, goals set collaboratively have been found to be typically higher than those set unilaterally by the person's manager.[32] They also lead to greater self-perceived competence of the goal owner and as a result to better performance. This is because a collaborative approach creates more opportunities for the goal owner to find out and discuss relevant information. On the rare occasion when a goal needs to be set unilaterally, providing a meaningful rationale and purpose for the goal will typically lead to greater commitment and better results than for goals assigned without an attempt to secure the goal owner's buy-in.[33]

Finally, important to securing the person's commitment to the goal is making sure that he or she is set up for success and then providing him or her with regular feedback and coaching. Helping the goal owner get off to a good start by ensuring that they understand the goal, their role and the success criteria, have the necessary skills, information, resources, authority and support, understand the relevant context, including how the goal aligns with their other goals and company goals will allow the person to become productive and start making progress sooner. Feedback and coaching will then help sustain that progress. Feedback makes the person aware of their progress relative to the goal as well as of areas of strong performance and opportunities for improvement. As such, it allows the person to adjust their approach or level of effort so as to meet the goal and hence is a critical enabler of high performance. Coaching empowers, allows the person to re-examine their assumptions and consider other ways of attaining the goal, thus having potentially a significant impact on performance as well. Importantly, feedback and coaching also signal to the person their manager's commitment to them and to their work which in turn enhances the person's own commitment to the goal further still.

4.4 Effects of goal attainment

Results that meet or exceed one's goal give rise to satisfaction. Any shortfall is likely to have the opposite effect. Goals thus serve as a reference point for determining satisfaction. Rewards and recognition received on successful goal accomplishment further enhance the effect. Satisfaction from goal accomplishment energises and increases the goal owner's willingness to commit in new challenges, often at a higher goal level. Goal accomplishment also boosts the person's self-perceived competence and leads to greater commitment to future goals. This facilitates the emergence of a high-performance cycle where success in one initiative breeds success in future undertakings.

This high-performance cycle (along with the goal type choices and the mechanisms affecting performance described earlier) is illustrated in Figure 2 on the following page.

Figure 2: Goal setting and the high-performance cycle
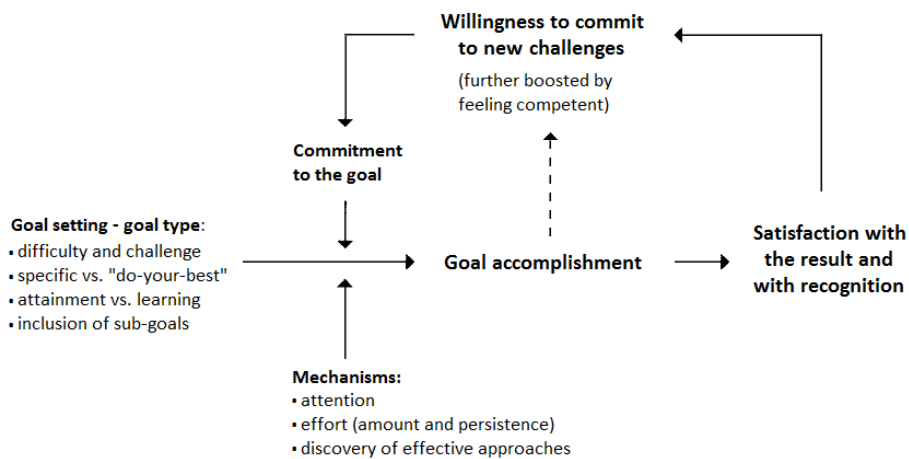
4.5 Motivation in a multi-goal environment

People's work typically consists of multiple goals. To remain motivated, a person must find their goals motivating not just on a stand-alone basis but also in aggregate. This requires that goals are consistent and do not preclude one another. For example, where one goal targets an increase in sales and another a budget reduction, it needs to be ascertained that both goals can be attained to the desired extent. While working towards a focused selection of mutually reinforcing goals can be highly motivating, trying to balance goals that are mutually exclusive can lead to demotivation even if on their own each goal is highly meaningful. That said, it needs accepting that most of the time organisational success depends on meeting seemingly conflicting goals at the same time – growing revenues while keeping fixed costs under control, meeting short-term earnings plans while investing for the future, etc. This is achievable as numerous successful companies have demonstrated. Many roles will therefore require balancing such seemingly conflicting priorities almost on a daily basis. Goals will thus often be challenging but should not be mutually exclusive. And, ensuring that while consistent, the goals are also sufficiently diverse, will give the person the opportunity to both achieve and learn in a variety of contexts and settings. This will make their work more interesting and their contribution to the organisation more broad-based. Finally, if the goals differ in their relative importance, this should be made clear at the time of goal setting, e.g. using a scorecard where each goal has a weighting corresponding to its relative importance. That way the person will know where their focus should lie and how their results will be evaluated overall.

