DEMYSTIFYING EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION

Fred Herrera

***Fred Herrera**, DPA, SPHR, is an HR director for Hall Kinion International. He has over 20 years experience in all aspects of human resources and previously worked for Kaiser Permanente and Levi Strauss & Co. He has also been an adjunct professor for the University of Louisville, in Kentucky, and the University of La Verne, in California. He may be reached via e-mail at fherrera@hallkinion.com.*

Finding sources of employee motivation has been the life's work of many researchers, psychologists, management gurus, and an assortment of other very intelligent people. The efficiency engineer Frederick Taylor sought to find the best way that we could organize work assignments and tasks in order to improve productivity. During the late 1950s and the early 1960s, a group of behavioral scientists proposed that employees would strive to reach their full potential under the proper circumstances. Abraham Maslow professed that the specific needs of people that must be met in order for them to be motivated, thus improving productivity. Herzberg's two-factor theory told us about satisfiers and dissatisfiers. He stated that one group of factors, *satisfiers,* accounts for high motivation among employees at work, whereas dissatisfiers were responsible for demotivating employees. Examples of these dissatisfiers were substandard conditions in supervision, interpersonal relations, working conditions, and salary. In 1966 Edward Lawler III and Lyman W. Porter wrote the book *The Effect of Performance on Job Satisfaction*. These two management theorists developed a motivation model based on the concept that equity is perceived fairness of what the person does (inputs) in relation to what the person receives (outcomes). In other words if the reward is worth the effort, then the employee is motivated.

These are just a few of the people who have been trying to find the answer to the question, how can we retain employees and keep them motivated so that we can enjoy higher productivity? Each of the experts mentioned above had very specific ideas about employee motivation, but each used a one-dimensional approach. Their theories did not address the workplace environment and company culture. Yet, employees do not work in a one-dimensional world. They work in a world where relationships, feelings,

DOI: 10.1002/ert.10014

timetables, able managers, incompetent managers, policies, egos, personal agendas, and prejudices contribute to the makeup of their daily lives. This article focuses on the environmental factors that permeate today's work arena and identifies those components that motivate or demotivate employees.

A FLYING-FISH STORY

In January 2001, when I visited some of our facilities in the Seattle area, it had been two months since I first heard of flying fish and the motivational speeches associated with a fish market in downtown Seattle. A close friend of mine described the "fish place" and told me, "You can take this enthusiasm back to your work, and many of your problems will be solved because you will have learned the secret to motivating employees." I decided to see for myself what all the fuss was about.

I could hardly wait to see this model of employee motivation. After spending over 20 years in various management positions, I could not understand how I could have missed some "obvious" solutions to motivating employees.

I arrived at the corner of First Street and Pike Place at about 6:45 A.M. and soon found the object of my curiosity. As you face the fish place, immediately to the left is a meat market where two butchers labor in quiet obscurity. They don't play games, have flying steaks, or attract much attention. On the right side of the fish store is another establishment that sells flowers and groceries. It appeared to be a small grocery store without any distinguishable characteristics and no particular following.

After spending over 20 years in various management positions, I could not understand how I could have missed some "obvious" solutions to motivating employees.

The fish market can be described as one small alley with small open-style shops on both sides, much like you'd find in any other open market. The fish place had a set of counters, devoid of glass or barriers, forming a three-sided display. Behind the counter, you could see a refrigerated display, which had extensions that were open to the air.

Not many people seemed to be in the area before 6:45 A.M. At 6:50 A.M., two men and one woman emerged from a large, white van. They hauled out a large studio-type video camera and a boom microphone. (They were part of a television crew filming background information for a travel show.)

All three headed for the fish place and began preparing the equipment to record the anticipated events.

The Show

At nearly 7:00 A.M., the employees began to show up at the fish market. These individuals are the source of motivational tapes and corporate programs designed to show people how to enjoy their work and thus become more productive. Other people began gathering as more and more shopkeepers began opening their doors.

The stars of the show consisted of six young people, five men and one woman. They were dressed in orange wading boots and orange jackets; some had suspenders, most wore gloves, and all wore smiles. As they began preparing their counters, they yelled back and forth to each other using syllables or words that initially appeared to mean something only to them. While the film crew watched and filmed, the employees at the fish market seemed oblivious to anything going on around them. Two had large aluminum snow shovels and were taking shaved ice from a bin and laying it as the foundation for their counters. Each counter was built sloping downward at the front to give the customer a perfect view of all the goods in that section.

