

smart supervisionTM

strategies, ideas and tips for managing yourself and others

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Supercharging Productivity by Tapping into the Psychology Behind Motivation

By Sharon Daniels, president and CEO, AchieveGlobal

As the year is rapidly coming to an end, and the Halloween sugar rush has left employees' systems, thoughts have shifted toward holiday shopping and vacation schedules. Rather than focusing attention on the task at hand, employees may be dreaming up plans for impending vacations or simply retreating home for a glass of eggnog.

Coupled with the holiday season is the threat of burnout. After a turbulent year in the economy, many employees have worked feverishly to help their companies meet their goals and stay ahead. Simply put, employee motivation may be waning.

However, the fourth quarter is critical to the success of many companies. As a result, leaders across industries are tasked with keeping their workforce motivated and productive throughout the holiday season to ensure year-end goals are met. In addition, planning for the year ahead needs to be firmly in place and everyone must have his or her marching orders to begin the next year on the right foot.

Whether it be because of the holidays or workplace fatigue, leaders can help their workforce maintain focus and productivity by creating a fulfilling work environment. This can best be accomplished by first tapping into employees' internal drivers of motivation, versus providing external awards only, and by showing leadership's commitment to driving motivation from the top of the organization. In order to accomplish this, leaders must first understand the true sources of employee motivation.

Understanding the Source of Motivation

Maximizing employee productivity and motivation has long been a major concern

for organizational leaders, and approaches have evolved with the emergence of new insights and thinking. Today, research spearheaded by industry leaders, such as Edward Deci, Richard Ryan and Daniel Pink, show that true motivation is not derived from external rewards or punishments, but from the satisfaction of psychological needs shared by all humans. This theory, known as the Self-Determination Theory, identifies two kinds of motivation:

- **Controlled (external) motivation** — Doing a job because the employee feels pressured by external or internal forces to do it.
- **Autonomous (internal) motivation** — Doing a job because it is either intrinsically interesting or is consistent with the employee's deep and abiding personal values.

"After a turbulent year in the economy, many employees have worked feverishly to help their companies meet their goals and stay ahead. Simply put, employee motivation may be waning."

Understanding the type of motivation leaders are promoting is key to employee productivity and success. Studies have shown that the type of motivation that employees have is more important than the amount of motivation when predicting how they will perform and feel in the workplace. In fact, more than 120 studies confirm that there is strong evidence for the paradoxical negative effect of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation.

The Three Basic Psychological Needs

True workforce innovation, effectiveness and productivity starts with employees who are internally motivated, not controlled by

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their supervisors. Leaders looking to drive this kind of motivation amongst their direct reports must place a laser focus on creating a work environment that engages and satisfies the three basic and universal psychological needs of all employees. These three needs are:

- **Competence** — People's experience of being effective and mastering their social and physical environment.
- **Relatedness** — People's experience of close, meaningful and mutually supportive connections with others.
- **Autonomy** — People's sense that their behavior is volitional, performed willingly and reflectively self-endorsed.

When these needs are thwarted, healthy functioning plummets. Conversely, when leaders provide support for competence, relatedness and autonomy, employees experience higher levels of well-being, trust in the organization, engagement and satisfaction at work, and overall performance in the workplace.

Are Rewards Harmful?

It's important to realize that there is no one path to employee motivation. Extrinsic rewards do not always undermine intrinsic motivation and are, at times, appropriate. However, great care should be given so they are not used to control behavior, thus achieving an unintentional negative effect. It is vital to employee motivation and productivity that employees do not become dependent on rewards. Motivation must come from within if it is to be sustained and effective. Since research shows that internal motivation is more likely than external motivation to promote flexible thinking, high-quality learning and problem solving, employees are more effective and they experience greater satisfaction at work when extrinsic rewards are minimized in favor of fostering employees' intrinsic motivation.

Driving Motivation from the Top

It is important to note that leaders cannot force their employees to internalize motivation. Employees perform work-related tasks for a variety of reasons. Some complete their daily tasks quite willingly and with experiences of interest, excitement, enjoyment and satisfaction, while others feel pressured or forced to do those tasks.

