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Why Motivating People Doesn't Work...



and What Does

The New Science of Leading,
Energizing, and Engaging

Susan Fowler

Foreword by Ken Blanchard

More Praise for *Why Motivating People Doesn't Work...And What Does*

"I encourage leaders to read this book—but with a warning. They may get more than they expect. I learned as much about my own motivation as I did about the motivation of those I lead."

—**M. Paula Daoust, PhD, Director, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas**

"If you believe, as I do, that people are learners who long to grow, enjoy their work, be productive, make positive contributions, and build lasting relationships, then you must read this book. Susan presents tools you can use to create a company sure to unleash everyone's full potential."

—**Dick Lyles, CEO, Origin Entertainment**

"We all want help to motivate the people we lead, to help them develop and grow in a productive working environment. Susan Fowler's technique shows you the right approach, leading to both the best performance and employee commitment."

—**Agnes Jeanbart, Facilities Manager, Gulf, Unilever**

"If you read only one book this year, read this one!"

—**Robert L. Lorber, PhD, President, The Lorber Kamai Consulting Group**

"Susan reveals that the recipe for motivation does not consist of carrots and sticks. Her formula has helped me lead my patients, my employees, and myself in the joyful pursuit of healthier outcomes. I would prescribe her book to everyone!"

—**Laura Lee Copeland, MD, MBA, FACEP, emergency physician and Director of Medical Informatics, Humber River Hospital, Toronto, Canada**

"One of the greatest opportunities for leaders is to help their people create meaning. Susan's book shows us how."

—**Mine Sadiç, EEMEA Training Development Manager, Roche, Istanbul, Turkey**

"Ever wonder what makes your consumers, clients, business partners, and employees keep coming back? Susan opens your eyes to why they do and how you can make the choice to return easy."

—**Tom Porter, Director, HR and Administration, Kawasaki Motors Corp., USA**

“This book helps leaders reflect on what keeps them going and help others feel comfortable doing the same. It is critical to make what Susan writes in her book into a habit.”

—**Marios Loucaides, CEO, Cyprus Trading Corporation Plc, Nicosia, Cyprus**

“No motivational buttons, no inspiring speeches, no carrots, and no sticks; instead, Susan proposes developing a greater awareness of ourselves, practicing mindfulness, and learning to align values and purpose. We should listen instead of talking and search for the right questions instead of the right answers.”

—**Marius Tanase, Executive Director, Farmexpert**

“Some ideas are way ahead of their time; Optimal Motivation is one of them and will shock you out of old methods of motivating people. It is the most revolutionary theory of motivation in decades.”

—**Andrei Foisor, Country Manager, Roche Diabetes Care, Romania**

“Susan’s book is provocative and pragmatic at the same time. She has successfully tapped into a longing I have had as a leader: how can I help people do what I think they naturally want to do—grow, develop, and fulfill their potential? Susan’s propositions are surefire and easy to put into action.”

—**Dr. Santrupt B. Misra, CEO, Carbon Black Business, and Director, Group Human Resources, Aditya Birla Group**

**Why
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Doesn't Work . . .
and What Does**

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• Foreword by Ken Blanchard

I am a fan of cutting-edge leadership. Over thirty years ago, we introduced Situational Leadership II (SLII), which revolutionized the way managers lead. In this book, Susan Fowler introduces the Spectrum of Motivation, a model that will revolutionize the way leaders think about motivation and evolve their leadership.

I am proud of the quality of thinking in this book. Susan has pursued the study and application of motivation science for almost twenty years. Together with David Facer and Drea Zigarmi, she developed the innovative Optimal Motivation training experience with the Ken Blanchard Companies and then field-tested it with trailblazing leaders and thousands of people from business, government, and nonprofit organizations around the world. What really excites me are the real-world stories and examples that show how this groundbreaking approach to motivation works.

I think you will be as excited about these ideas as I am, so I need to warn you about something we learned years ago. In the early years of teaching SLII, leaders would leave the training session eager to put their new skills to work. We were surprised by how they immediately applied the concepts without conversations with their employees to explain what they were doing. They followed the SLII

model, backing off on direction and support for the self-reliant achiever, leaving her alone to do her thing. They provided direction and close supervision to an employee who was an inexperienced enthusiastic beginner. But when the two employees got together in the lunchroom, the experienced employee commented on how she had not seen her manager for weeks. The inexperienced employee said, “No wonder—he’s constantly in my office. I don’t know what I did wrong.”

We learned over the years to remind leaders that *leadership is not something you do to people; it is something you do with people*. I am fascinated how the ideas Susan writes about in this book and SLII complement one another. One model, the Spectrum of Motivation, is on the cutting edge of new science—the other is now the most used management model in the world. Both models provide leaders with specific actions and language for helping people grow, learn, produce, and thrive. They both require conversation and direct communication with the individuals you lead.