Who would not love to have the audience "ooohhh" and "aaahhh" every time we do something wonderful at work?

Once the preliminary preparations appeared to be completed, the employees gathered in a huddle toward the back of the store and exchanged information. I could not tell what they said to each other, but the end of the meeting was marked by a loud "yeeeeeeehhhh" yell that began low and quiet and then increased in pitch and volume.

One of the employees was a slightly rotund young man in his mid-30s, about six-feet tall with a beard and a gruff disposition. It was obvious from his frequent smiles and laughs that his gruffness was either an act or did not have much depth to it. One of the young men behind the counter yelled something unintelligible to him, and he responded "fish for Charlie" (not his real name) and proceeded to throw what appeared to be a 20-pound salmon to Charlie. Charlie caught the fish with the ease with which one would catch a loaf of bread. The camera crew recorded the action, and I was able to see my first "flying" fish.

Lessons Learned

I'd love to show off my skills in front of a bunch of gawking tourists. I'd love to impress the audience with my skills at handling a rude manager or soothing an employee who is having a difficult time. Who would not love to have the audience "ooohhh" and "aaahhh" every time we do something wonderful at work? Most of our jobs, however, do not allow us to show off our skills in front of an audience.

Most of us who work in offices have to deal with customers, employees, managers, and assorted other groups who need, want, or demand something from us. Some theories tell us that we can accomplish much more if we would just have fun at work. Telling our managers or employees that one priority is to have fun can only serve to confuse these folks. To them, fun is something we do

Managers are led to believe that they can continue mistreating and/or ignoring employees and that one motivational meeting will cleanse all the ills of poor management.

outside of work after business obligations are met. I wonder whether the jolly fishmongers would act so happy and enthusiastic day after day if they worked in anonymous obscurity where nobody could see them or know about them? We can do fun things to augment our days, but work is not necessarily fun.

When I go back to my job, I have to advise one manager on how to deal with the clerk who keeps arriving late, the employee who thinks she is overworked, and the employee who's been out on disability and does not want to make his doctor visits. I need to spend time with another manager who has to deal with a lazy employee, a minority female who is over 40 years old and feels that she does not have to work as hard as her fellow employees. What do I tell these managers? "Oh, all you have to do is whistle while you work, and the job's a game."

Employees are perceptive. When they see management trying new interventions, whether about fishmongers or one-minute managers, they know two things: (1) leadership is unhappy with performance, but is completely out of touch with the workforce and is hoping that this rain dance will make everything all right, and (2) the company does not want to expend the energy or resources to do what really needs to be done to fix the problem. You have to train soldiers for years to get them to put their lives on the line with no information, but the rawest recruits will die for a worthwhile reason. Managers are led to believe that they can continue mistreating and/or ignoring employees and that one motivational meeting will cleanse all the ills of poor management. We also give managers the wrong message that it is acceptable to be poor managers because we can go out and purchase a magic potion that will erase all of management's sins.

FACTORS THAT KEEP EMPLOYEES MOTIVATED

Motivation originates from the Latin word *movere*, which means "to move." In the work context, motivation is defined as that which incites a person's activities. In other words, we want to move employees to want to perform the best work they can and to continue working for our company for as long as we want them to stay. To move employees to do their best work and to remain on the job, we need to provide certain things.

More important, perhaps, is creating a workplace culture or environment in which employees are appreciated and respected. Other related factors are

- open and honest communication that includes an issue-resolution process
- dignity and respect manifested as equal and fair treatment

- reward and recognition

Often the importance of these factors is recognized in their absence. They are like the water from your kitchen faucet. You turn on the faucet without even thinking about it. You don't say, "Wow, there is water in my kitchen faucet, how lucky I am." You just turn on the water without giving it another thought, until you turn on the faucet and nothing comes out. All of a sudden you realize how valuable and important the water from your kitchen faucet really is.

Open and Honest Communication

Both "open" and "honest" are labels that require explanation. I am not advocating that employees be allowed to sit in on management meetings or be given copies of the minutes of board-of-director meetings. I am, however, advocating that we tell employees what are the short-term and long-term corporate strategies. It is difficult to lead employees unless you tell them where you are leading them to and what is in it for them. If management is not trusted because employees feel that communications are either withheld or inaccurate, then it will not be easy to obtain information from them.

