

# The Gift Of Motivation

by Del Suggs

President Dwight D. Eisenhower said "Motivation is the art of getting people to do what you want them to do because they want to do it." Truer words were never spoken.

Understand that all motivation is internal, or intrinsic. You can't motivate people through external or extrinsic means-- threatening people is not a motivator in most cases. What you must do is to find a way to help people motivate themselves.

To get a solid understanding of motivation requires a quick refresher of your high school or college psychology class. Recall "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs." Abraham Maslow proposed that everyone has the same basic needs, and they must be satisfied in a hierarchical order-- that is, lower needs must be met before higher needs.

The most basic (lowest) needs are physiological needs: air, food, water, sleep, all the basic requirements of life. These needs must be met before anything else.

The second level is safety, such as physical security, job security, health, and more. You don't satisfy these needs until the basic needs are met. Think about it like this: People will risk their life to obtain food,

but once they have it they will seek safety.

The third level is love & belonging. The need for love and affiliation is tertiary to basic needs (like food and water) and secondary needs (like safety). But once the lower needs are met, the third level of needs must be satisfied.

Once the first three levels of need have been met, then people seek to satisfy the fourth level: esteem. This is that drive we have to be respected by others, and for self-respect.

The final level of need is called "self-actualization." This is essentially the need to succeed and be productive-- to learn, to solve problems, to be creative. But we don't develop those needs until the other (lower) needs are met.

I don't mean for this to be a psychology lesson, but you should understand the most basic motivations in life. All motivation that you seek to instill in others will fit in one of these categories. Your motivational techniques will only be effective if the person you're motivating is at the right level.

As you seek to motivate others, here are some important first steps. To begin with, you must set a good example. You've heard that

before, I'm sure, and it's important. In order to motivate others, they must see the motivation that you have within you to be productive.

Develop good active listening skills. Learn to pay attention and focus on others when they are speaking to you. Have you ever been trying to talk with someone, and they continue to text others at the same time? You know they aren't really listening.

You should develop your skills so that you listen actively when others speak to you. Look them in the eye. Nod at the appropriate times, and reply when they ask questions. Repeat what they are saying back to them, "so what you're saying is..." and restate their message. That way you verify your understanding, and they can see that you have truly been listening.

Set goals for your organization, and reward your staff when they achieve them. And, perhaps most importantly, create an atmosphere where good work is encouraged, recognized, and appreciated.

Here are a few ideas to motivate those you are leading. While all of these ideas may not be appropriate for your situation, apply the ideas that will work.

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Don't be afraid to try these. You might be surprised at how effect they can be.

**Recognition.** Everyone wants to feel appreciated, and recognition is one of the most basic ways to generate that feeling. Whether it's a plaque, an award certificate, or applause at a meeting, people need to feel appreciated.

**Individual Help.** If you are seeking to inspire others, don't underestimate your own influence. Working with someone one-on-one can be a powerful motivator. People follow you because they admire you and want to learn from you. This individual coaching is just that.

**Job Titles.** We've all heard stories of people seeking a raise, and ending up with a new title. It often does work. People have that need for respect and esteem. A title can sometimes meet that need, and motivate people to be more productive.

**Good Work Environment.** When workers are surveyed, they place a good work environment far above where you might expect. So an excellent means of inspiring motivation is to provide a good, positive place to be. You'll find that others will be inspired to do their best.

**Leadership Roles.** Like a fancy title, people can be motivated by leadership roles. Giving people a role to fill, a group to lead, and a task to complete can be an excellent means motivating them.

**Executive Recognition.** Having your boss-- or your boss's boss-- praise someone personally can be a powerful motivator. Develop a relationship with those whom you follow, and see if they can't take a moment to help you motivate your followers. It can be a powerful motivator to receive a phone call or email from someone important telling you that you've done a good job.

**Social Events.** Remember that third level of Maslow's Hierarchy: love and belonging. People can be motivated by the need to feel like they are part of a larger community. Events such as dinners, parties, birthday celebrations, and more can be powerful motivators. People want to belong.

**Additional Responsibilities.** Some people really want to do more. Give these people greater responsibility. Put them in charge of programs and events, and give them bigger challenges. It motivates them that you have higher expectations of them, and they

will rise to meet those expectations.

Finally, **show your appreciation.** When people do a good job, let them know. Write personal "thank you" notes, with a real pen and paper-- don't just type "thx U" and hit "send" on your phone.

Small creative thank you gifts can also be motivational. You don't have to spend a fortune to thank someone. We all know "it's the thought that counts," but giving a small gift really drives the point home. Pick up some five-dollar gift cards from Subway, Starbucks, or a local cafe and include them with your note. You've just thanked them by buying them lunch. Wouldn't you appreciate that?