I am both amused and saddened when leaders tell me they don’t have time to have meaningful conversations with their people. It makes me wonder what being a leader means to them. I’ll catch you on the back end of the book in the afterword with the hope that between now and then you might reconsider what leadership means to you—and the people you lead.

• Introduction:

Stop Beating Your People with Carrots

Are you motivated to read this book? You might find this a silly question given that you are reading it. I agree it is silly but perhaps for a different reason.

Asking if you are motivated raises more questions than answers. What criteria do you use to determine if you are motivated? If I asked you to decide if a colleague of yours is motivated to read this book, how would you reach your conclusion? How do you evaluate another person's motivation? What does *motivation* even mean?

For many years, my go-to definition of motivation was simply "the energy to act." It turns out my definition has the same fatal flaw as the other 102 definitions you can find for motivation.¹ Thinking of motivation as having the energy or impetus to act fails to convey the essential nature of human motivation. It does nothing to help you understand the reasons behind the action.

Ask the Right Question

Back to my opening question. Are you motivated to read this book? This is simply the wrong question. What if I asked instead, Why are you motivated to read this book? I might discover that the reason you are reading the book is because you take being a leader seriously and you are

struggling with the motivation of a member of your staff. You are hoping this book might shed light on your motivation dilemma. Or I might discover that you are reading this book because the head of your department told you to read it and you're afraid of what might happen if you don't. These are two very different reasons for being motivated that generate different qualities of energy. Instead of asking if you are motivated, I need to ask a different question to reveal your *reasons* for acting.

An important truth emerges when we explore the nature of motivation. *People are always motivated.* The question is not *if*, but *why* they are motivated.

The motivation—or energy and impetus—a person brings to any action can be *qualitatively* different. Some reasons people are motivated tend to promote well-being for themselves and others—and unfortunately, some reasons don't.

- Motivation that comes from *choosing* to do something is different from motivation that comes from *having* to do it.
- Motivation generated from values, purpose, love, joy, or compassion is different from motivation generated from ego, power, status, or a desire for external rewards.
- Motivation to compete because of a desire to excel (where the score serves as feedback on how successfully you are growing, learning, and executing) is different from competing for the sake of besting someone else, to impress, or to gain favors.

One of the primary reasons motivating people doesn't work is our naïve assumption that motivation is something a person has or doesn't have. This leads to the erroneous

conclusion that the more motivation a person has, the more likely she will achieve her goals and be successful. When it comes to motivation, assuming that more is better, is too simplistic and even unwise. As with friends, it isn't how many friends you have; it is the quality and types of friendships that matter.²

Imagine you are a sales manager. You wonder if your sales reps are motivated. You look at the midquarter sales reports for your two highest-selling reps and conclude, yes, they are both highly motivated. What you might fail to notice is that they are motivated differently. The reason one rep works hard is to win the sales contest, to be seen as number one, and to make the promised bonus. The reason the other rep works hard is because he values your products and services, his efforts are connected to a noble purpose, and he enjoys problem solving with his clients. The science of motivation provides compelling evidence that the reps' different types of motivation have major implications. The quality of their energy affects short-term results and long-term stamina.³

Traditional motivation prompts the questions, Is this person motivated? How much motivation does this person have? These questions reduce your answers to simplistic black-and-white, yes-or-no responses that fail to provide much-needed insight into the nature of the motivation. But asking *why* a person is motivated leads to a spectrum of motivational possibilities. Appreciating these possibilities, and the implications behind each of them, enables you to take advantage of the new science of motivation and guide your people to a more optimal and higher-quality motivational experience.

We Have Learned How to Put the Science to Work

My curiosity about motivation peaked in 1985, when virtually overnight I became a strict vegetarian. A study on how we treat animals so moved me that I simply could not eat animals anymore. People who knew how much I had enjoyed eating meat remarked on my amazing discipline. I found this intriguing. My new behavior had required no discipline at all. I found myself energized yet grounded in my new lifestyle. In almost thirty years, that dedication has not wavered.

I developed personal motivational theories about my experience, but it was not until I caught *The Oprah Winfrey Show* on October 14, 1996, that I began to understand the science behind my motivation. Winfrey's guest was Alfie Kohn, author of *Punished by Rewards—The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A's, Praise, and Other Bribes*.⁴ Winfrey announced that Kohn's message could be revolutionary, that it would change the way viewers think about parenting. Kohn's primary point was for parents and teachers to stop bribing children for doing things they are already inclined to do—such as learn, grow, and excel. Bribing children, Kohn asserted, killed the intrinsic motivation of the behavior being rewarded.

Kohn's ideas resonated with me—but I was not a parent or a teacher. Those who were, fought back. They were not just dismissive of the ideas—they were angry. Couldn't Mr. Kohn understand that when a child won't stop crying, ice cream can be your best friend? When a kid won't read, promising a prize prompts him to pick up the book. When

your daughter doesn't do her chores, rewarding her does the trick. One mother stood by her tactics—she had doled out thousands of dollars to her kids. Bribes and incentives were the only way she could get them to listen to her.