In their article "When Employees Feel Betrayed," organizational behaviorists Elizabeth Wolfe Morrison and Sandra L. Robinson clarified the relationship that exists between employees and management.[1] The basic premise is that employees have certain expectations of the obligations that organizations have towards their employees. One of the obligations is to tell the truth. When employees feel this obligation has been violated, they are less likely to trust management, less likely to remain satisfied with their jobs, and, in some cases, to reduce their contribution to the company.

If management is not trusted because employees feel that communications are either withheld or inaccurate, then it will not be easy to obtain information from them.

Communication works this way: You send out a message and then evaluate the receiver's response to the message before you reply. Employees respond to the message they perceive was sent by the company. If the company sent the wrong message, then the company will not receive accurate feedback. The company response to the inaccurate feedback will then be distorted because it will be based on something other than the truth. Very quickly the communication becomes even more distorted, and nobody knows what to believe. (This is one way that companies end up being unionized without knowing what happened.)

It is crucial that employees believe management. Sometimes the information is neither easy nor pleasant to give, but employees are adults and must be treated like adults. This means that employees need to know when the company is not doing well and when it is prospering. When times are bad we can capitalize on opportunities to engage the employees and have them participate in cost-cutting and develop savings programs that will ease the tough times. When times are great, employees need to know that their hard work and dedication has created a boon for the company, and they should share in some of the benefits.

Dignity and Respect

We all know the Golden Rule: Treat others the way you expect to be treated. Companies that view employees as replaceable and interchangeable parts are missing one major point. Each person brings his or her own ideas and personality to the position. Each employee is different, and each sells his or her "wares" in a different manner. As a company learns to appreciate the skills and personality that each employee brings, it recognizes that its biggest asset is indeed its employee complement.

People like to be treated with dignity and respect, whether they are at work, in a store, or buying property. In their book *Sacred Cows Make the Best Burgers*, Robert Kriegel and David Brandt, two contemporary management consultants, describe what they found when a $100 million vacation share company brought them in to find out why only 10 percent of the customers bought vacation shares and how to reduce the company's $5 million annual expenditures to train and retrain salespeople.[2] One major symptom was the high turnover of salespeople. The authors posed as customers to see how the business was viewed by its customers. What they found shocked the owner and answered the owner's questions. The salespeople were bullying customers, trying to coerce them into buying or giving them the bum's rush when the customers stood their ground. No wonder people didn't buy. If people didn't buy, the salespeople didn't make money, so they left. The more that salespeople pressured customers to buy, the less customers bought. As fewer customers bought shares, fewer salespeople remained.

As a company learns to appreciate the skills and personality that each employee brings, it recognizes that its biggest asset is indeed its employee complement.

The business environment in a company is no different. Employees want to know that they will be treated as adults. Too often, however, companies hire and promote very young and inexperienced people. These young people don't know how to manage or lead people, and the only model they have of directing people is the way their parents directed them. They tend to act as parents, don't explain things, and bully employees because they are the "parent / boss" and the subordinate is the "child / employee" who should do what is told without questioning.

Do companies want their managers leading employees in the style of parents raising children? In addition to potential legal problems, the lost opportunities due to hard feelings and negative emotions rob companies of millions of dollars each year.

Sometimes we preach one thing and practice another. The job description for a receptionist requires that the employee answer the telephone, handle the mail, greet clients, and be polite in all his or her encounters. Each receptionist stamps his or her own personality on the position and thus creates the atmosphere for each company. If we walk into ten different companies, we will find the lobby atmosphere vastly different simply because of the attitude of the receptionist. If the receptionist sitting in the front lobby, the first contact with your customers and suppliers, is not treated with dignity and respect, you can expect his or her attitude to suffer. When we mistreat people, they often leave, but it's even worse when they don't leave. They remain with the organization, all the while suffering and making everybody with whom they come into contact suffer right along with them.

People change when they reach a point at which their current position or status become so unbearable that they are willing to make a move, even if they are plunging into the unknown.

An airline that is known for having the fastest and best service started out as a regional airline; as it grew, it didn't lose its culture of fun and service. Another very established airline seems to thrive in hiring rude ticket agents, rude flight attendants, and obnoxious gate agents. Does top management now know this? Of course they do, but they see that in order to correct that behavior they may need to spend money, so they figure that as long as customers are willing to fly in their planes, they can tolerate this attitude. What would happen if people finally refused to tolerate this behavior and boycotted that airline? The airline would be forced to change.

