



## Motivating Employees under Adverse Conditions

\* Dr Alpesh B Joshi

\* Sr Lecturer in English, Atmiya Institute of Technology Science, Rajkot, Gujarat

### ABSTRACT

*Success in business hinges on your ability to use assets more effectively than your competitors. Because employees typically represent a company's most valuable asset, they also represent the largest opportunity to improve company performance — and shareholder returns. By understanding the factors that motivate employees and the processes by which you can influence those factors, you will be better able to increase your employees' discretionary effort and, as a result, your company's performance.*

*Because every company is unique, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to employee motivation. It's up to you to determine the combination of practices that will have the greatest impact on your employees. First determine where you can improve, then use the appropriate theories and principles that address the specific areas you identify. By investing the time it takes to identify opportunities to improve employee motivation — and by taking the actions that will increase discretionary performance — you will be making a cost-effective investment in the success of your company.*

**Keywords : Motivation, Encouragement, Employer-Employee Relations, Promotional Opportunities, Skills, Competence, Experience, Apathetic and Unproductive staff, Morale, Apprehension, Conditions**

### MOTIVATING EMPLOYEES UNDER ADVERSE CONDITIONS

#### The Challenge

It is a great deal easier to motivate employees in a growing organization than a declining one. When organizations are expanding, adding personnel, promotional opportunities, pay rises, escalating the output/production and the excitement of being associated with a dynamic organization create feelings of optimism and sanguinity. Management is able to use the development allied with growth to entice and encourage employees. When an organization is shrinking, the best and most mobile workers are prone to leave voluntarily. Unfortunately, they are the ones the organization can least afford to lose as they are with the highest skills, competence and experience. The minor employees remain with the organization because their job options are inadequate. Over time, this can translate into an unmotivated and unproductive staff. Therefore, it's important for your company to make sure that employees are interested in and appreciated for their work.

Morale also suffers during decline. People become apprehensive that they may be the next to be made redundant in a bleak scenario. Productivity often suffers, as employees spend their time sharing rumours and providing one another with moral support rather than focusing on their skills at jobs. For those whose jobs are secure, pay increases are rarely possible. Pay cuts, unheard of during times of growth, may even be imposed. The challenge to management is how to motivate employees under such retrenchment conditions there by keeping their self-esteem intact. One of the primary goals of all managers is to motivate employees to achieve the highest-level performance of which they are capable — and for good reason. Higher employee motivation leads to greater creativity, productivity and discretionary effort, which in turn lead to improved company performance. (Becker, B.E. and Huselid, M.A., 1998) Evidence of this relationship can be found in the Forbes magazine list of the "100 Best Companies to Work for in America," which highlights organizations that have achieved high rates of employee satisfaction and motivation. Revenues, net income and job growth for these companies were substantially higher than they were for com-

panies with average levels of employee satisfaction. (Cattlet, B., & Hadden, R. (2001)

How can you, as an employer, achieve similar results? Research indicates that you should start with your human resources practices, which can have a direct impact on employee motivation. (Becker, B.E. and Huselid, M.A., 1998) It is essential that you understand the relationship of employee motivation to your company's performance, that you identify strategies to motivate your employees to increase their discretionary effort, and that you have a plan to effectively implement those strategies, which ultimately will contribute to your company's success. A few of them have been outlined below.

#### 1 Matching People to Job

Businesses have the power to directly impact employee motivation through their employee management practices. (Becker, B.E. and Huselid, M.A., 1998) There is an abundance of evidence to support motivational benefits that result from carefully matching people to jobs. For example, if job is running a small business or an autonomous unit within larger business, high achievers should be sought. However, if job is to be filled is a managerial post in a large bureaucratic organization, a candidate who has a high need for power and a low need for affiliation should be selected. Accordingly, high achievers should not be put into jobs that are inconsistent with their needs. High achievers will do best when the job provides moderately challenging goals & where there is independence and feedback.