Kohn tried to explain that rewards and punishments *can* work at the moment, but they only buy one thing: temporary compliance. Kohn tried to convey the undermining effect these carrot-and-stick tactics have on the quality of a child's learning, comprehension, and commitment—especially over time. He challenged parents and teachers to consider what happens when the reward or pressure is gone or resources run dry. Since the reward was the reason for action, the child will have no interest without the reward. Kohn pleaded, children should not be trained like pets.

Alas, Kohn's focus was on what parents and teachers needed to stop doing. You could see, hear, and feel their fear. *What does he expect of us? What should we do instead?* Kohn did his best, but under the glaring lights of national television and with limited time, his explanation of these cutting-edge ideas came off as defensive.

Now we have decades of data and uplifting research that undeniably demonstrate how alternative approaches to motivation make a difference. I now understand why becoming—and remaining—a vegetarian was so easy for me. I have been able to translate that knowledge and apply it to other tasks, goals, and situations in both my personal life and my professional life.

Through years of experience, we have learned how to position and promote the provocative research by Dr. Edward Deci, Dr. Richard Ryan, and other groundbreakers upon whose work Kohn and other popular writers such as

Daniel Pink have based their ideas. Thanks to these dedicated researchers, we have come to understand the true nature of human motivation. It is full of hope and promise.

The time is right to challenge antiquated ways of leading through a combination of contemporary motivation science and real-world application. There is a different and better way to approach motivation—which raises a question: *If there is a proven better way to approach motivation, why aren't more leaders using it?*

This question has three potential answers. Which of the three best describes you?

- You are not aware of the evidence.
- You don't believe the evidence.
- You don't know what to do with the evidence.

Potential answer 1: You are not aware of the evidence

A funny thing happened on the way to understanding human motivation. Psychologists decided to study animals. For example, you can watch Harvard psychology professor B. F. Skinner on YouTube showing how he “motivates” a conditioned pigeon to do a 360-degree turn by rewarding its behavior with pellets. It is fascinating to watch—he rewards the bird for doing what he wants it to do, and he can get it to do almost anything. Behaviorists reasoned that this method could motivate people in the workplace the same way: reward people for doing what you want them to do, and you can get them to do almost anything. And guess

what? It worked—or seemed to. My colleagues and I call it the Pecking Pigeon Paradigm.

Using metaphorical pellets as incentives to “motivate” employees to do tasks they don’t necessarily want to do has become common practice. A massive industry has evolved providing complex schemes to motivate workers with compensation systems, rewards, contests, tokens, badges, prizes, and formal recognition programs. Pellets and more pellets.

Current data clearly demonstrate the futility of the Pecking Pigeon Paradigm. In thousands of experiments worldwide, the results are the same: even though people will take the money or rewards you offer, the only correlation between those incentives and performance is a negative one. In other words, external rewards produce a disturbing undermining effect on the energy, vitality, and sense of positive well-being people need to achieve goals, attain excellence, and sustain effort.⁵

Traditional forms of motivation may appear to work in some types of jobs or industries. For example, if you promise people more pellets, they may produce more on the assembly line in the short term. However, it is unwise to confuse productivity with thriving and flourishing. Without thriving and flourishing, short-term gains tend to turn into long-term opportunity losses. The Pecking Pigeon Paradigm *never* worked the way we thought it would—no matter the type of job or industry. The simple fact is, *people are not pigeons*.

While this book provides relevant research to help you appreciate the compelling evidence showing how outdated modes of motivating people do not work, its focus is on

helping you develop the leadership skills to take advantage of it.

Potential answer 2: You don't believe the evidence

Can you complete these statements?

- It's not personal; it's just _____.
- The purpose of business is to _____.
- Leaders are in a position of _____.
- The only thing that really matters is _____.
- If you cannot measure it, it _____.

These beliefs are so embedded in our collective psyche that you probably don't even need to check your answers. (But if you are curious, you can take a peek at chapter 6, which is dedicated to exploring these beliefs.) Just because these statements represent common beliefs doesn't mean they are legitimate. I encourage you to consider that holding on to these beliefs may undermine your ability to effectively investigate alternatives, change your methods of motivation, and embrace new ways of leading. Chapter 6, "Rethinking Five Beliefs That Erode Workplace Motivation" challenges you to reconsider your own beliefs about motivation, where they come from, and if they still serve you, your people, and your outcomes.

Through the exploration of evidence and alternative approaches to motivation, I hope you will come to appreciate how your basic beliefs may be undermining your leadership intentions. For example, your belief in driving for results may be creating the psychological distress, tension,

and pressure that makes it less likely you'll get the quality short-term results or sustainable long-term outcomes that you—and those you lead—are seeking.

