

# MOTIVATING EMPLOYEES<sup>1</sup>

by Michel Giasson

**Abstract.** Motivation of employees starts with a well motivated manager. The manager will have to generate his own motivation by developing a good attitude towards himself and his goals. This will have to take into account the equilibrium required among the demands made by his work, his health, his family, and his personal finances. His rewards will come from his successes and his ability to spring into action. The manager will motivate his employees by showing a proper attitude towards them and their goals. He will look for their equilibrium with active listening and will develop a program of active communication.

**Resume.** *La motivation des employés commence par un manager bien motivé. Celui-ci devra générer sa propre motivation en développant une bonne attitude à l'égard de lui-même et de ses objectifs. Il devra tenir compte de l'équilibre requis entre les demandes de son travail, de sa santé, de sa famille et de ses finances personnelles. Sa satisfaction dépendra de ses succès et de sa façon de passer à l'action rapidement. Le manager motivera ses employés en démontrant une attitude positive à l'égard d'eux-mêmes et de leurs objectifs. Il s'intéressera à leur équilibre par l'écoute active et développera un programme de communication active.*

Given the proper situation, we are all experts in motivation! For instance, we know what our political leaders should do to motivate the citizens, we know what our business leaders should do to motivate their employees, and best of all, we know what our wife should do to motivate us.

But our own employees look at us and quickly become experts on what we should do to motivate them. The problem is, how should we go about it? Very often we are divided between using theories which always seem to apply better to other businesses and relying on our own practical experience because what has worked in the past should work again today. But where should we start? Let us start by applying motivation to the most influential of all employees — the manager.

## Motivating the manager

It is fair to say that the manager probably has one of the toughest and loneliest jobs in all the organization. Nobody looks after him but he is expected to look after everything. Nobody motivates him but he is expected to motivate

everybody. This leaves him with this delicate task of how to motivate himself before trying to motivate others. Let us look at three practical aspects, his attitude, his equilibrium, and his action.

**Attitude.** As simple as it might look, the manager must accept himself. He must be glad for his strengths, and be willing to assume the effects of his weaknesses. He must also have a very clear goal and a burning desire to reach it. For instance, he might take time to write down what he expects to achieve for himself and for his organization and then measure what he is willing to do to reach such a goal. With such an attitude towards himself and towards his goals, the manager will be sustained in his own motivation.

**Equilibrium.** But motivation depends also on the various factors surrounding the office. A well oriented manager will do a poor job of motivating himself on a Monday morning if he appears at work too tired from weekend activities or too preoccupied with personal problems. To achieve a successful state, the manager must reach a point of equilibrium where he balances the demands made on him by the following factors: 1) his health, 2) his family, 3) his job, and 4) his personal finances (Fig. 1).

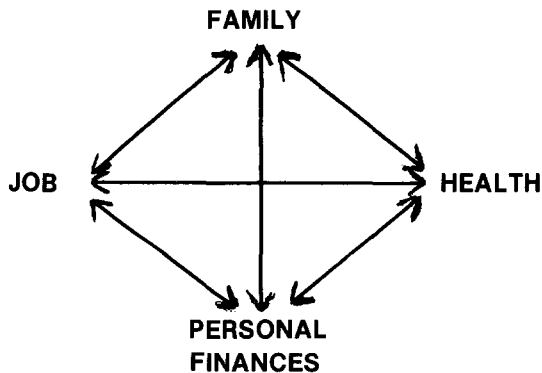


Fig. 1

<sup>1</sup> Presented at the ISA conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in August of 1977.

If one of these factors pulls too much on him, a problem situation will develop rapidly. For instance, if one spends 14 hours a day at work without taking time for physical fitness or family life, a crisis will follow sooner or later. On the other hand, if one spends more money than one cares to earn, financial preoccupation will appear to worry him on the job, and his motivation will soon go down.

The well motivated manager strives to keep a state of equilibrium.

*Action.* However a period of hard times might happen, this could lead the manager into a state of inactivity where he feels guilty about missed opportunities and worried about expected problems. In such a situation, two reactions could develop: 1) a fight to get out of the problems, or 2) a flight into dreams, vacations, and even more inactivity.

Starting to fight is easier said than done. But the only way to achieve a success is to step into action and to do it NOW. As shown in Figure 2, acting on the first task that comes to mind, even if it is a small task, will generate a success, which will in turn create a satisfaction generating confidence and leading into more action for another task. Failure to step into action NOW will only force the wheel the other way around, creating more problems, less satisfaction, and loss of confidence in one's ability.

Therefore, to motivate himself first, the manager must have a proper attitude, reach a state of equilibrium, and step into action NOW.

