

A possible chain of motivation

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***Abstract:** On a world-wide basis there is a growing concern about organization's capability to retain their top talents. In the specific case of a student's organization – Team Work - we confront with the same problems: how to inspire our members to act in the spirit of the values we share: professionalism, team work and voluntariate, and how to determine them to remain part of the system. This is where motivation appears like one of those terms that can mean very different things depending on exactly where you sit. The aim of the present paper is to draw a schematic picture of how it can work a chain of motivation in Team Work and other similar organizations.*

Key words: motivation, individuals, organizations, coaching, mentoring.

Motivation is critical factor in occupational performance. We are talking here of an individual's source of energy and what directs and sustains it. If organizations want to learn, adapt, change and innovate they need a strong element of dynamism in their workforce and in this purpose we present a possible itinerary of motivation in an organization.

1. The individual

Every organization wants to get the best out of people and this means treating them as individuals not as components. Every one is different and so, getting the best out of them means treating everyone differently. This presents a problem for most of the organizations and the most simple and obvious

causes for this situation are time and money. Volunteers associations are strictly related, in two opposite senses, to these causes: sharing *time* with *no money* involved as retribution, but most important are related, in every possible way, to individuals.

2. One size fits all

Taking the message above, we find ourselves in a very advantageous position: if the purpose of an NGO is generically to help others, and particularly for Team Work to help students integrated at their best in the professional life after college, we can say that motivating people to do this helping is one of the first tasks on our job description.

While it is true that it is essential when motivating to consider the very personal needs of the individual, it is also possible to define a set of practices that will work across the population, provided that you are prepared to establish just which elements an individual needs and the particular way of meeting those needs that fits best. It's a bit like running a clothes shop. The traditional, interchangeable component view says that you only need stock one size and style of each type of garment. On the other hand, the sensible response isn't to design a whole new type of garment for each person. Whether you make-to-measure or sell off-the-peg, you will have the standard set of products like shirts, trousers, skirts and dresses.

One approach to tailored motivation is the Maslow hierarchy developed by Abraham Maslow. This provides a five-tier view of the factors that motivate people. Maslow's theory was that once one tier was satisfied it ceases to be a motivator and we move up to

the next tier. The five stages are basic physiological needs, safety from fear, social needs, appreciation and pecking order, and realizing your potential. While Maslow's sequence seems much too structured for reality, these five elements all contribute to an individual's need for motivation, and at any one time an individual is likely to be more in need of certain elements – being in tune with this requirement can help a lot.

3. A relationship

The need to choose an appropriate approach to motivation of an individual implies having a relationship with that person. It is necessary to know the individual to best be able to motivate him. This doesn't mean you have to be drinking buddies or soul mates – just that knowing the individual is an essential to tailoring the motivation to fit.

As the relationship builds, you can see which type of motivation is best suited at the moment because needs aren't static, they will change over time.

4. Coaching

All the ways you can motivate an individual are about enhancing performance and developing job satisfaction, but coaching takes this specific approach of bringing an under-performer or helping someone who simply hasn't got the experience to do a job well. To be a great coach you don't have to do the job yourself, but you do have to have an understanding of what it is about.

The coach has to be aware of the requirements of the job and must be able to assess what is lacking in the individual. It may be a

matter of training or practical experience. It may be that there are particular aspects of the role of the individual that need bringing on. It may also be that the individual is attempting a role or task that is totally unsuited for. While this can sometimes be developmental as a one-off experience, the coach needs to be able to say that enough is enough and direct the individual away from this area. Here motivational skills rest in identifying other positive directions, so the individual is encouraged into a positive alternative use of his time, rather than being told that he is incapable of doing the original task.

5. Counselling

Coaching generally assumes there is some skill or experience missing from the individual's performance. Sometimes all that is missing is self-esteem. The sheer belief in "self" that can allow an individual to soar. Some individuals come with a natural self-confidence that carries them through, meaning they can take on a new role and act as if they were born for it. Others will be hesitant, either because they have a low opinion of themselves in general, or because they "know" that they can't do this particularly.

When counseling someone who believes themselves incapable of the task, it is important to understand why they think this. It is often the case when an individual has less academic qualification than their peers, or is very new to a job while surrounded by experts. The aim is not to make the person over-confident, and hence derided by their peers, but to give them the confidence to try (and potentially try several times in the face of failure).

6. Transforming

Like it or not, some tasks are boring and unattractive. They are naturally demotivating. It can also be the case that individuals bring an external problem into the workplace that can undermine any natural enthusiasm for the job. In such circumstances, the motivational role is one of identifying the problems and fixing them. This is a lesson from leadership – where a manager's role is often seen as making sure that staff do the right things – one of the leader's main tasks is getting the obstacles out of the way so that staff can get in with the real work.

Here motivation can take a wide range of forms. It might involve restructuring the task. A classic example would be moving from the soul-destroying repetition of undertaking a single action to involvement in the whole process of constructing a part or assembly. Such a change of direction gets better buy-in and results in better quality output. Similarly, other repetitious tasks can be varied by interlacing a range of activities.

Equally, motivation might involve special incentives. If there is no way to break up the tediousness of the task, find ways to add a side attraction. Special incentives need to be obvious and immediate: perhaps a prize for the day's best performance, or even a lottery with entries dependent on the products of the tasks.

7. Mentoring

Perhaps the hardest individual motivation is dealing with the high performer, someone who is already doing the job well. So why bother to motivate them at all? In

part because of retention. Just because someone does a job superbly well, it doesn't mean that they want to stay in it. They are susceptible to outside lures that makes positive motivation to stay a real benefit for the company. Also, however good they are, it doesn't mean that they can't be motivated to do more.

There's another factor to motivating the high performer, too, which paradoxically conflicts with the first argument. It may be that you need to motivate them out of their present job into something bigger and better. This is a difficult one for those who see motivation as only being about getting the most out of a resource. In our opinion a major reason has to be concern for the individuals – you should want them to go on to something better, just as you would your child, even if it hurts when they leave the home. However, there are less altruistic motives, too. Keep a high performer down and eventually they will turn on you, becoming more and more destructive and devious.

Achieving motivation in this type of situation involves a role that may sound rather like coaching, but is actually quite different – mentoring. Mentoring doesn't put you in a position of authority, or even necessarily of expertise. As a mentor you are a sounding board for the individual's ideas and thoughts. You give them a chance to think things through with an intelligent audience. You can suggest different ways of going for-

ward and ways of assessing those opportunities. You can even say what you would do in such circumstances. But in the end, your role is as an unthreatening, trusted person to discuss options with. This can be a highly satisfying role for you, and will be greatly valued by the individual. You may even end up in a mutual mentoring relationship, although you often find that your own mentors are different from those from whom you provide mentoring.

8. Avoiding demotivation

Motivating a person is not just about enhancing the positive – often it is about removing the negative. Whatever the positive needs of the individual, there are dangers of demotivating from sources that are common to everyone. In fact, a number of common factors that are often regarded as motivational actually aren't. Instead, they are elements which will demotivate if absent, like salary and perks, which doesn't make the case of a volunteers association.

Recognition, having true responsibilities, doing something interesting and discovering the realistic potential are the motivating factors we try to impose in our organization, by implementing the steps described along the paper. It is not easy but there's a very simple explanation behind it: we are truly motivated to change things around us.

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