I have my philosophy about change, and it goes like this: People (or companies) do not change for the sake of change. People change when they reach a point at which their current position or status become so unbearable that they are willing to make a move, even if they are plunging into the unknown. Another factor that motivates people to change is the prospect of a reward for changing that is so great, valued, and attainable that they would lose massively if they failed to move.

Reward and Recognition

We want to be paid what we think we are worth. The value we place on our skills and abilities might be different from what our boss determines. When the discrepancy is small, then we remain with the employer. If we perceive the discrepancy to be large, then we may move to another employer. There are other considerations when we determine whether we are being paid according to what we feel we are worth. These other factors include the economy, unemployment in the area and in our profession, our perceived equity within our own company, and our belief that we can easily find a similar or better position with another employer.

Although most surveys reveal that compensation is not the top criterion for determining whether we remain with an employer or not, it serves as a measure of the value placed on us by our employer. If we feel we are underpaid and can easily find another job making more money, we may keep an eye open for an opportunity. If, on the other hand, we feel undervalued and that we cannot easily locate another job, then we might be willing to put up with more than we would otherwise. When unemployment is high in our field, we tend to keep a low profile and not be seen for fear of attracting attention and thus being targeted for elimination.

Rewards and recognition are more closely related to being an acknowledgement of our contribution and value to the organization than vehicles of remuneration.

In either of these scenarios, if we feel that have been victimized because of management favoritism we may be more apt to make a move regardless of the economic factors. Our pride and ego can only take so much before we throw caution to the wind and react to protect our self-esteem. Sometimes this reaction will cause us to act prematurely and wind up in a precarious situation.

Rewards are not always positive motivators but sometimes become demotivators. Rewards and recognition are more closely related to being an acknowledgement of our contribution and value to the organization than vehicles of remuneration. When we are promoted, given specific recognition for a project, or rewarded for a particular contribution, we see ourselves as recognized. The level and value of the recognition must at least equal our perception of the effort we exerted toward the action that precipitated the reward. If we feel the reward was less than the effort, then the reward becomes a negative motivator. If the reward exceeds our perceived effort, then the reward becomes a positive motivator.

Bonus programs sometimes are designed to reward employees for achieving milestones and objectives. Sometimes, however, those objectives are impossible to reach or the criteria are out of the control of the participant such that the program becomes a demotivator. The time and effort spent in trying to make employees feel good about their work serves to have the opposite effect, showing employees the futility of their assignments. It also shows employees how out of touch the program designers are with the reality of the program participant.

Another example of a positive motivator turning into a demotivator happened to me many years ago. It was not that the goal was unachievable, it was that the reward never came close to matching the effort. I was working in a warehouse for a shoe company. My job was simply to load trucks. When I took the job, I saw that the warehouse had no labeling system and there were shoes strewn throughout the floor; the shelves were stacked without rhyme or reason. It took me three whole weeks, but I finally set up a labeling system and straightened out the warehouse so that every pair of shoes was catalogued by group (male, female, boy, girl, and infant) and then separated by manufacturer. Every shelf was labeled, and a master listing was developed to easily find any pair of shoes.

Reward, like discipline, must fit the occasion, be timely, and be equitable.

When I finished, I was very proud of myself, so much so that I asked the owner to come to the back and see. He "humphed" as he chewed on his cigar and went back in without another sound. The following week was Christmas week, so I expected something special for all of the hard work I had done. With my paycheck I received a fruitcake, the same as all the other clerical and salespeople. I was so dejected that I quit less than one week later, which is how long it took me to find another job that paid 15 cents per hour more.

I learned two lessons from that incident. The first was that I would never work for anyone who did not appreciate my skills and abilities. The second lesson was that when I became a manager, I would reward employees individually for their work and efforts. I never want to be thought of as an unappreciative bore like that owner. Reward, like discipline, must fit the occasion, be timely, and be equitable.

Another example is a reward that can become negative if it is perceived as not being equitable. Anthony, a new employee, works for you as an accountant, earning $65,000 per year. He is happy to work for you and likes his job, fellow employees, and job benefits. Two weeks later you hire another accountant, MaKayla, to work alongside Anthony, and you pay her $75,000 per year. Their jobs are basically the same, but MaKayla negotiated a higher salary, and you felt she was worth it. In retrospect, if Anthony had negotiated harder you might also have offered him $75,000. But both are happy and you see no reason to throw away $10,000 by offering Anthony the same wage.