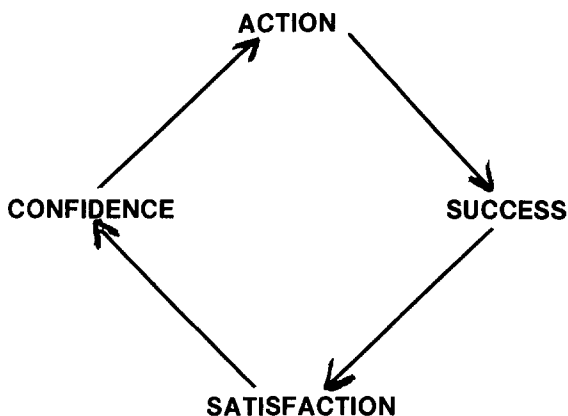


Fig. 2

### Motivating employees

The same three points can be used to create motivation for the employees. Let us see how to go about them.

*Attitude.* First, the manager must have a positive attitude towards the employee himself, considering him as a really important person. He must also take into consideration the employee's own objectives and try to see how they can be achieved while achieving the company's objectives. We will see later on how active listening and active communication can be used daily to do this.

*Equilibrium.* More often than not, the manager will be successful in motivating his employees but at times, even the best attitude and the best intended action will not produce the expected results. Then, more attention will be required to find out whether the employee might have reached a loss of equilibrium among the demands from his own four factors: 1) his health, 2) his family, 3) his job, and 4) his personal finances.

Active listening will permit the manager to find out. Even if it takes time, it will be well worth the effort. When the employee realizes that his demotivation is created more by his own problems rather than by his job or his boss, he will be on his way to a solution and a better motivation on his job.

*Action, active listening.* Active listening starts with a sincere effort from the manager to find out what the employee has in mind, a patient effort to let him express his own problems and a heroic effort to keep his mouth shut. Active listening is achieved without probing but with feed-back given to the employee in a NONEVALUATIVE manner. As an example, if the employee mentions that he considers a deadline too close for a job, an active listening approach might go like this: "You think that you will not have enough time to do the job?", where as on an evaluative answer could be "I have calculated that deadline and you can do it!", or even better "Who do you think you are, to evaluate how long it takes to do it?"

Active listening will let the employee realize which problems are caused by himself (problems he can solve), and which problems are caused by

the job (problems the manager can solve).

*Active communication.* Active communication means a planned and purposeful effort to give the employee information on the enterprise and on his performance within it. The more informed the employee will be on the goals and results of the enterprise, the better the chances of keeping his interest. The more often he will be consulted in decisions that affect him, the better the climate will be.

Moreover, each employee wants to know where he "stands with the boss." Unfortunately, in many cases, he finds out only once a year and if he happens to be under a labor contract, he might not even find out. "If I have not told you anything, it is because I am happy" is not enough. Congratulations and appreciation for a job well done will do much more to develop a proper climate of motivation.

Therefore, active communication requires the manager to reserve some time in his busy schedule to inform the employee, consult him, and give him proper and frequent feed-back on his performance.

An effective program of motivation for employees starts with a well motivated manager which shows him a proper attitude, looks for his equilibrium, and uses active listening and active communication.

*Professor, Management and Insurance  
Faculté des Sciences de l'administration  
Université Laval  
Quebec, Canada*

## ABSTRACTS

Lewis, Clarence E. 1977. **Trees from shrubs.** American Nurseryman 146(9): 7-8, 50, 52, 54.

Shrubs can often be made into usable small trees. It is a matter of training (by judicious pruning) the plant at an early age, so the upright branching structure becomes regulated to one, two or three main stems. Then a careful thinning operation of the side branches will create more lateral branching. The nurseryman should create an effect whereby these side branches reach outward. The whole practice is to emphasize the larger stems, both vertical and horizontal. What should one look for in a shrub that is to become, or replace, a small tree? There is often a natural, lateral flow of side branches. This growth tendency may in some instances be more noticeable in older shrubs. When this is apparent, then it is not necessary to start with young shrubs. Only little organizing thinning is necessary. To obtain a single stem from a shrub, it may be necessary to stake the one trunk until it becomes sufficiently able to hold the top, otherwise you may end up with a weird result. Various shrubs require different lengths of time for staking, but, in any instance, be sure you leave the stake long enough to do the job.

Pierce, R.G. 1977. **Inoculating the Dutch elms.** Agricultural Research 26(3): 14.

A simplified injection system utilizing water-soluble fungicides has shown promising results in preliminary research aimed at controlling Dutch elm disease. Tiny holes (3/32-inch diameter) are drilled into elms as the first step in this experimental method. The depth of the hole depends on the diameter of the tree trunk. A veterinarian's syringe is used to inject the chemical into the hole. Up to 70 pounds pressure may be required for a sufficient dose. The total time for treating a tree is about 10 minutes, as opposed to an average of over 1 hour per tree with chemicals and procedures in current use.