



Stop demotivating safety excellence

Most people arrive at work with a desire to do well, feel a sense of accomplishment at the end of the day and return home confident they contributed toward something worthwhile — and, of course, to not get injured in the process. Most people awake each morning motivated, go to work and then become demotivated. High-performing organizations that are full of individuals constantly displaying discretionary effort recognize there is often more power in first determining that which hinders motivation and stopping it, than in seeking out ways to prompt, incentivize or compel someone to behave in a desired manner.

Consider the unfortunate but common act of incentivizing the reporting of near misses, which often results in fiction writing contests. If the goal is to increase the reporting of these types of events, first determine and address why they wouldn't get reported in the first place.

Motivation is a high level of energy focused on productive action; thus, it is internal. One human cannot motivate another. They can, however, create an environment or setting in which others

feel motivated or demotivated. Motivation occurs when someone has a desire to willingly accomplish something. Motivation prompts us to act and is a driving force within an individual. Similarly, demotivation occurs when the internal desire to accomplish something is lost. Preferred behavior may still be observable from a demotivated individual, often a result of feeling they "have to" rather than "want to." Few teams succeed under this mentality.

Many organizations successful in all areas of operational performance maintain a motivational strategy that contains the following three tactics:

1. Removing demotivators: Identify the things that rob people of their inner motivation and desire to want to do a great job and contribute to team goals. According to Dean Spitzer, author of "SuperMotivation: A Blueprint for Energizing Your Organization from Top to Bottom," some sample demotivators are unclear expectations, constant change, withholding information, hypocrisy, dishonesty, unfairness, unproductive meetings, internal competition, lack of follow up, over control, ignoring input and

unnecessary rules.

2. Adding motivators: What then can you put into the environment to help increase motivation and willingness to participate with discretionary effort? Some examples are input into decisions, ownership, involvement, teamwork, scorekeeping and a sense of progress and improvement, winning, variety and recognition.

3. Rewarding: There is nothing wrong with recognizing someone for great performance, especially when it is connected to previously communicated goals and delivered in a timely manner. However, be careful of the generalization to praise people in public and criticize in private as this is not always a truth. Essentially, ask people to do the right thing for the right reason and reward or recognize their performance when they do. Don't promise an incentive as this might result in working for the incentive, rather than working because they care and want to contribute.

If your goal is to create a work force driven by the sense of "want to" rather than "have to," ensure you have a strategy for motivation that begins with the leaders

understanding who their people are (what individually motivates and demotivates). Work hard to not get in the way of the naturally occurring motivation that propels most people forward. Lou Holtz, one of the most successful American football coaches

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known for his ability to inspire players, once stated, "It's not my job to motivate players. They bring extraordinary motivation to our program. It's my job not to demotivate them."

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