#### 2 Treat Your Employees with Respect

This tip sounds like a no-brainer, but it can make a world of difference to employees. Don't swear, lose your temper or ignore your staff, especially in front of other employees. Treat employees with the courtesy and respect they deserve — say please and thank you, ask about their weekend, and take an interest in projects that they're working on. Most employees appreciate it when their supervisors remember their birthdays or acknowledge personal milestones such as having a child or finishing a marathon or any other joyous day of their life. Some companies even offer employees a paid day off on their

birthdays. Knowing that managers are aware of employees' lives outside of work makes them feel like a valued member of the team rather than just anonymous workers.

### 3 Understand Explicit Goals

The literature on goal setting theory suggests that managers should ensure that all employees have explicit goals and receive comments on how well they are doing in those goals. The comments that they receive must be critical, rational and logical, disregarding and filtering any kind of personal bias. For those with high achievement needs, typically a minority in any organization, the existence of external goals is less important because high achievers are already internally motivated. The next factor to be determined is whether the goals should be assigned by a manager or collectively set in conjunction with the employees. The answer to that depends on perceptions of goal acceptance and the organization's culture. If resistance to goals is expected, the use of participation in goal setting should increase acceptance. If participation is inconsistent with the culture, however, goals should be assigned. If participation and the culture are incongruous, employees are likely to perceive the participation process as manipulative and be negatively affected by it.

### 4 Investment of Consistent Efforts for Performance

Regardless of whether goals are achievable or well within management's perceptions of the employee's ability, if employees see them as unachievable they will reduce their effort. Managers must be sure, therefore, that employees feel confident that their efforts can lead to performance goals. Now, research has established that link, showing that higher employee motivation leads to greater employee creativity, productivity and discretionary effort, which in turn lead to improved company performance. (Becker, B.E. and Huselid, M.A., 1998) Additionally, working for a successful company itself becomes a component of employee motivation, helping create and sustain a cycle of performance improvement. For managers, this means that employees must have the capability of doing the job and must regard the appraisal process as valid. In this ever-evolving world of new technologies and ideas, employees need to stay up-to-date with developments in their field. Staff members can interpret an employer's unwillingness to invest in training as a disregard for their professional development. They'll also be less productive than your competitors' better-trained employees. Enroll workers in classes/training modules and send them to conferences/workshop to keep them (and your company) on top of the game. This entire exercise endeavors to fill in the employees/workers with new proficiency to work on.

### 5 Contingent & Personalized Rewards

Since employees have different needs, what acts as reinforcement for one may not for be another. Managers could use their knowledge of each employee to personalize rewards over which they have control. Some of more obvious rewards that managers allocate include pay, promotions, autonomy, job scope and depth, and the opportunity to participate in goal setting and decision making. Managers need to make rewards contingent on performance. Consider offering flexible schedules and flexible benefit plans (Kiniki, A, & Kreitner, R. 2003 and Wagner, J. & Hollenbeck, J. 1998) To reward factors other than performance will only reinforce those other factors. Key rewards such as pay increases & promotions or advancements should be allocated for attainment of employee's specific goals. Consistent with maximizing impact of rewards, managers should look for ways to increase their visibility. Higher employee motivation leads to greater employee creativity, productivity and discretionary effort, which in turn lead to improved company performance. (Becker, B.E. and Huselid, M.A. 1998) Eliminating secrecy surrounding pay by openly communicating everyone's remuneration, publicizing performance bonuses & allocating annual salary increases in a lump sum rather than spreading them out over an entire year are examples of actions that will make visible & potentially more motivating.

### 6 Transparency in Rewards – Equitable and Equal

The way rewards are distributed should be transparent so that employees perceive that rewards or outcomes are equitable and equal to the inputs given. On a simplistic level, experience, abilities, effort and other obvious inputs should explain differences in pay, responsibility and other obvious outcomes. The problem, however, is complicated by the existence of dozens of inputs and outcomes and by the fact that employee groups place different degrees of importance on them. For instance, a study comparing clerical and production workers identified nearly twenty inputs and outcomes. The clerical workers considered factors such as quality of work performed and job knowledge near the top of their list, but these were at the bottom of the production workers' list. Similarly, production workers thought that the most important inputs were intelligence and personal involvement with task accomplishment, two factors that were quite low in the importance ratings of the clerks. There were also important, though less dramatic, differences on the outcome side. For example, production workers rated advancement very highly, whereas clerical workers rated advancement in the lower third of their list. Such findings suggest that one person's equity is another's inequity, so an ideal should probably weigh different inputs and outcomes according to employee group. However, according to Herzberg, motivation can occur only when all dissatisfying experiences are eliminated, since any type of motivator can be canceled by an unresolved dissatisfying experience. (Kiniki, A, & Kreitner, R. (2003) and Steers, R.; Porter, M.; Lyman, W. & Bigley, G. 1996)