Potential answer 3: You don't know what to do with the evidence

You may be familiar with scientific evidence proving how traditional methods of motivation undermine employees quality of work and productivity.⁶ It may have captured your imagination and piqued your curiosity. But as often happens in attempts to simplify science, the ideas get boiled down to clichés that make them difficult to use. For example, the virtues of intrinsic motivation resonate with most of us at a deep level. They also cause fear and trepidation as the leader within you wonders, *What are alternatives to abandoning the stick and weaning people off the carrot? How do I get and keep people intrinsically motivated?* As well-intentioned as these questions are, they still reflect a traditional approach to motivation that suggests motivation is something you do *to* people.

Popular books and speakers are doing the important job of raising awareness about the positive attributes of intrinsic motivation and the detrimental effects of extrinsic motivation. But the simplistic duality of good-bad, internal-external, either-or does not provide enough depth to use the ideas in a meaningful way.

Misunderstanding what motivation means leads to a misapplication of techniques to make it happen.

Admitting that many traditional approaches to motivation practiced all these years have been counterproductive—or worse, destructive—frees us up for new ways of looking at

motivation. We need to realize that applying pressure to achieve results has undermined the results we were seeking. We need to consider that promoting competition or winning a contest is not the best way to encourage and sustain performance. We need to appreciate that—despite the practical need for money and people's incessant requests for more—the focus on monetary rewards has obscured what really satisfies people in their jobs. It appears motivating people doesn't work to generate the type of results we need. Leaders need alternatives that do. It is time to stop beating our people with carrots and sticks and embrace different, more effective, leadership strategies.

When it comes to motivation, we have underestimated ourselves—and perhaps even cheated ourselves—of something richer and much more meaningful than pellets, carrots, and sticks. By falling prey to the outdated Pecking Pigeon Paradigm, we convinced ourselves that this was the nature of motivation, and we bypassed the more human reasons we work.

The new science of motivation is full of promise. There are alternatives to the outdated Pecking Pigeon Paradigm and the constant grind to provide more and better pellets to get people to do what you want them to do. It shouldn't surprise you that people don't find those pigeons pellets satisfying.

From Theory to Practice

Motivating people doesn't work, but this book provides you with a framework, model, and powerful course of action

that does. You will also discover a fresh and much-needed new vocabulary for thinking about and expressing motivation. Outdated terminology—such as *driving for results* or *incentivizing behavior*—leads you down the wrong path if you are looking for motivation that generates productivity without compromising positive and enduring energy, vitality, and well-being for the people you lead.

- Chapter 1, “The Motivation Dilemma,” explains why motivating people does not work and introduces the Spectrum of Motivation model as an alternative.
- Chapter 2, “What Motivates People: The Real Story,” reveals the true nature of human motivation, the benefits of tapping into it, and the hidden costs of continuing to ignore it.
- Chapter 3, “The Danger of Drive,” presents alternatives to driving for results that, ironically, lead to better results.
- Chapter 4, “Motivation Is a Skill,” provides a deeper appreciation of what individuals need for shifting the quality of their own motivational experience and the skill to help them do it.
- Chapter 5, “Making Shift Happen,” teaches leaders how to conduct a motivational outlook conversation that facilitates a person’s shift to higher-quality motivation.
- Chapter 6, “Rethinking Five Beliefs That Erode Workplace Motivation,” confronts how your beliefs and values may undermine leadership practices and recommends best practices that support and encourage people’s optimal motivation.

- Chapter 7, “The Promise of Optimal Motivation,” examines the potential of this fresh approach to motivation from three perspectives: the organization, the leaders, and the people who long to flourish in the workplace.

This book is for leaders with the strength to question traditional beliefs and common practices. It is for leaders who recognize that outdated approaches to motivation compromise people's energy, creativity, well-being, and health—both mental and physical. This book is for leaders who want to cultivate a workplace where people flourish. This book is for you if you yearn for a practical yet honorable way to achieve and sustain results that also brings out the best in—and for—people.

The Motivation Dilemma

Imagine you have the perfect person in mind to recruit and hire as a new employee. Your offer includes the highest salary ever offered to someone in this role. You are authorized to include whatever it takes to motivate this person to work in your organization—signing bonus, moving allowance, transportation, housing, performance bonuses, and a high-status office.

This was the situation facing Larry Lucchino in 2002. His mission: lure Billy Beane, the general manager of the small-market Oakland A's, to the Boston Red Sox, one of the most storied and prestigious franchises in baseball. Lucchino was impressed with Billy's innovative ideas about using *sabermetrics*—a new statistical analysis for recruiting and developing players.

The Red Sox offered Billy what was at the time the highest salary for a GM in baseball's history. The team enticed him with private jets and other amazing incentives. As you may know from *Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game* by Michael Lewis or from the hit movie starring Brad Pitt, Billy turned down the historic offer.