However, there are ways that leaders can ensure they are exhibiting the behaviors, engaging their employees and providing opportunities that empower workers to satisfy their psychological needs and unlock their inner drive. Leaders looking to focus on internal motivation that addresses competence, relatedness and autonomy can show their commitment to employee motivation by:

Empowering competence through supportive management. Supportive management includes:

- Working hard to remove unnecessary obstacles

to success and provide employees with necessary resources

- Helping employees identify solutions when faced with issues, as opposed to simply providing the answer
- Keeping employees up to date and included in projects they are expected to own.

Tapping into relatedness through work group commitment. This is accomplished by:

- Creating a sense that the work group is doing something worthwhile
- Showing how the work of each employee fits into the bigger picture
- Making sure employees have clear directions and know how they will be measured
- Creating a sense of ownership of the work.

Driving autonomy by showing respect. This is done by:

- Encouraging others to share their ideas and perspectives
- Highlighting and utilizing the unique skills of employees
- Focusing on being a professional coach in addition to a manager.

Making Motivation a Priority

How individual employees approach given tasks depends on many personal factors — different for each employee. Leaders, however, can contribute to their employees' workplace success by providing an environment and facilitating certain behaviors that allow employees to satisfy their needs for competence, relatedness and autonomy, thus promoting optimal motivation and productivity that carries through the fourth quarter and the year ahead. ■

about the author

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She has been featured in Fox Business News, Training Magazine, Smart Business, The Oregonian and Talent Management on topics such as employee retention, leadership in tough times and the current state of the retail industry.

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Revisiting Quality Benefits Everyone

Question: How can I convey the concept of quality to my employees and how can I maintain quality standards when my workers are more jaded than ever?

Answer: These are great questions. When it comes to quality, it's important that everyone does his or her best. Here are some tips on how you can get employees to care more about quality:

1. Step up feedback levels and recognition efforts.

Yes, you want your workers to excel all the time. But are you doing your part to recognize top-notch effort? It's all too easy to take hard-working employees for granted, but don't fall into that trap, especially with the labor market being the way it is. Remember, it takes real effort and concentration to be "on" all the time. If there's never any reward or recognition, workers will lose heart. So keep those words of appreciation coming, both to individuals and to the group as a whole.

2. Show employees the end results of continuous quality.

If your workers only see one small portion of the end product they're working on, they may have a hard time making the connection between their day-to-day job and the ultimate proof of their commitment to quality: a quality product and a quality company. So involve your workers in the big picture.

Once a month, you can have a "show and tell" session in which you bring in some of the company's products. Bring an upper-level manager along to rally the troops and talk about how much the company appreciates the hard work your employees put into these products and how proud the company is of your department.

Also, make sure any letters from satisfied customers get photocopied and passed on to your workers, such as by hanging them up in a well-traveled area like the lunch room.

3. Nip laziness in the bud.

Employees who don't pay attention to their work can cause quality problems, not only in their own work, but in that of their co-workers. Once standards start slipping, it only gets worse. Other employees wonder why they need to work so hard when another worker is slacking off. Say something to the employee who is not putting everything he or she can into the job, and say it as soon as possible. ■

Stop Email Abuse in Your Department

Question: I'm concerned that my employees are spending more time sending and checking emails than actually working. Is there anything I can do to put a stop to this?

Answer: Workers sit at their workstations, typing furiously, seeming to be working hard. But sometimes they are really sending personal emails on company time. This can seriously affect your department's productivity and bottom line.

Here are some simple, inexpensive solutions to help you put a stop to email abuse during work hours:

Ban Excessive Personal Email

You can't stop people from occasionally using email for personal purposes any more than you can stop them from occasionally using the telephone for personal purposes. The key word here is "occasionally." What you need to do is devise a policy explaining that company email is company property. Workers are expected to use it for company business. If they need to email a spouse to let him or her know they have to work late, that is OK. But ongoing correspondence with anyone that isn't related to work should not be tolerated.

Enforce the Ban

To enforce this kind of ban cheaply, the only thing you can do is walk around and look at workers' screens while they're typing. It might be better to just issue the rule and then do what you do best — supervise. After all, if employees are spending too much time on personal email, their jobs will suffer. Make sure they have enough work to keep them busy and make sure deadlines are being met. Then, personal use of email shouldn't be an issue.