Two months later, Anthony finds out what you are paying MaKayla, storms furiously into your office, and says, "I understand you are paying MaKayla $75,000. Is that true?" You calmly say that, first of all, it is not his concern what other employees earn and that you will only discuss his salary and not anybody else's. "We'll see about that," he replies and storms out of your office, and goes back to work. One week later you receive an envelope from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission stating that a sex discrimination charge has been filed against you by Anthony.

The charge states that you are paying a female a higher wage for performing the same job.

By the time you are done paying attorneys' fees and back pay and posting a notice that you will cease and desist your discriminatory ways, $10,000 will seem like a cheap fix. Now you have an angry employee who will distrust you, and if you plan to discipline him or fire him, he can file charges of retaliation for exercising his right to file the initial claim. You will have a terrible employee who will be extremely difficult to terminate.

If you had acted differently and approached Anthony and said, "I just hired another accountant who will be performing the same job as yours, and since I am paying her a higher wage, I want to increase yours to match her wage," you would have had a different result. Anthony would have been not only shocked, but also your most loyal employee because you did something to maintain equity simply because it was the right thing to do. You could have also explained to him that future increases would be based on individual accomplishments and not on maintaining parity.

If you were to ask a thousand managers whether they would go back and increase someone's salary, I would bet my next paycheck that a thousand managers would say no.

If you were to ask a thousand managers whether they would go back and increase someone's salary, I would bet my next paycheck that a thousand managers would say no. Why? Because managers don't like to spend money for potential problems. They will, without exception, roll the dice and think bad things could not happen to them.

A SENSE OF BELONGING IS KEY

Beyond the environmental things discussed above, we need to provide employees with a reason to stay—beyond the money and benefits, beyond treating them well, and beyond the average things a company offers. We need to provide them with a sense of belonging, purpose, and exclusivity.

We all need to find a common purpose or a common enemy. It is this belonging that is the most powerful of all motivational criteria. Look at what has happened to the United States since that fateful morning of September 11. People joined together to send millions in cash to help the victims, and people lined up for blocks to give blood. Why? Because in this case we have banded together to fight a common enemy. We gave it a name, "terrorism," and gave it a face. We took the concept of terrorism and demonized it.

People band together for mutual protection and mutual aid for a common cause. Football teams wear uniforms that distinguish them from their adversaries. We fly the U.S. flag to distinguish ourselves from the rest of the world. We wear our company logo on our shirts to distinguish us from other companies. Going back to the fish market described earlier in the article, what were the fishmongers distinguishing themselves from? Their audience. They were saying to their audience, "We are unique because we can have fun and have the talent to pitch large fish because we trust that that our fellow employees will catch the fish and not let it drop and make us look stupid for throwing fish at another person." It is all about belonging to an exclusive group. It means, I can do this and you can't.

Some places actually became fun to work at; although the failures in many companies were due to economic management, they did not lack for imaginative ways to make the workplace a fun and more humane place to work.

The task of the manager who seeks to motivate his or her employees is to convince the employees that they are different, special, and unique. The manager must build pride in whatever job is performed. For example, recently I was talking to an accounts receivable manager who was down because his employees primarily dealt with people who did not want to be called, who did not want to pay their bills, and who did not want to part with their money. I suggested that he had a perfect opportunity to rally his team and build incredible pride. My suggestion was to create a large poster where employees could post their biggest collection successes, where the department celebrated each others' accomplishments, and where goals achieved were celebrated by department potluck lunches. In other words, his employees are special because they perform a valuable function that takes talent and expertise.

Imagine a company that can do this on a large scale. During the dot-com craze, many companies actually created incredibly cohesive teams. They motivated their employees to give their all for the team, and they did. Some places actually became fun to work at; although the failures in many companies were due to economic management, they did not lack for imaginative ways to make the workplace a fun and more humane place to work.

EARNING TRUST

Managers must earn the trust of their employees. How can they do that? Ronald Heifetz, director for the Leadership Education Project at the JFK School of Government at Harvard has his ideas on how this takes place. Interpreting his ideas and adding my views to his concept described in his 1994 book entitled *Leadership without Easy Answers*, I feel that trust is developed as follows:

1. The manager must have skills that are valued by his or her subordinates. Failure to have the skills seen as valuable will lead the subordinates to believe that the manager has nothing to teach because the subordinates know the same things as the manager. Why would you want to listen and

learn from someone who you feel has nothing to teach you? You wouldn't, and neither would they.