5. Giving rewards and recognition

Recognising contributions and achievement and showing appreciation for great work are powerful motivators. Acknowledging strong performance and reinforcing desired behaviours demonstrates that people's efforts are noticed and appreciated. Done consistently and frequently, it encourages everyone to continue giving their best, living strong values and building a high-performance culture.[34]

Favourable customer feedback, effective collaboration between departments, service quality and customer satisfaction metrics on the rise, exemplary demonstration of business ethics, a milestone getting achieved or a project delivered, a person going beyond the call of duty to help a colleague or meet a deadline and exceptional results being realised by an individual or a team are all great opportunities to recognise people.[35]

Small and unexpected gestures, such as walking over and thanking someone, can be highly effective in rewarding and motivating others. Other ways to recognise a person could involve sending a personal note, publicly recognising their contribution, or holding a celebratory event to mark the achievement.[36] Such social rewards are highly valued and do not need to entail tangible or monetary elements to be effective.[37]

Monetary or other tangible rewards contingent on results tend to crowd out autonomous motivation if used as a primary way to motivate. When not linked to results (e.g. base salary) or when unanticipated and awarded after successful goal completion (e.g. unexpected bonus), however, monetary rewards do not undermine autonomous motivation and contribute to the person's total motivation. Even if contingent on results and goal attainment, monetary rewards may enhance autonomous motivation if they are not used as the primary way to motivate and when they are administered in an environment where the person's three basic psychological needs are satisfied.[38] Incentive programs based on contingent monetary rewards tend therefore to be more effective where there is support for autonomy and where controlling elements are avoided.

Recognition tends to be most effective when delivered immediately after the person's contribution or favourable outcome. That way the situation is fresh in the person's mind and they are in the best position to internalise and reflect on the reward. As a general rule, the more personal the way in which recognition is delivered, the greater the motivational effect it will have. It is important, however, to honour the person's preference as to how they like to receive recognition – some will prefer a one-to-one setting while others a group occasion. Leaders should therefore take the time to ask people how they would like to get recognised. Finally, recognition will be seen as genuine and valuable when it references a specific desired behaviour or contribution rather than subjective impressions.[39]

Rewards tend to be more effective when individualised to reflect what each member of the group/team finds most motivating. With people receiving different types of rewards, social comparisons become an important consideration, as any perceived inequity in the way rewards are allocated could distract and demotivate. Any rewards system, therefore, and also more broadly hiring and promotion decisions as well as staff arrangements, need to be considered from the fairness perspective in order to ensure an equitable environment.

6. Creating opportunities for growth and advancement

Helping people grow and develop both benefits their effectiveness in the future and is a powerful source of motivation already today. Engaging in developmental pursuits is not only fulfilling in its own right, but it also brings about thoughts of an exciting future. Feeling that someone supports one's growth and has one's back is highly satisfying and motivates towards high performance. Opportunities for growth and advancement can be created by introducing new and more difficult tasks not previously handled or by encouraging people to develop leadership, specialist, or other relevant skills through training or work assignments. Growth and development can also come from horizontal or vertical role enrichment: the scope of a person's role can be enhanced in terms of the breadth of activities it covers or in terms of the level of accountability and autonomy built into the role, the latter for example through greater inclusion of activities such as planning and decision making. Building and regularly revisiting a personal development plan with all direct reports, exploring suitable training, job refresh, and stretch assignment opportunities, identifying potential future roles and facilitating the transition when the person is ready all contribute directly to the level of satisfaction and motivation in their current role and to the confidence they have in the leadership and the capabilities of the organisation.

Conclusion

The ability to motivate others towards high performance and successful attainment is a competence most sought after in a leader and a quality that saliently differentiates outstanding leaders in the organisation.[40] It is a skill that is highly desired by employers and direct reports alike. Everyone can learn how to motivate and in doing so will significantly raise his or her effectiveness as a leader while also enabling greater contributions from others.

Emphasis on controlled motivation, except for giving recognition, typically has a detrimental effect on overall motivation. Creating a sense of pressure, resorting to close supervision, providing detailed instructions, or relying on contingent monetary rewards as the primary way to motivate should therefore be avoided. Autonomous motivation, in contrast, has highly beneficial effects. It creates an inner drive to produce great work, results in better and sustainable performance and leads to people deriving satisfaction from work well done. It is what enables people to give their best effort and contribute to the best of their ability. Autonomous motivation requires three elements: interesting, challenging and meaningful work, a work climate where people can satisfy their basic psychological needs, and a work environment where everyone has the opportunity to achieve and grow into greater responsibility. Where a leader is able to ensure all these elements are in place, he or she is putting the foundation for genuine and lasting motivation all round – an important prerequisite for organisational success.

Version control

No.	Date	Changes
1	Jul 2019	Original version
2	Nov 2020	- Updated the way certain terms are used (groups/teams, performance/results) for consistency
		- Updated section 4.5 ("Motivation in a multi-goal environment")
		- Made minor wording changes throughout the guide
		- Updated Figure 2 for clarity

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