

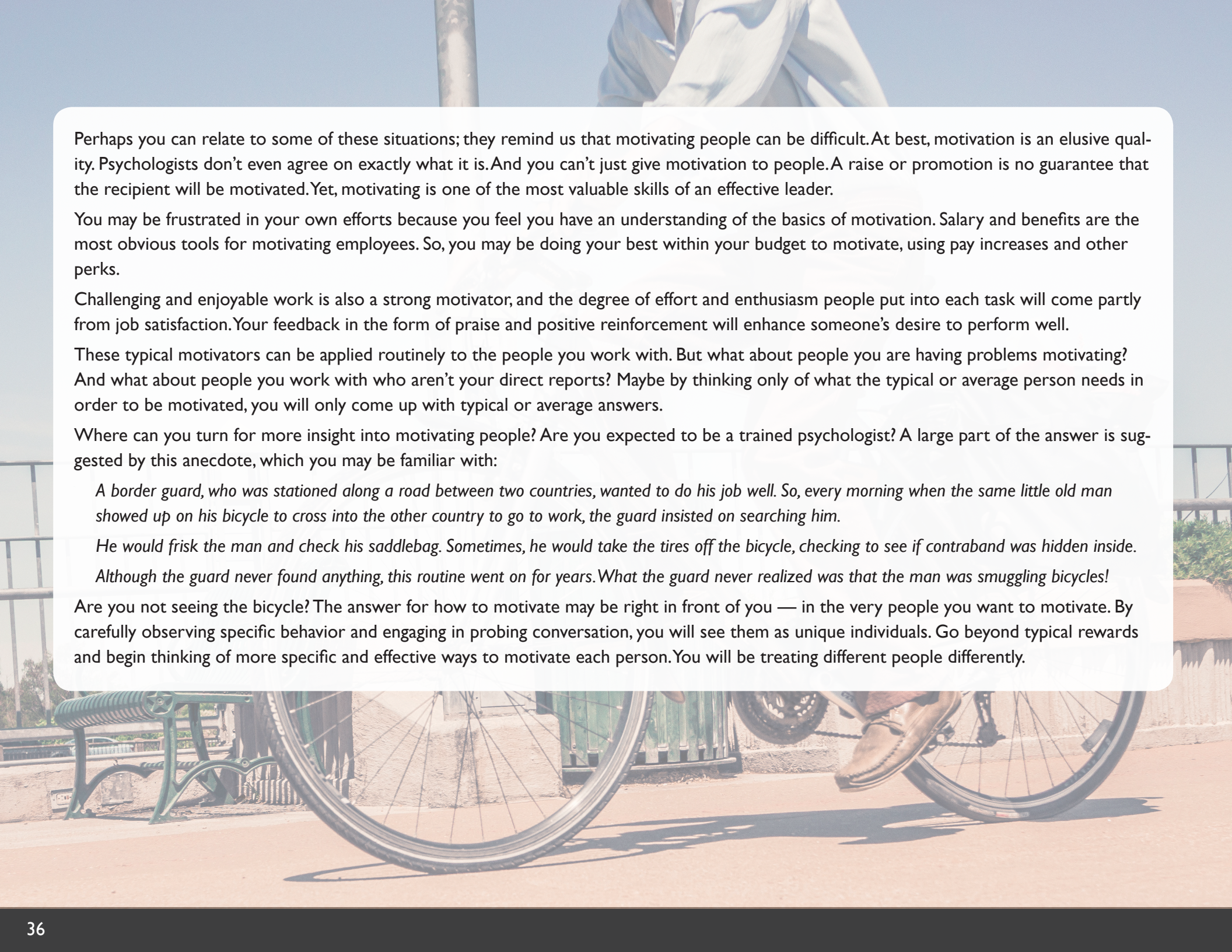
Article 3: Motivation

“Maximizing People’s Strengths”

Do you recognize any of these problems in motivating people?

- The person who was the brightest star of your organization now appears to be just marking time, not living up to his promise. Even a sizeable raise hasn’t made a difference.
- You work with the head of a company that is a strategic partner of your firm. This person is likeable and gets along with everyone. She is also bright and seems to understand your agreed-upon deliverables. But when the deadline arrives, you often get an excuse rather than results. You don’t know how to get her to come through.
- You’re not sure how to motivate a direct report because he doesn’t seem to be the same person from one day to the next. If you could understand better where he’s coming from at any given time, you would know better how to motivate him.
- Lately, a colleague with whom you’ve had good rapport seems to have a chip on her shoulder when working with you. This has had a negative effect on her productivity. You’re not sure how to handle this development to improve your working relationship on projects.





