

## **The Foundation of Teambuilding**

Anytime you're in a leadership position, you are faced with the question of how best to motivate those who work under you. There are countless philosophies and ideas out there, all claiming to be exactly what you need. The truth is, there is no one perfect answer. Moreover, what works at one time will not always work at another. There are team dynamics that you must always be in tune with. For example, suppose you offer a trip to Hawaii for the quarter's highest closer. If newer or less experienced reps feel like they can't stack up against the competition, then not only will they feel discouraged, but they may actually feel like there's not much use in trying. They will then become even less productive. Some reps will respond to cash rewards, while others are incited even more by praise and recognition. As Maslow said, "If the only tool in your toolbox is a hammer, then you will treat everyone like a nail." The truth is, everyone is *not* a nail. To be an effective motivator, you need to become an acutely attuned student of human nature and understand what makes people tick. Not until you do this on an individual level can you integrate your observations into a team-incentive approach that will work for the whole.

I strongly recommend having this discussion with your team members on an individual basis: "What do you need right now to help you feel like you can do your best? What are your goals in your work here, and how can I help you achieve them?" I can think of no better way of clearly and directly communicating your sincere and honest interest in your team and what they can bring to the table. This direct line of questioning also demonstrates to your employees that they are not just another grunt or number. This direct approach, combined with quiet observation, will give you the vital information you need to discover what motivates each particular employee.

One of the biggest mistakes managers make is withholding praise or acknowledgement until *after* an employee has "been good" or done something to "deserve" it. You may have heard the old grass adage: You tell the grass, "When you grow, and only after you grow, will I *then* give you water." This is just not how motivation works. This kind of reward system demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of human nature and basic

human needs. It breeds insecurity amongst employees, who may never function at their best over the long-term because they can never feel confident about what they're doing or where they stand.

Rewarding after the fact also creates resentment. It doesn't take an employee long to figure out that a boss considers her/his value conditional. How can anyone be expected to feel enthusiastic about her/his work and free to unleash her/his greatest productive energies with such a message confronting her/him every day? Yes, it is the typical tug-of-war in the workplace: Employers feel that their employees are privileged to even have the job; employees feel that employers don't appreciate how hard they work. Going back to the grass analogy, I would suggest that "nourishing" your team from the get-go, whether they have merited it or not, will spawn the greatest growth and productivity over the long term. Your employees will work thoroughly, creatively and enthusiastically because you have bred this kind of work ethic. Then, you'll no longer feel like you've got to pull teeth to get even the bare minimum accomplished.

Let's spend some time together exploring what it takes to get the best out of your team. There needs to be enough pressure that your workers are stimulated to action, but not so much that the environment becomes stressful and debilitating. One of the best ways to accomplish this proper level of pressure is to help your team members feel like they personally have stock in the outcome. Brainstorm ways in which a certain task or project can really become something your team can take ownership of, rather than something you're barking at them to do. Your team members have to feel compelled to achieve because of their personal stake in the situation, not because "the boss said so." How do you inspire *them* to have a vision for why the task has to be done? How do you instill in them that they are a vital part of the company's success? This type of communication and understanding, before the task is even begun, speaks volumes to your team. There is no better way to kick off a new campaign than for your employees to all have a secure knowledge of their standing within the company and why the company values and needs them.

When motivating others, there is a direct relationship between the type of persuasive technique used and how short or long-lasting the results will be. Basically, the most controlling and coercive measures yield the most temporary results, while the most deferring and respectful measures, those in which people feel free to act voluntarily, yield the most lasting results. Another interesting relationship is that it is often the use of control or force that is the easiest motivator to employ, perhaps giving reason to why this strategy is so commonly used. On the other end of the spectrum, control takes more time and patience to develop.

Over the years of my study of persuasion, leadership and influence, I have developed what I call the Hierarchy of Persuasion. In the past, I have only offered the abbreviated version of this hierarchy. In this chapter, however, I want to reveal the full version of the Hierarchy of Persuasion. View the diagram below to see what types of persuasion are best utilized in building a strong team foundation.

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