2. The manager must have the same values as those of his or her subordinates. In order for the development of trust to be even considered, the manager and the subordinates must share the same values. If the subordinates feel the manager is not a thief, then the manager may be trusted by the subordinates. Whether the manager can be trusted depends on how the manager behaves over time.

In truth, trust simply refers to a reliance, belief, dependence, and faith that the manager's actions will remain consistent over time.

What must be added to the above two concepts is a very important ingredient—time. The above prerequisites will give the manager credibility; the manager will be seen as someone who has something worthwhile to say to the subordinates. However, for trust to develop in a fertile environment there must be consistency in the manager's decisions over time. We normally judge people at first sight, but then we either confirm or reject our initial perception based on the person's behavior over time. If the behavior does not betray the initial value and skill assessment over time then the employee may trust the manager. If the manager behaves in a manner that is detrimental to the employee, then that also develops a trust of reliability.

Trust can be positive or negative. We often associate the word trust with someone on whom we can rely not to take adverse action against us. In truth, trust simply refers to a reliance, belief, dependence, and faith that the manager's actions will remain consistent over time.

Employees don't want fad management styles or catchy company propaganda. They want equitable treatment, a level playing field, and an environment in which they can predictably see that bad work brings bad consequences and good work brings rewards. When the actual return is less than the anticipated return for a specific effort, employees feel "cheated." They feel that management did not treat them fairly, and they leave.

The basics of maintaining equity include posting all positions; meting out discipline based on the offense, not based on who the employee is; and rewarding everyone as equally as possible for the same effort. Treating employees fairly can be easily illustrated by using a discipline principle I learned a long time ago. This system is called the Hot Stove Principle. It means that you compare discipline to a hot stove. A hot stove

- is *consistent*—it burns every time
- is immediate—it burns right away
- does not apologize—it makes no apology for burning

- forewarns—the closer you get the hotter it feels
- is impersonal—it does not care about rank or title
- shows no emotion

Employees do not mind if a manager is strict, so long as that manager is strict with everyone. It is the selective enforcement of rules or the selective rewarding that gets managers into trouble.

ISSUE-RESOLUTION PROCESS

No matter how cordial or friendly a place is to work, there are bound to be some differences of opinion. Those differences often arise over the allocation and use of resources. Each department jealously guards its resources and seeks to expand its control by acquiring additional resources. As each department requests or demands more resources, chances are that granting resources to department A will be at the expense of the other departments.

Some companies allow managers to resolve issues themselves, others require a facilitator, and still others require the intervention of the HR department.

Resources such as money, labor, supplies, equipment, etc., are the means by which each department accomplishes its assignments. Since resources are limited, budgeting becomes a zero-sum game. Resources are also allocated based on the company's goals and strategic direction. Additionally, the higher position a manager occupies, the greater the allocation of resources. When differences of opinion arise because one manager wants more resources or one manager infringes on the control of the resources of another manager, then there must be a method of resolving the problems.

A problem-resolution process must be seen as fair and equitable if it is going to be successful. Some companies allow managers to resolve issues themselves, others require a facilitator, and still others require the intervention of the HR department. Whatever the process is, it must be efficient and work in the best interests of the organization. The problem or issue can be had between two managers, between two employees, or, as is more frequently the case, between an employee and his or her manager. When there is no clear method to resolve issues, serious problems can result.

Some basic guidelines to develop a problem-resolution process are listed below. The process must

- be perceived as fair
- be available to all
- have structure (submission of positions in writing)
- give each party a chance to win—management cannot always win
- be timely
- encourage rational and consistent decision making

Take the case in the previous section and insert a problem-resolution process. Accountant A finds that he is being paid \$10,000 less than accountant B. Accountant A approaches his boss and demands an explanation. He is not satisfied with his boss's explanation, so he files an internal grievance. The arbiter must investigate the qualifications and job activities (not just job description) and assess their value. The arbiter must then render a written decision that justifies the position taken.

CORPORATE HONESTY AND LOYALTY

The workplace consists of complex and multilayered environments. There is the corporate official line that says we stand for A and B. Just below that layer is the actual practice of daily encounters that really shows that although we say we stand for A and B, we actually practice C and D.