Perhaps you can relate to some of these situations; they remind us that motivating people can be difficult. At best, motivation is an elusive quality. Psychologists don't even agree on exactly what it is. And you can't just give motivation to people. A raise or promotion is no guarantee that the recipient will be motivated. Yet, motivating is one of the most valuable skills of an effective leader.

You may be frustrated in your own efforts because you feel you have an understanding of the basics of motivation. Salary and benefits are the most obvious tools for motivating employees. So, you may be doing your best within your budget to motivate, using pay increases and other perks.

Challenging and enjoyable work is also a strong motivator, and the degree of effort and enthusiasm people put into each task will come partly from job satisfaction. Your feedback in the form of praise and positive reinforcement will enhance someone's desire to perform well.

These typical motivators can be applied routinely to the people you work with. But what about people you are having problems motivating? And what about people you work with who aren't your direct reports? Maybe by thinking only of what the typical or average person needs in order to be motivated, you will only come up with typical or average answers.

Where can you turn for more insight into motivating people? Are you expected to be a trained psychologist? A large part of the answer is suggested by this anecdote, which you may be familiar with:

A border guard, who was stationed along a road between two countries, wanted to do his job well. So, every morning when the same little old man showed up on his bicycle to cross into the other country to go to work, the guard insisted on searching him.

He would frisk the man and check his saddlebag. Sometimes, he would take the tires off the bicycle, checking to see if contraband was hidden inside.

Although the guard never found anything, this routine went on for years. What the guard never realized was that the man was smuggling bicycles!

Are you not seeing the bicycle? The answer for how to motivate may be right in front of you — in the very people you want to motivate. By carefully observing specific behavior and engaging in probing conversation, you will see them as unique individuals. Go beyond typical rewards and begin thinking of more specific and effective ways to motivate each person. You will be treating different people differently.

What's In It for Me?

Approaching each person individually is the best strategy because all motivation is essentially *self*-motivation. Your role isn't to make people do things. That's often not even an option, since you don't always have the power to do so. Successful motivating means influencing people to commit to a decision they make for themselves. So, keep one overriding idea in mind when thinking about motivation:

Because people commit for their own reasons, they ask the question, “What's in it for me?” before deciding to act.

Since people do things for their own reasons — not yours — it's to your benefit to help them find a good reason to perform well. You can learn the answer to “What's in it for me?” by careful observation and quality discussion.

What you thought was an important motivator for a particular person may not actually be one that makes a difference. Many studies show that a higher salary or other material incentives are not ranked first by employees as the most important component of job satisfaction.

Consider the head of a marketing unit who has an attractive salary and benefits. She does a lot of in-depth market research, interviewing consumers and conducting focus groups. She may not consciously realize it, but *working with people* is what actually motivates her the most.

If her boss has observed her behavior carefully, he could easily infer what she needs to be motivated. Because he doesn't do this, he decides to reward her good work with a promotion that actually takes away her primary motivation! Her new title, higher salary, and bigger office will not mean much since her new position removes all consumer contact. A big “What's in it for me?” has been taken away. Her boss expects her to embrace the standard benefits *he* has in mind for her. Both will be disappointed, and *his* motivators will probably not be successful with her.

Why make such a move? He assumed she would be motivated the way *he* would be if he were in her position. However, he's not much of a people person. For him, the prestige and status of the new position would be the important motivation.

We need to broaden our definition of benefits beyond the standard rewards by simply observing what is right in front of us. Restructuring this person's job by combining new duties with even more “people” activity would have motivated far more effectively than a new title or fancier desk. And, frankly, it's the kind of motivation that wouldn't put a drain on resources.

Benefits That Motivate People Are Always Personal

People determine for themselves what a job benefit or reward is. We can't overlook the importance of salary bumps and bonuses, but, those benefits are not strong motivators on a day-to-day basis. When we spend 40 or more hours a week working, we look for satisfactions that are more specific to what we are doing than reminding ourselves that we get paid to be there — even if well compensated.

So, you observe that one of your direct reports is highly motivated by working with people. Your own boss enjoys representing your firm to the community and analyzing corporate data to get the big picture. Meanwhile, a colleague likes working on projects with a lot of structure and thrives on detail work. The reward of working is not tied strictly to what are called tangible benefits. It's a good thing, too, because it's not feasible to hand out raises and bonuses right and left in order to keep people enthusiastic about their work.

