

## Motivating Employee Performance

Another critical coaching tool for achieving top results is motivating employee performance. Motivation is defined as something that causes or influences a person to act or perform. In coaching, motivation is the creation of conditions that encourage an employee to achieve a high level of performance.

In coaching, motivation is not about inspiration. You don't need to be a dynamic leader who inspires people to great feats. Be yourself and take actions that stimulate good performance. Here are four practical strategies of motivation in coaching that do just that.

### 1. Motivation works best when its focus is on enhancing and sustaining performance, not on making people happy.

Performance and happiness are not the same. Sometimes managers have a misguided focus regarding employee motivation—they're trying to make everyone happy. Happiness is an emotional state. Trying to bring happiness to those near and dear to you in your personal life is tough enough; don't even attempt it in your professional life. On top of that, you may have met some people who are happy only when they're miserable—which will really confound you if you're trying to make them happy.

Whether or not employees whistle while they work is a function of personality style, and it's not a management concern. How well employees perform is what counts, which includes working conditions. Providing support to employees that helps them get their work done well and serve their internal and external "customers" (e.g. parishioners, co-workers, etc.) effectively is the focus of the coaching tool of motivation.

### 2. Behavior that's rewarded is repeated.

Sometimes managers reward the wrong behaviors and, as a result, problems often resurface. For example, every time Joe makes a mistake, his manager corrects it for him. No worry for Joe. Or, whenever Sue complains about an assignment her manager wants her to do, the manager gives it to another staff member. Sue's complaining is rewarded.



You should acknowledge employees for performing well. Some managers still believe in the old-school idea that "Employees receive a paycheck, that's enough reward. No need to bother with anything else." A manager who functions as a Coach realizes that providing positive reinforcement for good performance increases the likelihood of continued good performance. Taking people for granted has never been an effective motivator.

Positive feedback and other forms of recognition are powerful ways to provide positive reinforcement for the right performance. They cost little to nothing and can be given when the good performance occurs, which is when motivation has its greatest impact. The key is in knowing what's important to reinforce in an employee's performance. Here are few areas to consider:

- \* Delivering excellent service
- \* Producing high-quality work
- \* Teaching others to do their jobs
- \* Providing backup coverage for others
- \* Volunteering for special assignments
- \* Demonstrating positive teamwork
- \* Taking initiative
- \* Solving problems
- \* Showing improvement in performance
- \* Meeting or exceeding goals
- \* Meeting deadlines
- \* Showing consistent reliability



### 3. Match needs of the individual with needs of the parish.

As you spend time with your staff members you often get to know what's important to them in their job situations. In this motivation strategy, the idea is to understand the needs of the employee and tie those needs with what helps your parish; that is, work to create the matches.

While you may have a sense of what the needs are of each individual on your staff, the best way to find out is to ask directly. In this motivation strategy, you have a conversation with each employee and ask open-ended questions around important issues of their performance and job situation such as the following:



- \* What they see as challenges in their work
- \* What are their likes and dislikes in the duties performed
- \* What they see as areas for improvement in their performance
- \* What their desires for professional growth are

The next step is to create a simple game plan with the employee, identifying a need or two you can support and coming up with specific actions that can be done to meet the particular need that also helps parish operations. For example, if the employee has needs for skill development, you can often organize training efforts to help. Sometimes you can delegate assignments that give people greater challenges in their jobs. With the insight you gain, you're poised and ready to create matches that help both the employee and your group's performance.

### 4. Your behavior makes a big difference.

This last motivation strategy can be summarized as follows: A manager's behavior can have a positive influence on driving employee performance. To put this strategy into action, look at the following three categories of behavior. In each you see examples of specific actions a manager can do that fits within the category.

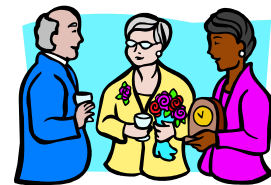
#### a. Show concern for the individual.



- \* Informally and periodically engage in conversation to get to know the person behind the employee by asking about their family and outside interests.
- \* Provide support to help resolve work-related problems.
- \* Provide the tools or resources employees need to do their jobs efficiently.
- \* Follow through on the commitments you make.
- \* Actively listen when employees talk with you, especially when they have concerns.
- \* Send a note or card to recognize anniversaries, birthdays, or other special occasions.

#### b. Show appreciation for good performance.

- \* Give ongoing positive feedback, not general praise.
- \* Cover for the employee so the person can take an afternoon off.
- \* Take the employee out to lunch.
- \* Provide a gift certificate, flowers, or other memento as thanks for a job well done.



#### c. Show a desire to consider and develop employees' skills and thinking.



- \* Organize training opportunities, including cross training, to help increase employee skills.
- \* Delegate a challenging project or assignment, providing support and follow up to ensure success.
- \* Seek employee input on plans, decisions, and challenges affecting the office.
- \* Tutor with questions to help the employee work through an issue or challenge.
- \* Allow employees to attend outside seminars or conferences on occasion.
- \* Mentor, teach, and share your knowledge and experience periodically.

Looking at the sample list, circle a few actions that you can do with more emphasis in your management practices. Now answer this question: What would the effect on your performance be if your "boss" regularly did things that showed concern for you as a person, appreciation of a good job performance, and interest in developing your skills and abilities? Not hard to guess the effect.

Your actions, not your words, have the greatest impact on employee performance. Managers make the difference. When you make use of this motivation strategy and follow the other three strategies, you provide employees with the support to grow and perform at their best. If you are going to demand a lot from your employees, then work to strongly give support in return. For achieving top results in employee performance, coaching recognizes the correlation between how much you demand and how much you support.