In real life, Billy is almost a shoe-in for the Baseball Hall of Fame because of the choices he has made, the relative success of the low-payroll Oakland A's, and how he revolutionized the game of baseball through sabermetrics. He also provides an example of what *you* face as a leader. The Boston Red Sox could not motivate Billy Beane to be the team's general manager with a huge paycheck and extravagant perks.

Billy's mom, Maril Adrian, is one of my dearest friends. It was fascinating to hear her perspective as Billy's life unfolded in the media over the decade. *Sports Illustrated* corroborated her assertion that money didn't motivate Billy: "After high school, Beane signed with the New York Mets based solely on money, and later regretted it. That played into his decision this time."¹

To understand Billy's choices is to appreciate the true nature of human motivation and why motivating people doesn't work. Billy was motivated. He was just motivated differently than one might expect. He was not motivated by money, fame, or notoriety but by his love of and dedication to his family and the game of baseball. Trying to motivate Billy didn't work because he was already motivated. People are always motivated. The question is not *if* a person is motivated but *why*.

The motivation dilemma is that leaders are being held accountable to do something they cannot do—motivate others.

I was sharing these ideas with a group of managers in China when a man yelled, "Shocking! This is shocking!" We all jumped. It was really out of the ordinary for

someone in a typically quiet and reserved audience to yell something out. I asked him, “Why is this so shocking?” He replied, “My whole career, I have been told that my job as a manager is to motivate my people. I have been held accountable for motivating my people. Now you tell me I cannot do it.” “That’s right,” I told him. “So how does that make you feel?” “Shocked!” he repeated, before adding, “and relieved.”

This led to a robust conversation and an epiphany for leaders and human resource managers in the room. They came to understand that their dependence on carrots and sticks to motivate people had become common practice because we didn’t understand the true nature of human motivation. Now we do. Letting go of carrots and sticks was a challenge because managers did not have any alternatives. Now we do.

The Appraisal Process: How Motivation Happens

Understanding what works when it comes to motivation begins with a phenomenon every employee (and leader) experiences: the appraisal process.

Why do we say that people are already motivated?

Assuming that people lack motivation at any time is a mistake! For example, when you lead a team meeting, it’s a mistake to assume that participants are unmotivated if they are checking their text messages or tweeting instead of

paying attention to you. They may just not be motivated to be at the meeting for the same reasons you are. They have appraised the situation, come to their own conclusions, and gone in their own motivational direction.

To experience this appraisal process for yourself, think about a recent meeting you attended. Reflect on your different thoughts and emotions as you noticed the meeting on your calendar, jumped off a call, and rushed to make the meeting on time. Did your feelings, opinions, or attitudes fluctuate from the time you added the meeting to your schedule to the time you left the meeting burdened with all the “next steps” on your to-do list?

This reflection process is what your people are doing all the time—either consciously or subconsciously. They are appraising their work experience and coming to conclusions that result in their intentions to act—either positively or negatively.

The appraisal process in figure 1.1 captures what you might have experienced in the example of attending the meeting.² Whether mindful of it or not, you had thoughts and feelings about attending the meeting—you had both cognitive and emotional responses to the meeting. *Is the meeting a safe or threatening event? Am I feeling supported or threatened? Is it a good use of or a waste of my time? Am I excited or fearful? Am I attending because I want to or because I feel I have to?* Ultimately, how you *feel* about the meeting has the greatest influence on your sense of well-being. Your well-being determines your intentions, which ultimately lead to your behavior.

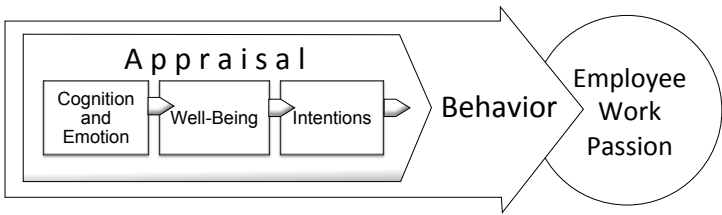


Figure 1.1 The appraisal process

Every day, your employees' appraisal of their workplace leaves them with or without a positive sense of well-being. Their well-being determines their intentions, and intentions are the greatest predictors of behavior.³ A positive appraisal that results in a positive sense of well-being leads to positive intentions and behaviors that generate employee engagement.

The heart of employee engagement

The appraisal process is at the heart of employee engagement—and disengagement.⁴ I would be surprised if your organization doesn't assess employee engagement or have some type of initiative aimed at improving it. Tons of data support the value of an engaged workforce. However, researchers have only recently explored *how* people come to be engaged.⁵ How do you improve engagement scores if you don't understand the internal process individuals go through to become engaged?