Alternate rewards are *intangible* benefits. A job may be rewarding because it allows someone to be part of a team or to show off a talent in a very public way. The reward may be helping people solve problems, creating something that didn't exist before, leaving a legacy, or even changing the world. For someone else simply having a friendly place to go every day and accomplishing something is plenty of motivation. In fact, many people are motivated by the intrinsic satisfaction of doing something well. They feel pride in accomplishment.

Since people choose for themselves the reasons they commit to a task, we must tap into those intangible benefits that motivate for *each* of the people we work with.

I Hear and See . . .	Intangible Needs	Benefits Around
Q4	Self-Realization	Opportunity for challenge, growth, contribution, collaboration
Q1	Independence	Opportunity for power, control, autonomy, influence
Q3	Esteem	Opportunity for respect, status, recognition, approval, and credit
Q2	Social	Opportunity with friendship, belonging, interaction with others, harmony
Q2	Security	Opportunity for predictability, stability, low risk, and reassurance

The Benefits We Offer Serve to Meet Individual Needs

What accounts for the wide range of benefits that people derive from their jobs? Most motivation theories identify people's individual needs as the answer. Discover what people need, and you will understand the benefits they seek.

Like benefits, our needs also vary greatly from person to person. Some people have strong social needs, as we've described. Others will have a need for security. The need to achieve, to be recognized, to feel useful, or to be independent may also be fulfilled or stifled by what happens at work. A job not only can be a means to fulfill certain needs, working itself may awaken other needs as well.

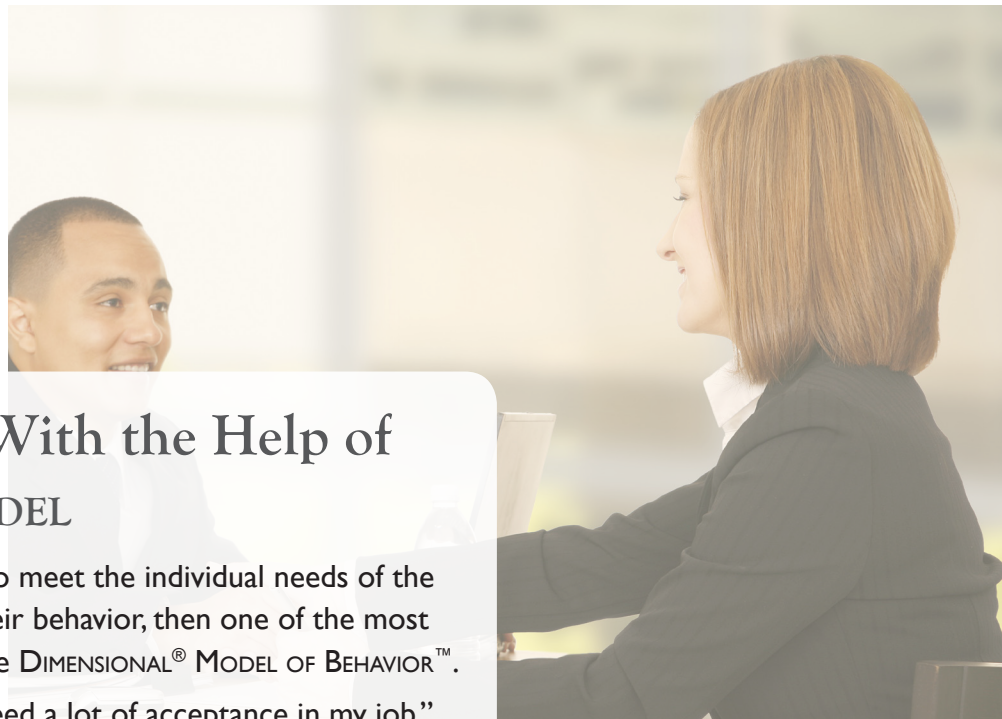
By understanding that needs are the key, we know that we motivate successfully when we:

1. *Influence people to behave in a way that they choose . . .*
2. *by making benefits available . . .*
3. *that meet their unique and individual needs.*

This formula works even if people aren't consciously aware of their needs. You may infer that a direct report has a strong need to elevate her self-esteem. She likes to take on high-profile or even risky assignments. Yet, you would never call her into your office to say, "I have a new project for you that's sure to give your ego a boost." And neither of you will discuss it as the inspiration for working hard. Your overall motivational strategy will be to make sure this competent self-starter is assigned her fair share of important projects that allow her to distinguish herself.