Send Emails to Your Workers

Seeing an email from a supervisor can really drive home the fact that the worker is using a company email address, company computer and company time.

If all else fails, talk to your human resources department and/or the information technology department about ways to determine if employees are abusing email.

Another option is to set up one computer in the department or in a break room that is available for personal use during employees' break times. ■



Employees vs. Interns: Defining the Supervisor's Role

Many supervisors — especially those employed by non-profit organizations — will be called upon to manage not only paid employees, but unpaid interns as well.

Recently, employers have run into problems by not paying at least the minimum wage to interns, even though many of these interns originally agreed to work only for the experience and not for money.

The key to maintaining a relationship with interns in which minimum wage liability does not arise is to stick to the purpose of the internship: Keep the job related to the schoolwork for which the student/intern is receiving course credits.

Here are several tips for supervisors who want to make sure that they are on the right side of the fine line between having an intern vs. having an employee:

Get Official Documentation from the School

- ✓ **Know the kind of coursework the intern is taking and tailor assignments so they directly relate to his or her studies.** If the intern's work has no relation to a course of study, it is more likely that an employment relationship covered by federal or state minimum wage laws will be found to exist.
- ✓ **Confirm with the school that the intern will receive course credits toward completion of a degree or certificate once the internship is successfully completed.** Obtain a letter from the school indicating that the work involved in the internship has been approved as relevant to the intern's course work.
- ✓ **The intern should be required by the school to prepare a report on the work experience and submit it to a faculty member.** This reaffirms the educational purpose of the work. Ask for a copy of this report for your records (which can be used as evidence of the educational usefulness of the work, if this is ever called into question).
- ✓ **Clearly identify the learning objectives.** The goal of an internship should be to learn, not to make money for the intern or the employer. You should be teaching the intern a skill or providing knowledge about your business or industry.

How to Stay Out of the Gray Areas

- ✓ **As a general rule, interns should spend no more than 50 percent of their time performing work ordinarily done by regular, full-time employees.** Interns who duplicate work done by the regular workforce may be held to be employees. Do not fit interns into job descriptions used for employees. Their assignments should be outside the scope of the written descriptions.

- ✓ **Do not guarantee the intern a job upon completion of the internship or graduation from school, as this might strengthen an intern's claim to employee status.** If the intern is interested in a position with your company, provide him or her with an application and complete the traditional hiring procedure as you would for any other job applicant.

Keep in mind that some companies choose to pay interns the minimum or a lawful sub-minimum wage (permitted in some cases for trainees). However, if your organization's desire is to have only unpaid interns, following the above steps will bolster your defense if an intern sues for wages. ■

Make Sure You Provide Constructive Criticism

As a supervisor, you have to correct and critique workers in order to get the results you need. But there's a red light flashing here. If you correct and critique in the wrong way, people could be turned off by your behavior and their work might actually suffer. Here are some ways to help people change and become motivated at the same time:

Don't Be Vague

In her book, *How to Love the Job You Hate* (Nelson), Jane Boucher says that when your talk is finished, the struggling employee should know exactly what is wanted and needed. He or she should have agreed to it and should have a can-do attitude. Never leave a person with a vague set of instructions as that will only increase his or her anxiety and doubt.

Keep Your Cool

View yourself as a teacher. People really want to do their work well so they can enjoy it more. Help them to do that by showing them the right way and focusing on that. Skip the authority statements that start with words like "You must," "You should" or "You should have." Discuss the problem and what to do about it. Ask your employees what situations might be interfering with their work.

Watch Your Timing

Pick a time that isn't complicated with other situations and when the person isn't upset about a problem. Talk in private if possible.

Demonstrate Caring for the Individual

Show that you are concerned about sharing ways to raise the individual's success and job satisfaction. The important facet of the discussion is that you want to help the employee improve in his or her work.

Point Out the Benefits

Show how an individual will benefit from changing the procedure you are discussing and taking the action you suggest. ■

Advice for New Supervisors

Congratulations, you've just been promoted to a supervisory position. Before you dive into your new job, take a deep breath and consider the following bits of advice:

Check Your Ego at the Door

You will never get the respect of your employees if you fail to treat them with respect. Yesterday, you may have been doing the same thing they're doing. You were just fortunate enough to have been promoted.