You may find this encouraging: cutting-edge researchers discovered a higher level of engagement beyond the disengaged, actively disengaged, and engaged employee.

They call it *employee work passion*. An individual with employee work passion demonstrates these five positive intentions:⁶

- Performs above standard expectations
- Uses discretionary effort on behalf of the organization
- Endorses the organization and its leadership to others outside the organization
- Uses altruistic citizenship behaviors toward all stakeholders
- Stays with the organization

In these studies, researchers identified twelve organizational and job factors that influence a person's positive appraisal process.⁷ When the factors are in place, people are more likely to experience a positive sense of well-being that leads to positive intentions and behavior. Over time, they experience employee work passion.

You can build an organization that supports employee work passion. You can change job designs, workload balance, distributive and procedural justice issues, and other systems and processes proven to encourage people's positive intentions. All of this is good news, but setting up new systems and processes takes time, and you need results *now*. What if you could help people manage their appraisal process today? *You can*.

This leads to a bold assertion: *Motivating people may not work, but you can help facilitate people's appraisal process so they are more likely to experience day-to-day optimal motivation.*

Optimal motivation means having the positive energy, vitality, and sense of well-being required to sustain the pursuit and achievement of meaningful goals while thriving and flourishing.⁸

This leads to a second bold assertion: *Motivation is a skill. People can learn to choose and create optimal motivational experiences anytime and anywhere.*

Before you can help your people navigate their appraisal process or teach them the skill of motivation, you need to master it yourself—and that leads back to your meeting experience.

A Spectrum of Motivation

Asking if you or your staff were motivated to attend a meeting is the wrong question. Your answer is limited to a yes-no or a-little-a-lot response rather than the quality of motivation being experienced. Asking *why* people were motivated to attend the meeting, however, leads to a spectrum of motivation possibilities represented as six motivational outlooks in the Spectrum of Motivation model, figure 1.2.⁹

The Spectrum of Motivation model helps us make sense of the meeting experience. Consider which of the six motivational outlooks, shown as bubbles, best describes your experience before, during, and after your meeting. These outlooks are not a continuum. You can be at any outlook at any time and pop up in another one at any time. In the meeting example, you may have experienced one or all of these outlooks at one point or another:

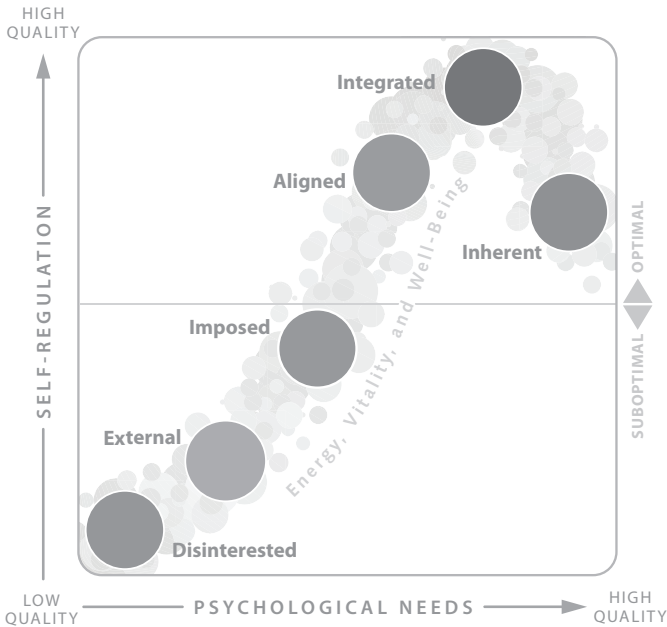


Figure 1.2 Spectrum of Motivation model—Six motivational outlooks

- *Disinterested motivational outlook*—You simply could not find any value in the meeting; it felt like a waste of time, adding to your sense of feeling overwhelmed.
- *External motivational outlook*—The meeting provided an opportunity for you to exert your position or power; it enabled you to take advantage of a promise for more money or an enhanced status or image in the eyes of others.
- *Imposed motivational outlook*—You felt pressured because everyone else was attending and expected the same from you; you were avoiding feelings of guilt, shame, or fear from not participating.

- *Aligned motivational outlook*—You were able to link the meeting to a significant value, such as learning—what you might learn or what others might learn from you.
- *Integrated motivational outlook*—You were able to link the meeting to a life or work purpose, such as giving voice to an important issue in the meeting.
- *Inherent motivational outlook*—You simply enjoy meetings and thought it would be fun.

You may have noticed on the Spectrum of Motivation model that three of the outlooks are labeled as *suboptimal*—disinterested, external, and imposed. These outlooks are considered motivational junk food, reflecting low-quality motivation. Three of the outlooks are labeled as *optimal*—aligned, integrated, and inherent. These outlooks are considered motivational health food, reflecting high-quality motivation. To take full advantage of the Spectrum of Motivation, it is important to appreciate the different effects suboptimal and optimal motivational outlooks have on people's well-being, short-term productivity, and long-term performance.