In contrast, another employee may have completely opposite needs, like a strong desire for security. You will get many years of rock-solid performance if he feels safe and his work is predictable. That employee may be as important as the high-flyer, but his/her needs are much different.



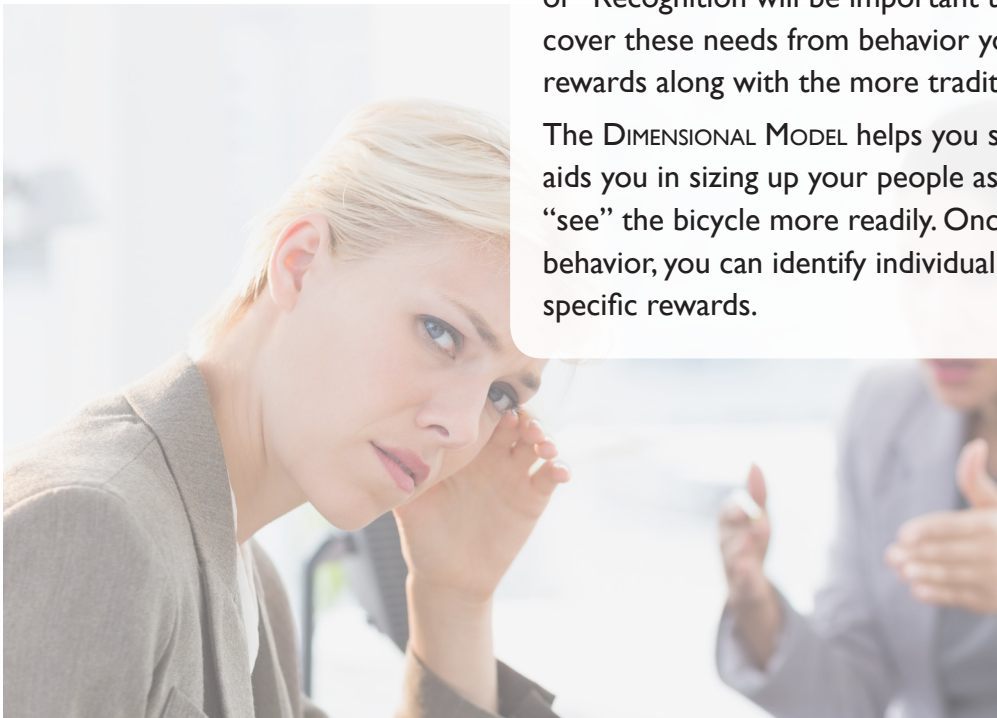


Sizing Up Behavior With the Help of the DIMENSIONAL MODEL

If the key to successful motivation is to meet the individual needs of the people around you from observing their behavior, then one of the most valuable tools to have as a leader is the DIMENSIONAL[®] MODEL OF BEHAVIOR[™].

You aren't likely to hear them say, "I need a lot of acceptance in my job," or "Recognition will be important to me on this project." You must discover these needs from behavior you observe and, then, design unique rewards along with the more traditional ones.

The DIMENSIONAL MODEL helps you sort out what you see and hear and aids you in sizing up your people as unique individuals. It allows you to "see" the bicycle more readily. Once you have an organized profile of behavior, you can identify individual needs more easily and craft the specific rewards.



CAUTION

The Prework article “A Model for Leadership Behavior” mentioned that behavior can change quickly. One reason is that people’s needs may change, depending on influential factors, such as what is at stake at the moment, who they are with, and their life circumstances.

For example, your boss may display a lot of authoritarian Q1 behavior because of a need to show his independence and to bolster his self-image as someone in charge. However, in a meeting with you and *his own* boss, he may be very deferential, exhibiting a strong Q2 need to feel secure. He may wait for his boss to express an opinion first; whereas, alone with you, he strongly expresses his own opinion on the same subject. Perhaps, his relationship with his boss is shaky, and he doesn’t want to go out on a limb in the discussion and look foolish. It’s not necessary to interpret the reason. Just understand that you can’t pigeonhole people’s needs and assume they are set in concrete. You have to make ongoing observations to assess people.

Fortunately, the DIMENSIONAL MODEL helps you analyze behavior so that you can even anticipate changes. The same person who has a Q1 need to assert himself much of the time may behave in a Q2 or Q3 manner in situations where competing safety or social needs prevail.

