

How to Motivate the Unmotivated

It is a perennial problem in business, small or large, how to motivate the unmotivated. The perfect business environment would be for all employees to be highly motivated, every day, all the time. Unfortunately, this perfect situation exists in very few businesses. When employees come to work and enter the front door, they also bring their personal problems and individual stresses. They usually have more to think about than what can they do to make the business they work for better.

Obviously, each individual is motivated in a different way. Although money might be a motivator for some employees, it usually is not the stimulus for developing a long-term company commitment. If money is not the driver of commitment and motivation, than what is? Let's look at the T.E.A.M. concept, an acronym for train, engage, approach, and mentor.

Train - Employees must be trained. They cannot simply start a job with little or no training although this happens all the time and dooms the employee to fail. Whatever motivation they had coming into the job is lost in short order. Businesses spend time and money in recruiting, interviewing, testing, and checking references. The employee is hired, goes through an onboarding process (sometimes), and then is left to learn the job on his (or her) own. All is great when things go well but when mistakes are made, guess who takes the blame? The employee, of course, who is the only one that remembers there was never any proper training and out the window goes motivation.

Engage - Employees must be engaged. There must be communication and dialogue so employees feel part of the business. Nothing excites employees more than knowing their input is sought and their ideas and suggestions considered to be valuable. The "boss" doesn't always have to be the only one with an opinion about how something should be accomplished or improved. Employees doing the actual work often times have the best suggestions for improvement.

Approach - Employees love to talk to their bosses about everything imaginable...kids, family, vacations, promotions, other employees...you name it and someone wants to talk about it. Of course, if employees cannot approach the boss, then who are they going to talk to and about what? They just might talk to other employees about...guess what...maybe, how "unapproachable" the boss is! When communication breaks down, there is little hope that motivation will increase on its own.

Mentor - Training is one critical factor in business and, certainly, important. An equally important factor in the motivation process is mentoring...going one step past training by working one-on-one with individual employees. Rather than just training someone on the basics of a particular job, mentoring involves teaching, assisting, and giving advice to someone less experienced to help with their personal and professional growth. When employees feel valued as individuals, they become committed. It is through a feeling of commitment that employees become highly motivated.

Rather than take the approach that as a group, employees are unmotivated, try the T.E.A.M. concept and see the results. Taking positive steps with training, engaging, approachability, and mentoring can have profound effects on them.