Remember that your title will mean nothing if your employees do not respect you.

Don't Change a Thing — At First

Give yourself a chance to get your feet wet and find out why things are done the way they are. Then, look at your alternatives and take your time choosing the best one. The last thing you want to do as a new manager is to rush in and make a million changes that turn out to be disastrous.

Don't Be a Dictator

Being a dictator will send your best and brightest workers packing. They'll want to work somewhere where they will have a voice and some creative latitude. You'll end up with a staff of poor performers who will be content to simply go through the motions and do as they're told.

Get to Know Your Employees

One of the best things about being promoted from within the ranks is that you probably know your employees fairly well on a personal level from having worked with them. This is invaluable. While you can't expect to be everyone's best buddy anymore, it is great to know your staff well. This helps you understand what motivates them and makes them tick. It is also important to know your staff on a professional level. How do they feel about their jobs? Where do they see themselves in five or 10 years? What are their immediate needs? Any problem areas?

Get to Know Your Peers

As a new supervisor, you now have a new set of professional peers. Get to know them. You will probably be working closely with some of them and it is important to get off on the right foot. Try to form your own impressions of these individuals, rather than basing your opinions on gossip. Ask what you can do to help them. In time, you'll be in a position to tell them how they can help you.

Give Your Employees a Vision and Empower Them to Achieve it

For example, suppose the vision is to "Provide stellar customer service to every customer who calls our company." Make sure your employees know that this is the vision. Print it on a banner and hang it up in the call center. Print it on small cards to hang in cubicles. Just make sure they know it.

The harder part is empowering workers to achieve the vision. For example, if a customer calls and wants his or her money back, is your employee allowed to approve that? If one of your customer service representatives is struggling and wants to go to a training program, can he or she go?

Delegate

This is much easier said than done, but the ability to delegate is one of the most important skills a supervisor can have. You can't possibly do it all, at least not if you want it done well. You need to learn what you can delegate and to whom. Don't make the mistake of delegating meaningless, boring tasks. Delegate tasks that will challenge your employees. They want to show you they can succeed.

Be a Good Communicator

Employees don't like to be left in the dark and, when they are, the rumor mill goes into overdrive. If something is going on, share it with your staff. On rare occasions, there are things that can't be discussed, but at least try to help quell the rumors. Even more

important is to be a good listener. When an employee comes to you with a problem, really listen. Use the old trick of repeating what the worker has told you to make sure you've gotten it right. Then, respond. If the employee has a question you can't answer, tell him or her that you will find the answer and get back to him or her as soon as possible. Then do it!

Start with a Clean Slate

As a new supervisor, you probably have a new boss. Just as you don't want your new boss judging you based on what he or she may have heard, don't do the same thing to your new boss. More importantly, don't do it with your employees. Sure, you may have worked with them for a long time and you may think you know them inside and out, but give everyone an equal chance with you. In many cases, your employees may be smarter than you expect them to be, they may be more engaged in their work and more eager to help the company achieve its goals. It's up to you to give them a chance. ■



Are Your Workers Missing in Action?

Slash Absenteeism with these Tips

If you are like many supervisors, your workers' absenteeism rate has been increasing over the last few years. The good news is that there are several measures you can take to drive the number back down. A bonus: Anti-absenteeism measures improve productivity, so anything you can do to control an absenteeism problem will boost the bottom line as well.

Here are some ways you can lower your department's absenteeism rate:

Make Sure Workers Have a Doctor's Note

Some employers feel that if a worker is sick enough to miss work, he or she is sick enough to see a doctor. This is not always the case. However, if you suspect a worker of abusing sick days, you are certainly justified in asking for a doctor's note.

Some companies have a written policy that states that if an employee is absent for two or more consecutive days, he or she must have a doctor's note. However, this is really only fair to enforce if workers have health benefits through the company. This system will deter the use of sick days for "mental health days," which some employees feel entitled to.

