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Motivation Management

Fueling Performance by Discovering
What People Believe About Themselves and Their Organizations
by Thad Green
Davies-Black, 2000
268 pages

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Take-Aways

- Motivation is always future oriented.
- Employees are motivated by what they believe will happen, not by what you promise them will occur.
- Motivation is like the fuel for performance. It is what makes an employee perform well.
- The motivation management model is based on what employees believe, which determines how hard they will perform.
- Employees are motivated by a belief system based on this chain of events: "Effort leads to performance, which leads to outcomes, which result in satisfaction."
- The three beliefs employees need to be effectively motivated are confidence, trust and satisfaction.
- Employees need to believe: "I can do it" to have confidence.
- Employees need to believe: "Outcomes will be tied to my performance" to have trust.
- Employees need to believe: "The outcomes will be satisfying to me" to have satisfaction.

Rating (10 is best)

Overall	Applicability	Innovation	Style
8	10	7	8

Review

Motivation Management

Why do people work hard and try to perform well? Salary, status and security are the tangible pay-offs, but the core motivators that drive people to earn these rewards are less easy identified.

Author Thad Green offers several simple but practical methods to inspire employees that go beyond the standard rhetoric perfected by other motivational authors. The upshot: Employees are not motivated by what you tell them will happen, but by what they believe will actually happen. This is a subtle point that's often lost in build-trust-through-communication manuals. Using well-organized examples, anecdotes and charts, Green tells you how to cement the connection between positive performance and predictable rewards in the minds of your employees. The section offering questions that you can ask employees to unveil the source of discontent and poor performance will be an invaluable tool for any manager. Of course, some suggestions in this hands-on treatment may seem obvious (such as asking employees what they want, so you can select the motivators that will satisfy them). But otherwise, *getAbstract.com* recommends this solid book on a subject at the heart of many employer-employee relationships.

Abstract

"Clear up confidence problems and the way is opened for motivation to wield its power on performance; allow the problems to fester and motivation never gets out of the starting gate."

"Motivation is the fuel, the energy, the power to perform. When managers do not see the connection between motivation and performance, they focus on performance. This is dangerous, like driving a car without a fuel gauge."

The Basic Motivation Model

Many managers are dissatisfied with their efforts to motivate employees, because they don't get consistent results. If you understand the dynamics of motivation and use solid motivation strategies, you can get the results you want more consistently.

Motivation is always future oriented. Employees are motivated by what they believe will happen, not by what you promise. If they don't believe what you say, they will not be motivated. This motivation-management model is based on the importance of what employees believe. By managing motivation this way, you can create the conditions necessary to effectively motivate employees.

Motivation is like the fuel for performance. Motivation makes employees perform well, and when employees lack motivation, performance will lag. To obtain the best performance you can get from your employees, recognize this "critical connection between motivation and performance."

The Belief Equation

What employees believe determines how hard they will work and how well they will perform. This motivational belief system is composed of a chain of events that follows this structure: Effort leads to performance, which leads to outcomes, which result in satisfaction. Within this structure, an employee may make a big or small effort leading to either good or bad performance. Then, the outcomes can be big or small, and can lead to either high or low levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. This is like a mathematical equation or formula. Though the variables can change, the principle itself is always the same.

Commonly, popular theories of motivation focus only the end of this chain of events — the relationship between outcomes and satisfaction. These theories suggest you will get the best performance by offering employees something they want, so they will work hard to get it. Conversely, they posit, if you offer something employees don't want — such as unemployment in exchange for poor performance — they will work hard to avoid it.

Such a reward-based system produces unpredictable results because managers who focus only on the relationship between outcomes and satisfaction are ignoring two critical elements of effective motivation — effort and performance. Certainly, you need to offer employees what they want, but you must also consider what they believe.

This element of belief is critical to motivating good performance. Employees need to hold certain beliefs for rewards to be meaningful — and thus motivational — to them.

Three Critical Beliefs
The three beliefs employees need to be effectively motivated are confidence, trust and satisfaction. In other words, to be motivated they must feel "I can do it," "Outcomes will be tied to my performance" and "The outcomes will be satisfying to me."

1. Confidence — Employees need to believe: "I can do it." People must believe their efforts will lead to the necessary result. Often, managers don't detect confidence problems because people find it hard to discuss them. People don't like to talk about where they fall short. Getting employees to discuss a lack of confidence about an assignment helps open the door for motivation.
2. Trust — Employees need to believe: "Outcomes will be tied to my performance." They have to believe that how they perform is connected to the results and rewards they will receive. This includes recognizing the consequences of their actions and trusting that their manager will respond based on the merits of their performance. Thus, you have to show your employees that you will reward them appropriately and that you will follow through on what you promise to do based on performance. Unlike confidence problems, employees will often discuss trust issues, at least with each other. Problematically, when employees discuss problems about trust, managers often think they are complaining, such as when an employee says that a performance evaluation wasn't fair. Try to listen to such comments as signs of a trust problem and take steps to correct it, so you can be sure to bestow performance rewards or punishments appropriately.
3. Satisfaction — Employees need to believe: "The outcomes will be satisfying to me." Employees have to really want the outcome you offer. It's common sense that people work hard for results they want. Accordingly, you have to realize that employees are different and they don't all want the same thing. An outcome that satisfies one employee may not please another. To learn what is really satisfying to different employees, ask them directly. For instance, managers in many organizations encourage employees to become empowered. However, while some employees may like empowerment and may enjoy having more responsibility for taking initiatives and making decisions, other employees may not like it. They might simply prefer to do a good job at their assigned tasks. Thus, it is not a good idea to empower people who don't want added power. Remember, an outcome that would satisfy you won't necessarily satisfy an employee. People want different things. You can no longer assume that the big three motivators — money, advancement and job security — are enough

by themselves. People also need "praise, recognition, openness, honesty and other important motivating outcomes." If you ask, you can learn what is most important to each person in your organization.