The Problem with Feeding People Motivational Junk Food

You buy dinner for your family at the local drive-through—burgers, fries, and shakes—with the intention of eating it at home together. The aroma of those fries is intoxicating. You simply cannot help yourself—you eat one. By the time you get home, the bag of French fries is empty.

Consider the effect junk food has on our physical and mental energy. How do we feel after downing the package of French fries? Guilty or remorseful? Even if we feel grateful and satisfied, what happens to our physical energy? It spikes dramatically and falls just as dramatically. How nourished are our bodies? A steady diet of junk food simply isn't good for us. Even if we can justify an occasional splurge, we are wise to understand our alternative choices.

Parents, teachers, and managers promise more money, award prizes for contests, offer rewards, threaten punishment, apply pressure, and use guilt, shame, or emotional blackmail to encourage specific behaviors from children, students, and employees. When people give in to one of these tactics, they end up with a suboptimal motivational outlook—disinterested, external, or imposed. But, those rewards and punishments (carrots and sticks) are as hard to resist as those French fries—and just as risky.

Here's a case in point. You receive an invitation from your health insurance provider to lose weight and win an iPad mini. You think, *What do I have to lose except some weight? What do I have to gain except health and an iPad mini?* Think again.

A recent study followed people who entered contests promising a prize for losing weight. They found that, indeed, many people lost weight and won their prize. However, these researchers did something that others had not done. They continued to follow the behaviors and results of the prizewinners. What they found reinforced vast

motivational research findings regarding incentives. Within twelve weeks after winning their prize, people resumed old behaviors, regained the weight they had lost, and then added even more weight! Financial incentives do not sustain changes in personal health behaviors—in fact, they undermine those behaviors over time.¹⁰

Rewards may help people initiate new and healthy behaviors, but they fail miserably in helping people maintain their progress or sustain results. What may be more disturbing is that people are so discouraged, disillusioned, and debilitated by their failure, they are less likely to engage in further weight-loss attempts.

So why do over 70 percent of wellness programs in the United States use financial incentives to encourage healthy behavior changes?¹¹

- If people participate, without perceived pressure, in a weight-loss program offering small financial incentives, there is some likelihood they will lose weight initially. However, studies reporting these weight-loss successes were conducted only during the period of the contest. They didn't track maintenance. "The rest of the story" is one that most people have not heard.
- Financial incentives are easy (if expensive to offer). Organizations have not taken the time to create more innovative, healthy, and sustainable options.
- People have come to feel entitled to receive incentives, and organizations are afraid to take them away.

Why do leaders keep promoting junk-food motivation to entice people to achieve goals or adopt certain behaviors?

- Many leaders simply don't question common practices.
- Leaders have not gained an awareness of the skill to apply the science of motivation to facilitate people's shift to a more optimal and sustainable motivational outlook.
- People don't understand the nature of their own motivation, so when they are unhappy at work, they ask for more money. They yearn for something different—but they don't know what it is—so they ask for the most obvious incentive: money. Managers take the easy way out and assume that since they can't comply with people's requests for more money, their hands are tied.¹²

Try Serving Motivational Health Food

Kacey is perennially a top salesperson in her organization. When her company announced a contest to award top sellers with a weeklong spa trip, she felt offended. “Do they think I do what I do so I can win a week at a spa? Maybe it sounds corny, but I work hard because I love what I do. I get great satisfaction by solving my clients' problems and seeing the difference it makes. If my company wants to connect with me and show appreciation—that's different. Obviously, that isn't the case. If they knew me, they would understand that as a single mother, a spa week away is not a reward but an imposition.”

People with high-quality motivation, such as Kacey, may accept external rewards when offered, but this is

clearly *not the reason* for their efforts. The reasons the Kaceys of the world do what they do are more profound and provide more satisfaction than external rewards can deliver.

Kacey would have found it easier if her organization had been more attuned to her needs rather than falling into the junk-food belief that salespeople are motivated by money and rewards. Instead, she found herself in an awkward situation. She didn't want to get sucked into the low-quality motivation of the reward trip, but she was fearful of offending her manager and colleagues by refusing the trip or complaining about the choice of reward.

Being an exemplary self leader, Kacey initiated a meeting with her manager to discuss the situation. She explained how the incentive program had the opposite effect than her manager had probably intended. She declared that she would continue selling and servicing her customers with her customary high standards—regardless of winning a reward. Kacey and her manager both described the conversation as “liberating.” They felt it deepened their relationship because the manager now understood Kacey's internal dedication to her work.