Be Consistent in Responding to Absences

The supervisor who says, "That's OK" one day when a worker calls in sick and, "You better have a doctor's note" the next time, is sending mixed messages. If employees bank on the softer side, this will come back to haunt you.

Treat workers with respect when they call in sick, but stick to the company's attendance policy. There should be a limit to sick days, which, if exceeded, could be grounds for termination.

Gain Employee Loyalty by Giving Responsibility

If a worker has a challenging job to do, is treated with respect in the workplace and feels in touch with the product he or she is responsible for, that worker is not likely to be absent unnecessarily.

When employees take ownership in their work, they're more likely to show up to make sure things get done the right way. If you make your department a place where they want to come to work, you'll be rewarded with employees who show up and work hard.

Don't Make Personal Problems Your Problem

Don't immediately tell employees to stay home every time something in their personal lives goes wrong. Sometimes, there are glitches, like plumbing problems and sick children, but try to get the worker to think through his or her options.

If you sense that an employee is having a hard time juggling work and family responsibilities, try to make helpful suggestions, such as: "Can a neighbor let the plumber into the house?" or "Can a relative sit with your daughter?"

Remember that your job is to keep your company functioning smoothly. Make it clear that workers are responsible for getting to work at the required time. Of course, sometimes emergencies do occur and they should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

"Treat workers with respect when they call in sick, but stick to the company's attendance policy."

Family and Medical Leave Act

If you think an employee is missing a lot of work because of a chronic illness or the illness of a family member, you might want to mention the option of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

Under the FMLA, a worker can take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for a serious medical condition. Make it clear to the worker that this is unpaid leave. Employees who are taking advantage of "sickness" will straighten out their act very quickly.

Not all businesses must provide FMLA leave. To find out if your company provides FMLA leave to eligible employees, as well as what qualifies an employee as eligible, talk to your human resources department or visit www.dol.gov/whd/fmla/. ■

Absenteeism Tidbits

Main Reasons for Unscheduled Absences

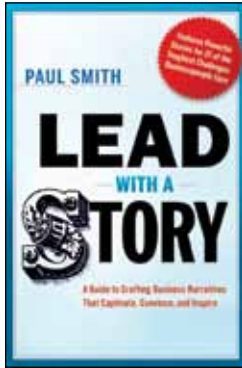
- Personal illness
- Family illness.

Hidden Costs of Absences

- Paying overtime to cover for an unscheduled absence
- Hiring temporary help to fill in for an absent worker
- Supervisory time spent rearranging work schedules.

Top Factors in Discouraging Absenteeism

- Fear of punishment
- Strong work ethic
- Loyalty to supervisor. ■



Storytelling Has Come of Age in the Business World

From Armstrong International to National Car Rental to Dollar General, successful companies in every sector have embraced the ancient art of storytelling. At Nike, all senior executives are designated “corporate storytellers.” 3M has its own process for writing “strategic narratives.”

Kimberly-Clark holds seminars to teach its 13-step program for constructing stories and structuring presentations using them. And Procter & Gamble has hired Hollywood movie directors to teach its top executives storytelling techniques.

Storytelling has taken its rightful place in the business world as a powerful leadership tool. Want a happy ending? Anyone with the motivation can learn how to tell stories that touch, teach and motivate a department, team or employee. In *Lead with a Story: A Guide to Crafting Business Narratives that Captivate, Convince, and Inspire*, Paul Smith demonstrates how to effectively use stories for a wide range of leadership challenges.

Drawing on his experience as a corporate storyteller and leadership trainer, Smith not only helps leaders at all levels tell other people’s stories with confidence and impact, but also offers thorough and practical advice to get them started on writing engaging, instructive and impactful stories of their own.

Based on exclusive interviews with executives at dozens of companies around the world, *Lead with a Story* presents more than 100 short, but powerful, stories the reader can use to:

- Set goals and build commitment.
- Define customer service success and failure.
- Inspire innovation.
- Empower others.

Interspersed throughout the chapters on tackling leadership challenges — and stories about companies from Merrill-Lynch to Pizza Hut, from Kellogg’s to Dun & Bradstreet — readers will find lessons on story-writing. Starting with a simple structure for a good business story, the “how-to” chapters cover six elements essential for turning a good story into a great one: metaphors, emotion, realism, surprise, style and, last but far from least, how to recast your audience into the story.