### 7 Establish an Employee-Recognition Program

Employees want supervisors to be aware and appreciative of their work. Create an employee-of-the-month program or a wall of fame to recognize workers' notable contributions. Such programs demonstrate an employer's appreciation and also offer incentives for other staff members to increase their productivity. If you're particularly impressed with an employee's work, show it. Handwrite a note or send flowers or a gift certificate to demonstrate your gratitude. Your personal attention will make the recognized employee feel valued and unique. **Treat them to lunch.** Order pizza or take employees out to lunch occasionally to keep their spirits high. Getting the opportunity to socialize without worrying about the bill will put employees in a good mood and help them enjoy their work environment and colleagues. Hold meetings with individual workers or groups of employees several times throughout the year to address any questions or concerns that they may have. Even if you don't have a meeting scheduled soon, make sure that employees know that you are always there to address any problems that may crop up. Ask for their feedback and reactions to new company policies, and be sure to update them on what steps you've taken to solve any problems.

### 8 Avoid Layoffs and Cutbacks.

Nothing hurts employee morale like knowing that their jobs might be on the line. Turn to [layoffs](#) only as a last resort if your company or department is struggling. And if you must cut jobs, be completely honest about the reasons why particular employees were chosen. Also, try to give employees as much notice as possible that layoffs are looming; that way, they'll have time to get their personal budgets in order or start scheduling interviews.

### 9 Conduct Employee-Satisfaction Surveys.

Satisfaction at workplace sets the work and performance of organization in motion. Find out employee perceptions of equity through informal conversations, interviews or attitude surveys and respond quickly and accordingly to correct organizational issues. (Cornell University — Gevity Institute Study 2004) Whereas shrinking morale en routes the performance of the organization in negative territory. In this case it is obligatory to find out what makes them happy or unhappy through conduction of an [employee-satisfaction survey](#). Be sure to address any issues you uncover promptly and thoroughly to avoid losing workers for good. This will give birth to solving any grievances in the most transparent way.

In short, an unhappy employee is an unproductive employee. Your company needs to pursue policies like the ones mentioned above to help your business become a more enjoyable place to work in any circumstances of an organization. Not only will employees start to look forward to their workdays, but

your organization will benefit from newfound efficiency. And of course, when word of your company's perks gets around, it will make it much easier to [recruit](#) the most talented workers in the job pool.

## REFERENCES

- 1 Becker, B.E. and Huselid, M.A. (1998). "High-performance work systems and firm performance: a synthesis of research and managerial implications." *Research in Personnel and Human Resource Management*, 16. G.R. Ferris (ed), Greenwich, CT: JAI Press. | 2, Catlette, B., & Hadden, R. (2001) *Contented Cows Give Better Milk*. Sattilo Press: Germantown, TN. | 3 Kiniki, A., & Kreitner, R. (2003) *Organizational Behavior: Key Concepts, kills & Best Practices*. McGraw- Hill/Irwin: New York. | 4 Wagner, J. & Hollenbeck, J. (1998) *Organizational Behavior: Securing Competitive Advantage*. Prentice Hall: Upper Saddle River, NJ. | 5 Steers, R.; Porter, M.; Lyman, W. & Bigley, G. (1996). "Models of work motivation." *Motivation and Leadership at Work*. Richard M. Steers, Lyman W. Porter, and Gregory A. Bigley (eds.), McGraw-Hill: New York. | 6 Cornell University — Gevity Institute Study (2004), *Human Resource Management Practices and Firm Performance in Small Businesses*.