At the end of the next sales cycle, Kacey had exceeded her goals for her own high-quality reasons. Instead of imposing a reward on her, Kacey's manager conferred with her about a way that he could express his gratitude for her achievements within fair price and time boundaries. Kacey chose an activity that she and her young child could enjoy together. Rather than interpreting the reward trip as a carrot to work harder, Kacey internalized it as an expression of her organization's gratitude. She reported how different

the experience was from previous award trips: “The week took on special significance as a heartfelt thank-you from my manager and a wonderful memory-making experience with my child.”

Kacey’s deepened relationship with her manager and feeling valued was far more rewarding than winning a contest. There are significant implications for the organization when people experience high-quality motivation. They achieve above-standard results; demonstrate enhanced creativity, collaboration, and productivity; are more likely to repeat their peak performance; and enjoy greater physical and mental health.¹³

Junk Food or Health Food—You Choose

The three suboptimal motivational outlooks—disinterested, external, and imposed—are the junk foods of motivation. Their tangible or intangible rewards can be enticing in the moment, but they do not lead to flourishing. Far from it. People with a suboptimal motivational outlook are less likely to have the energy it takes to achieve their goals. But even if they do, they are not likely to experience the positive energy, vitality, or sense of well-being required to sustain their performance over time.¹⁴

The three optimal motivational outlooks—aligned, integrated, and inherent—are the health foods of motivation. They may require more thought and preparation, but they generate high-quality energy, vitality, and positive well-being that leads to sustainable results.

Motivation Mini Case Study: Himesh's Story

On his first day back at a plant in India after an Optimal Motivation training session, Himesh encountered one of his employees with a type of low-quality motivation. This technical service executive was in the lab having a discussion with an external contractor. Himesh noticed that the technician was wearing safety glasses, but she had not followed plant procedures to ensure the contractor was also protected.

Himesh is a strict manager with a no-tolerance policy when it comes to breaking safety regulations. His normal response to this flagrant breach of policy would be to call the technician to his office and, in his words, “read her the riot act.” By the way, this is why Himesh had been in the training class. His plant’s engagement scores were among the lowest in a global company that has more than fifty thousand employees.

According to Himesh’s self-assessment, “I am known to blow a fuse (or two) when safety rules are flouted; however, I managed to keep my cool and decided to test my training.” He asked the technician to come to his office. He could see that she was worried about his reaction. Instead of leading with his dismay and disappointment, Himesh started by explaining that he had just received some training on motivation. He shared key concepts with her. He then asked her if she thought that the rule to wear safety glasses, even when there was no experiment going on was stupid, as there is no danger to the eyes. Did she feel imposed upon by having to wear safety glasses at all times?

Since Himesh had invited the technician to have a discussion rather than a dressing down, she was open and candid. She explained that she had a two-year-old child and was extremely concerned about lab safety, as she wanted to reach home safe every evening. To Himesh's great surprise, she also shared that in certain areas, she would prefer even more stringent safety measures, not less stringent. For example, she suggested that safety shoes should be required for lab experiments conducted at elevated temperatures. But when no experiments were being conducted, she just could not understand the rationale for wearing safety glasses. Indeed, the technician expressed her resentment about the imposed rule. She wasn't compelled to enforce it, especially with an external contractor. Himesh listened and genuinely acknowledged her feelings. He then provided his rationale behind the regulation, explaining his hope and intention that wearing glasses would become a habit that protects people's lives, just like wearing a safety belt in the car.

Himesh said, "I saw the light dawn in her eyes."

It is important to note that Himesh did not attempt to motivate the technician. He recognized that she was already motivated—she was motivated not to follow the regulation. He challenged his natural tendencies, taking time to explore why she was motivated the way she was. By understanding the nature of her motivation, he had more options on how to lead: "I am sure if I had followed my normal instincts and given her a piece of my mind, I would have been met with a hangdog look, profuse apologies, and a promise to never do this again. And it probably would have happened again.

She would have gone away from my office with feelings of resentment and being imposed upon, and I would also have had a disturbed day due to all the negative energy.”

Himesh’s approach worked to shift his technician’s motivation from low quality (imposed outlook) to higher quality (aligned outlook). Throughout this book we will explore some of the more subtle but powerful aspects of Himesh’s motivational approach. As he reported, “Suffice it to say that in my view, my little experiment was a success. I have since shared what I learned with many of my team members and plan to have more motivational outlook conversations with them in the coming weeks.”

Recapping “The Motivation Dilemma”

Motivating people does not work because they are already motivated—they are always motivated. The motivation dilemma is that even though motivating people doesn’t work, leaders are held accountable for doing it. This dilemma has led to ineffective motivational leadership practices. You push for results, only to discover that pressure, tension, and external drives prevent people from attaining those results. Adding insult to injury, traditional motivational tactics focus on obtaining short-term results that tend to destroy long-term prospects.

Motivating people doesn’t work, but what does work is further revealed in the next chapter. You will learn how to begin weaning people off motivational junk food and offer them healthy alternatives that will prove to be the key to your motivation dilemma.

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