“Experience is the best teacher. A compelling story is a close second,” Smith declares. Filled with stories waiting to be retold and packed with inspiration — plus a winning formula, complemented by helpful tips and templates — for creating original stories, *Lead with a Story* leads the way to becoming a master business storyteller.

Lead with a Story: A guide to Crafting Business Narratives that Captivate, Convince, and Inspire by Paul Smith, AMACOM, August 2012. ■

Four Steps to Make Networking Work for You

Networking doesn’t just keep you up to date with management tools, it can also boost your career development. Here are some quick tips:

Don’t Be Shy

Don’t be afraid to approach another professional with your hand extended and say, “Hi, I’m Joe Clark from maintenance. I just wanted to introduce myself.” This is how working relationships begin.

Join an Association

Associations are great resources for networking. You’ll meet others interested in climbing the ladder, and your own horizons will be broadened as a result. Many associations offer training seminars and current information about your business or industry. Even if it means you foot the bill, these opportunities are worth it.

Find a Role Model

If you really admire someone’s networking abilities, don’t be embarrassed to emulate that person. This is a great route to self-improvement. As you practice and refine your own style, you will develop more confidence.

Stay Alert

When a topic comes up that you can contribute to, seize the opportunity. If your boss drops a hint about a promotion that might be appropriate for a supervisor with a lot of drive, jump on it and say, “I would be interested, what can I do?” This is what networking is all about. The more of it you do, the more comfortable you’ll feel. ■

Use this Checklist to Perform an Ergonomics Audit in Your Workplace

There are certain job tasks that carry with them ergonomic risk factors, such as repetitive motion or excessive force. Use the following checklist as part of an ergonomics audit in your workplace.

If you can answer “yes” to any of these questions, the job task should be evaluated a bit further:

Force in Lifting

- ☐ Does the lift involve pinching to hold the object?
- ☐ Is heavy lifting done with one hand?
- ☐ Are very heavy items lifted without the assistance of a mechanical device?
- ☐ Are heavy items lifted while bending over, reaching above shoulder height or twisting?
- ☐ Are most items lifted rather than slid?
- ☐ Are employees failing to follow proper lifting procedures?

Force in Pushing, Pulling, Carrying

- ☐ Are dollies, pallet jacks or other carts difficult to get started?
- ☐ Is there debris, uneven surfaces or dock plates that could catch the wheels while pushing?
- ☐ Is pulling rather than pushing routinely used to move objects?
- ☐ Are heavy objects carried manually for long distances?

Force to Use Tools

- ☐ Do tools require the use of a pinch grip or single finger to operate?
- ☐ Are incorrect tools used to complete tasks?
- ☐ Are tools too large or too small for the employee's hands?
- ☐ Are tools poorly maintained, broken, damaged or otherwise not kept in good working condition?

Repetitive Tasks

- ☐ Is a quick wrist motion used routinely?
- ☐ Do repetitive motions last for several hours without a break?
- ☐ Does the job require repeated finger force?

Awkward and Static Postures

- ☐ Is the back bent or twisted while lifting or holding heavy items?
- ☐ Are objects lifted out of or put into cramped spaces?
- ☐ Do routine tasks involve leaning, bending forward, kneeling or squatting?
- ☐ Do routine tasks involve working with the wrists in a bent or twisted position?
- ☐ Are routine tasks done with the hands below the waist or above the shoulders?
- ☐ Are routine tasks done behind or to the sides of the body?
- ☐ Does the job require standing for most of the shift without anti-fatigue mats?
- ☐ Do employees work with their arms or hands in the same position for long periods of time without changing positions or resting?

Reaching/Stretching

- ☐ Are workstations arranged so that workers must stretch or reach for tools or other items?
- ☐ Is work kept at and/or performed at a height that requires employees to consistently stretch, bend or crouch?
- ☐ Are supplies kept in areas that are difficult for employees to access?

Contact Stress

- ☐ Are there sharp or hard edges with which the worker may come into contact?
- ☐ Do employees use their hands as hammers?
- ☐ Does the end of the tool handle press into the worker's palm? ■

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