Motivating Upward and Outward

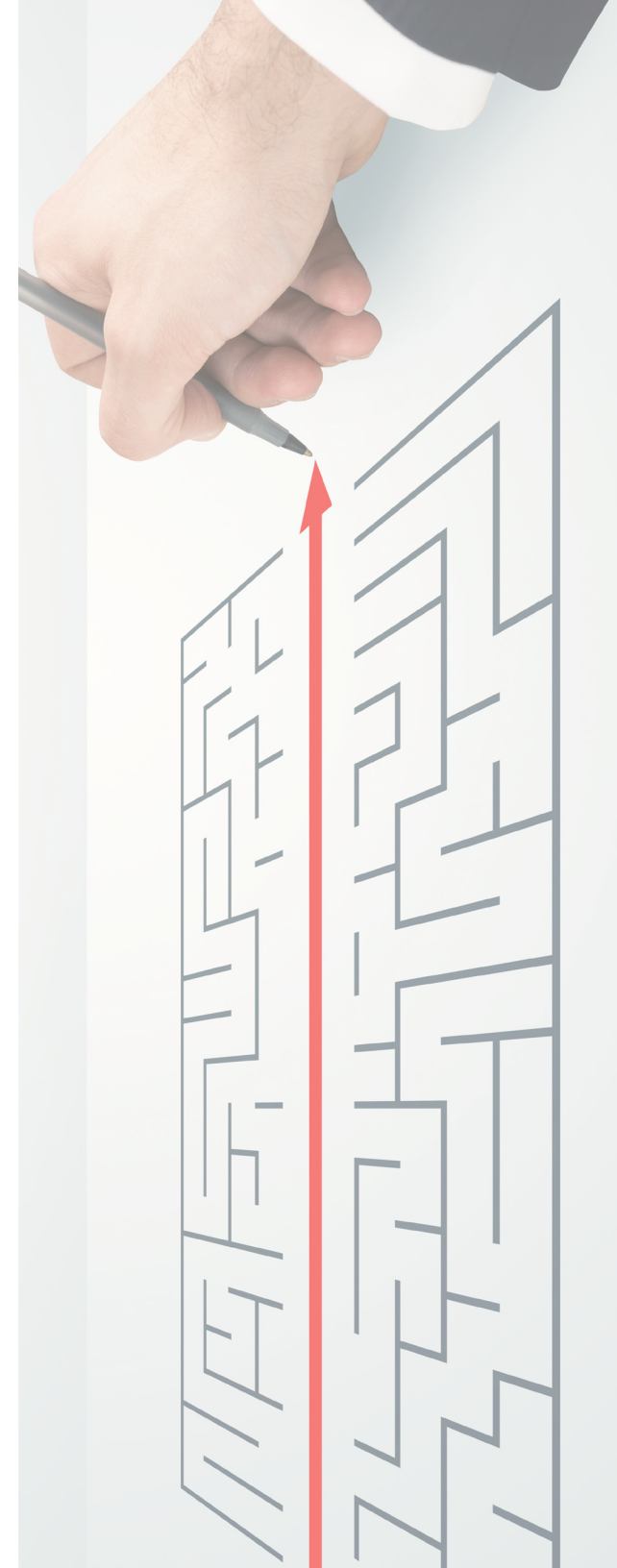
You may question how much you can motivate someone if you don't have the power in the relationship. In fact, your strategy would be the same for those with more power than you, although your tactics would be different.

To illustrate, suppose you have a pet project for your department. As their boss, you can make your direct reports participate. To get them fired up, you would be wise to think of intangible benefits to serve as extra motivation. The bottom line, though, is that you're the boss. They are going to work on the project one way or another.

Now, let's go back to when you first had to sell this project to your boss (or even a board or committee). You can't make him go along. You don't have a tangible reward to offer, either. But you can show how the project will enhance his image when the project succeeds. Maybe you can explain how it will make his life easier. Or point out that there is little risk in trying it, and if it succeeds, he will solidify his own position with the firm. Depending on the type of behavior you observe, you can tailor your proposal to meet his needs by thinking of ways your project will benefit him.

Then, suppose you need the help and support of another division to make your project fly. You approach the head of that unit, who is your peer. She may or may not have more power than you do. You must motivate her to cooperate by using the same strategy you would with your boss — appealing to her needs and outlining benefits for full participation.

So, the principles of motivation are similar no matter who has the power, but think carefully about the tactics and techniques you apply, since the other person isn't obliged to engage or participate.



The Decisive Difference in Motivation May Be You

Be aware of the part *you* play as a motivational factor in the working lives of the people around you. Earnings play less of a role in job satisfaction than being supported at work means to people.

