

4

Managing People - Motivation

Are They Afraid of You?

[Home](#)
[Return to
Motivation](#)

BusinessTown.com

Are They Afraid of You?

I've often slipped a few questions into employee surveys to find out if they fear their managers. And guess what? They usually do. Distrust and fear are in fact the norm in traditional workplaces. The same workplaces where managers keep trying motivation programs, and keep complaining that the programs are no darn good.

Oh, I know what you are thinking. You are thinking that a good spanking used to be considered healthy for a child. Or that the "real world" is tough and you have to be, too. Maybe you've read an interview with one of those tough-ass execs like "Chainsaw" Al Dunlap, whose plan for Coleman when Sunbeam acquired it (according to a Wall Street Journal article of August 19, 1998) was to "start whacking people." Well, just remember that you can't find examples of highly motivated people in negative, threat-driven environments. Not unless you are willing to go all the way to survival issues, like a sweatshop or a mugging. And even then, compliance is the best result you can hope for, not personal development and excellent performances. Threats are no substitute for true positive motivation.

By the way, Al Dunlap was fired by his own board shortly after he made that comment about whacking people. His threats cost a lot of people their jobs, including many of the best who quit because they couldn't stand working for him. But threats failed to produce the performances Sunbeam and Coleman needed to succeed in the marketplace. So I guess Chainsaw Al taught us a valuable lesson about management after all.

Unlike self-proclaimed tough guys like Dunlap, you probably make only casual, even accidental, use of threats. You probably follow your more sensible instincts and focus on the positive side of the motivation curve much of the time. But what happens when you send mixed signals, some positive, some negative? You get an average at best—in general, negatives outweigh positives about four to one in terms of their emotional impact. So the occasional threat can undo a lot of positive efforts. And when you cancel out, you end up in the middle, which is the lowest part of the motivation curve. Oops.

Moving Up the Motivation Curve

If you focus on the opportunity side of the motivation curve in Figure 1-1, you can think of your challenge as moving your people up the curve, toward higher levels of opportunity.

You know that people who are pursuing compelling personal opportunities are highly motivated. So "all" you must do to break through to higher levels of motivation is to increase the opportunities for your people. (That is in fact easier said than done until you learn new approaches to management, which is why there is more than one chapter in this book. But it isn't nearly as hard as motivating them any other way since it actually works and other methods don't.)

If you stop thinking about it as a motivation problem, and start thinking of it as an opportunity problem, you will theoretically be able to bring employee motivation and performance levels to the extremes you see in special circumstances, but so rarely see in your own work force. As you develop creative ways to put this theory into practice, you will be surprised at the amount of natural, internal motivation you release in your employees. To help you implement this theory, I've sprinkled motivation idea boxes like the following one throughout the book. And you will also find that later chapters explore different aspects of implementation in detail.

Site Index

[Home Page](#)
[Accounting](#)
[Advertising](#)
[Associations](#)
[Books](#)
[Business Directories](#)
[Business Opportunities](#)
[Business Planning](#)
[Careers](#)
[Consulting](#) New!
[Entrepreneur](#) New!
[Finance](#)
[Letters & Forms](#)
[Getting Started](#)
[Hiring & Firing](#)
[Home Business](#)
[Internet](#)
[Legal](#)
[Managing a Business](#)
[Managing People](#)
[Marketing](#)
[Message boards](#) New!
[Office](#)
[Presentations](#)
[Sales](#)
[Selling a Business](#)
[Site Map](#)
[Taxes](#)
[Time Management](#)
[Travel & Maps](#)
[Valuing a Business](#)
[Web Guide](#)

BusinessTown.com
Business Tools

Business Tools

**Small Business
Newsletter
Subscribe!**



The concept that we can motivate people to their highest levels of potential by presenting them with opportunities to succeed instead of telling them what to do is a theory I arrived at after researching and working on motivation for many years, and I have subsequently been able to find compelling examples of its validity, and to collect and develop lots of practical ways to put it to use. When I realized that none of the so-called employee motivation programs could motivate people as well as an opportunity to succeed at something they cared about, I stopped looking for external "motivators" and began to seek ways of "turning on" people's natural internal motivation to succeed. (It's interesting that the word motivator isn't even in many dictionaries.)

In truth, there is no such thing as a motivator. You can't just apply the right treatment and "get" employee motivation, as if you were doing some chemistry experiment. People who are highly motivated are self-motivated. Period. They have a strong will to achieve, to succeed, to learn, to perform. External factors are insignificant in comparison with internal motivation to succeed. Impose external threats or incentives in too heavy-handed a manner, and these self-motivated people will lose their strong commitment and become as careless as the rest.

*** Source Streetwise Motivating & Rewarding Employees**

<u>Motivation</u>	<u>Communication</u>	<u>Compensation</u>	<u>Firing Employees</u>
	<u>Performance Reviews</u>	<u>Problem Employees</u>	

Copyright ©1999 BusinessTown.com, LLC. [Disclaimer](#)
[Contact us](#) for technical support or provide us feedback.
Submit your url to our free Web Guide: [Submit link](#)