Discovering Problems and Identifying Causes

When you sense that an <u>employee has a motivation problem</u>, talk to him or her to determine what the problem is. Ask about his confidence about doing his job, his trust that his performance will be tied to outcomes, and his belief that the outcomes will be satisfying.

<u>Don't look at performance alone</u>. Examine the underlying motivation, much like you would check your fuel gauge when you are driving. By paying attention to this "gauge on employee motivation," you can anticipate problems before they develop.

You can spot problems and be proactive if you notice the outward signs or <u>symptoms of a lack of motivation</u>, such as any of the following: "lack of effort, lagging performance, employee dissatisfaction, tardiness, absenteeism, missed deadlines" or other indicators. While you may think these indicators are the problems, they are not. They are just the external symptoms that point to an underlying motivation problem.

In many companies, <u>confidence problems are widespread</u> because of common conditions in today's corporate environment, such as downsizing, rapid change and intense competition. As a result, employees may feel they don't have the training to accomplish their new tasks, especially when they have to use new technology or meet higher standards.

Learn What's Wrong, So You Can Fix It

To diagnose someone's motivational problem, you can't just observe. <u>You have to ask</u>. Most people want to tell you what is wrong, particularly if they think you want to help. Then, you can seek answers based on the three basic beliefs, as they pertain to this person.

While people may want to share their problems in hopes that you have a solution, you must prepare the way so employees feel confident talking honestly to you. Reassure them that they won't be fired or suffer negative consequences from speaking openly. Take steps to assure them it is safe. Then, you have to <u>ask the right questions</u>. For instance, to learn about confidence issues, you might ask: "Do you know what is expected?" or "Can you finish the work on time?" To ask about trust, you might pose a question like: "What do you expect to get if you do a good job?" To ask about satisfaction, you might ask: "What would be satisfying to you?" or "Do you want something that's not being offered."

Then, when employees respond, you want to <u>listen carefully and be open</u> and receptive. Don't see negative feedback, complaints or criticism as indications of a bad attitude, resistance or insubordination. On the contrary, honest employee feedback gives you a great opportunity to set things right. Use this valuable information to develop a plan of action. To help you interpret these responses, you can use a series of "Belief Scales" ranging from 0 to 10 to indicate the employee's level of confidence, trust and satisfaction.

Sidebar quotes:

"The Belief System for motivation management explains how people will determine (1) how hard they will work and (2) how well they will perform. These decisions spring from a process or chain of events that goes like this: Effort leads to performance, which leads to outcomes, which result in satisfaction."

"An outcome that is satisfying to one person may not be satisfying to another. If you want to know what will be satisfying to someone, ask."

"In the Belief System approach to motivation management, three conditions must exist for people to be motivated. They must believe 1) 'I can do the job' (Confidence); 2) 'I will get the outcomes if I perform well' (Trust), and 3) 'The outcomes will be satisfying'" (Satisfaction.)

"Most people are glad to tell you what the problem is, especially when they believe you want to help. All you have to do is get the answers to a few thoughtful questions."

Finding Solutions

To fix a motivational problem, you must know exactly what it is. That requires asking questions effectively and being aware of your communication techniques. For example, make your questions neutral and probing, so you get the truth. Don't ask leading questions, since you will elicit the answers employees think you want to hear, rather than the truth.

As you enter this conversation, remember the most common causes of motivation problems, which all relate to the three roots of confidence, trust and satisfaction.

- The nine most common causes of confidence problems are put-downs, negative self-talk, inadequate skills, unrealistic expectations, unclear expectations, a history of failure, inadequate resources or authority, an over-demanding manager, and organizational problems, such as understaffing, overburdened personnel or inadequate training.
- The most common causes of trust problems are outcomes that are not tied to performance, a misperception that outcomes are not tied to performance and a history of outcomes not being tied to performance.
- In the case of satisfaction problems, the most common causes are not receiving desired outcomes, receiving unwanted outcomes, undervaluing outcomes received, overvaluing outcomes not received, confusion over what is wanted, preference changes, conflicting desires and work that isn't rewarding.

Don't try to guess what is wrong. Inevitably, you will create more problems if you don't really know what the cause is. Tinkering when you don't know the actual problem is much like replacing the battery in a car that won't start, when the real defect could be in the alternator or starter.

When you know what is really wrong in the mind of any employee, you can craft a solution. Commonly, the solutions are self-evident once you know the problems. The best source of information and of good solutions is the person experiencing the problem. You'll find that people are usually eager to solve their own problems if you just give them the opportunity, the encouragement and a feeling of security, so they can open up to tell you what's wrong and what they would suggest doing to resolve it.

> "Motivation management is managing in a way that creates confidence, trust, and satisfaction — the conditions required for motivation."

> "Effective communication is the key to identifying the causes of motivation problems. With the Belief System, that means going to the source: Ask the employee."

> "Employees are motivated by what they believe is going to happen, not by what managers promise will happen."

About The Author

Thad Green is founder of The Belief System Institute – A Center for the Advancement of Motivation and Performance. Green has implemented motivation management with a wide variety of corporations, including AT&T, Delta Airlines, Lucent Technologies, Metropolitan Life Insurance, and NationsBank. He has written 11 books, including *Performance and Motivation Strategies for Today's Workforce* and *Developing and Leading the Sales Organization*.

Buzz-Words

Conditions for motivation / Fuel for performance / Motivation management