It takes hard work and sacrifice to practice corporate honesty and live up to our professed principles. All companies like to be seen as good corporate citizens who treat employees right, respect employees' rights, and manage with a sense of humanity. In all my years of working, I have encountered only one company that tries and really comes close to this type of unselfish paternalistic management style. I don't want this to sound as though I'm lobbying within my organization or trying to take credit for its culture, because this management philosophy existed long before I came on the scene.

Just below that layer is the actual practice of daily encounters that really shows that although we say we stand for A and B, we actually practice C and D.

This company goes out of its way to help employees. Here is an example of what this company has done that is worth emulating. One employee developed a serious hearing problem to the point that she needed hearing aides. The insurance covered the treatment but did not cover the appliances. Our executive vice president authorized the purchase of the devices outside the medical coverage at no cost to the employee. The employee needed them, the company saw that the insurance would not cover them, so the company bought them. There are dozens of such examples.

The company culture is such that if it is right for the employee, it is right for the company. People do not get yelled at, demeaned, or harassed. Managers are expected to behave professionally, and those who don't soon find themselves out of this organization.

Prior to joining this company, I was working as a contractor because I was finished with working for companies that saw the bottom line as the only method of measuring effectiveness and value. I felt that value had to be viewed in terms of employees first, and then those employees would add value to the company. After vowing never to return to the corporate world, I happened to do contract work in this organization. I had to join it. Its values and ethical behavior coincided with mine.

Ronald Heifetz describes that managers must have the same values as those of employees for trust to exist. So must the company share those values in order for the managers/employees to place faith in the organization. Motivation simply means that you give employees the motives for remaining loyal, giving their all, and adding value to the company. People stay where they feel appreciated and needed. In this society, where we each think of ourselves as "Me, Inc." we can certainly create organizations where employees are valued and respected, and the bottom line will reflect that value.

HOW-TOs FOR A THRIVING WORKPLACE

Employee motivation may not be a mystery, but it is certainly not obvious. We want to motivate our employees so they can provide their services, skills, and knowledge in a cost-effective manner so that we can use those skills and that knowledge to sell our goods and services at a profit. Motivation is just one component of the overall business enterprise. Motivation is that spark, that intangible, that catalyst that makes employees want to stay with the team and give their very best.

Motivation is that spark, that intangible, that catalyst that makes employees want to stay with the team and give their very best.

Motivation, however, is a fragile commodity. It is like a delicate plant that must have the proper balance of nutrients (management), the right amount of water (compensation and benefits), and the proper level of sunlight (recognition), as well as a place in fertile soil (positive company culture). If you skimp too much on one component or another, you wind up with a sick or dead plant. Follow the directions below and you will be closer to having a proper plant.

1. **Ingredient**: The Mission.
   Directions: Explain what you are trying to accomplish in measurable terms. Write it down in conspicuous places so everyone can see where you are headed.

2. **Ingredient**: Open and Honest Communication.
   Directions: Give updates on the progress, the obstacles, the victories, and the distance left (or the alignment with the original mission).

3. **Ingredient**: Dignity and Respect.
   Directions: Do not allow anyone to behave disrespectfully toward another, even if that person is your best producer. Tolerating a disrespectful person who gives you good results now will one day cost you more than they ever

contributed. People don't change, so fire the person who can't be respectful.

4. **Ingredient**: Equity in Treatment.
   Directions: Treat all employees alike and reward them for work or effort that is beyond what is expected. Don't wait until the next performance evaluation, do it now. Buy them dinner or give them ballpark tickets or something that they can enjoy with their families.

5. **Ingredient**: Loyalty.
   Directions: When you have the opportunity to do something "right" for an employee, don't be hampered by what the insurance covers or what is restricted by policy. If an employee hurts and needs personal help, give it. (Just be willing to give it to others as well.)

6. **Ingredient**: Consistency.
   Directions: Continue to give your employees a reason (motive) for staying and for giving you their best. ◆

NOTES

1. Morrison, E.W., & Robinson, S.L. (1997). When employees feel betrayed. Academy of Management Review, 22(1), 226–256.

2. Kriegel, R., & Brandt, D. (1996). Sacred cows make the best burgers. New York: Warner Books. See pp. 71–73.

3. Heifetz, R. (1994). Leadership without easy answers. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.