

Q: How do you motivate the unmotivated?

Biff

A: The first thing to realize is that when it comes to motivation, most employees are a different breed than we entrepreneurs, or maybe more accurately, we are a different breed than most everyone else.

What motivates you? If you are like most self-employed people, it is probably the idea of creating something from scratch, being your own boss, having freedom, and the opportunity to make as much money as your wits allow. Not so your employee. What motivates him or her? Certainly there is not the internal, psychological self-motivation and willingness to take a risk that comes with being an entrepreneur. Instead, employees are usually motivated by more external stimuli – wanting to get a raise, job security, good benefits, that sort of thing.

But although they may not have the same psychological factors driving them that drive you, in many important ways, they are not so different – they also want what you want in several respects: The satisfaction of knowing they did a good job and that it was appreciated. The key then to motivating the unmotivated is to figure out what they want from work and dangle that in front of them.

Money Motivators: It is no surprise that money motivates almost everyone, employer and employee alike. Indeed, according to Michael LeBoeuf, author of *The Greatest Management Principle in the World*, the #1 work-related reward is money. Your challenge is to use the money motivator in ways that get the desired result. For instance, the time-honored tradition of giving bonuses for a job well done is in fact time-honored for a reason: It works. Similarly, the chance to get a raise if certain goals are met works well too. A promotion combined with a raise is one of the best motivator of all.

Taken one step further, top businesses find that offering employees the chance to get an ownership share in the business is a very strong motivator; having a stake in the business turns an employee into an owner and an entrepreneur. Does this mean you will have to give up some ownership shares? Yes. Does it also mean that it may transform your workplace in amazing ways you can't even imagine? Yes again.

Other Motivators: People work for a variety of reasons; money is just one of them. Therefore, motivating without money is possible if you tap into these other reasons.

Studies consistently show that, almost more than anything else, workers greatly appreciate being recognized for a job well done, and knowing they can get that recognition motivates them to work harder and better. Giving them credit could be as simple as a letter home to the family saying how valuable the employee is or publishing compliments from customers in your newsletter.

Employees are also motivated by getting to work how and when they want. Consider flex time, telecommuting, or job-sharing as options to offer employees who reach certain desired performance benchmarks. Not only will they love you for that, but it will make your workplace a more family-friendly spot, which also can help with recruitment. Great policies cost you very little, but can create much.

Of course, everyone likes freebies. Gift certificates, dinners out, tickets to the game, or a free massage might be the right motivator. Maybe every employee could get a paid day off on their birthday.

Creating a great place to work, a place where people feel like they belong and are valued can be even more motivating than dangling some sort of carrot in front of them. And so, along those lines, one last way to motivate people is simply to listen. One small business I know of offers gift certificates to employees whose suggestions are implemented. Another enters all employees who participated in the employee suggestion program into a yearly drawing for prizes and money.

Be creative. Take suggestions. Motivating and rewarding staff is easier when they like where they work. Even a few small changes can reap remarkable results.

Today's Tip: According to LeBoeuf, the other top motivators for employees are

- Recognition
- Time off
- Getting to do work they love
- Freedom
- Personal Growth