A Corporate Leadership Council survey has identified the top drivers within companies that have led to a 25 percent or greater improvement in employee performance. Ranked number one was fairness and accuracy of informal feedback. Other drivers in the top 10 included feedback that helps employees to do their jobs better and having a manager who is knowledgeable about their performance.

These items demonstrate the important role played by a leader in motivating employees. In fact, many people point to their boss as the best — or worst — thing about their jobs.

With that in mind, how well do you know the people you want to motivate? Their background, likes, dislikes, goals, and even dreams? The more you know about your people, the better you'll be able to assign tasks and delegate work intelligently. That goes a long way toward motivating people — when they are doing meaningful work that's a challenge.

However, to motivate them to give their full *commitment*, observe their behavior to discover their needs. Then, think creatively about the intangible benefits and rewards you can use to motivate each person individually. This applies to direct reports, peers, fellow team members, managers, salespeople, and vendors. The good thing is that you have a virtually unlimited supply of intangible rewards, and the more you know people, the greater the supply grows.

You can't escape being an important motivational force. Nor should you want to. It's another component of being a successful leader.





What About Theories of Motivation?

How do you balance the numerous motivation theories that exist with the practical need to motivate your people in the real world? As a phenomenon, motivation can probably be studied forever without being fully understood; there isn't one universally accepted theory. The more prominent ones include:

- Maslow's hierarchy of needs
- ERG theory
- Expectancy theory
- McClelland's motivational needs
- Equity theory
- Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory

We use a modified version of Maslow's hierarchy of needs because it is uncomplicated and is based on the common-sense premise that people's behavior is motivated by fulfilling needs. This theory is especially useful for those in a leadership role. We differ with the classic Maslow model in that we believe that one's needs can move up and down in the hierarchy. Of course, you are free to apply any concept that helps you to motivate people in a positive way. Maslow reinforces our conviction that your best opportunity to motivate effectively is by addressing people's individual needs.

Case Study of a Missed Opportunity

A major advantage of performing in a Q4 manner is the ability to adapt your behavioral style to better motivate others by addressing their personal needs.

We observed and evaluated the behavior of 84 executives in a role-play simulation with “direct reports.” (For more details of the study design, see the Prewrite article, “Nobody Cares What You Have To Say . . . Until You Give Them a Reason!”.) Participants were supposed to tell a valued employee that he had been passed over for a promotion because of his poor, Q1 people skills and gain his commitment to stay with the company and to take steps to correct the problem. This scenario was designed to observe how executives would devise a strategy for moving the direct report from feelings of anger and rejection to a willingness to take positive steps for the future — not an easy task.

The vast majority of executives did not take into account the Q1 behavior they observed or adapt their own behavior based on the direct report’s needs. Nor did they do much to involve this person in working out a solution, which could have been a strong motivator for him to improve his people skills.

People exhibiting Q1 behavior have a strong need for independence and esteem. They want to be demonstrative, to voice their thoughts and opinions. Understanding this, the executives might have encouraged a vigorous discussion and involved the direct reports in constructing a plan of action.

Instead, most executives displayed Q1 behavior themselves, controlling the meeting. They did most of the talking and discouraged participation in what was, after all, a meeting about the direct report’s future. They had an opportunity to speak to the personal needs of the other by letting him evolve his own plan of action for improvement. The executives tended to squander their motivational opportunities by keeping a tight lid on the encounter. The consequence? In real life, performance would suffer. A solid performer might even leave the company. A disgruntled employee would negatively impact team morale. These executives won the power battle but lost the motivation war.

Only 20 percent of the executives explored disagreements. A meager 24 percent actively solicited ideas from the direct report. Shockingly, only 17 percent asked for the other’s input in determining a plan of action.

In the real world, it’s likely that this skilled but stubborn employee would buy into a ready-made plan handed to him without his input.



Questions to Ponder

1. What does “morale” mean in your organization? Is it an important factor where you work? What part do motivation and benefits (or lack of) play in determining where morale is? Is boosting morale important to your company’s success, or should the normal benefits of working there be enough motivation for people to perform well?
2. How can I use the motivational techniques discussed in this article without people thinking I am being manipulative?
3. Part of results-oriented leadership is making an effort to bring out the best in the people around you. If you feel that it is easier to work with the same individuals on projects and assignments, rather than seeking out those whom you’ve had difficulty motivating in the past, what have you learned about motivation that could be applied to the under-used group?