Motivation

One of the key skills required by project managers, in fact all managers, is the ability to motivate team members and the wider stakeholder community. Great leaders are great motivators[1]. However as a motivator, traditional rewards aren't always as effective as we think. Essentially there are two types of motivator; extrinsic motivators are based on an 'if-then' transaction, if you do something we want, you will get a reward. Intrinsic motivators are internal to the person based on 'feeling good' or happy as a consequence of something. Intrinsic motivators tend to be more durable than extrinsic motivators.

A decision to exercise to lose weight can be motivated by intrinsic factors such as the desire to feel fitter, extrinsic motivators such as the desire to 'look good' and in combination these drives need to outweigh any amotivation factors such as a wet and windy morning if you are going to go for a morning jog.

For most organisational situations there is a complex interplay of these three factors, strongly influenced by the characteristics of the person being motivated. Intrinsically motivated people tend to be rewarded by the joys of accomplishing the task itself, extrinsically motivated people tend to seek reward of recognition from their accomplishment of the task. Both factors are present in most people to a greater or lesser extent; the balance between the two determines which sort of motivator is likely to work best.

Reasons given in a recent survey conducted by the Australian Institute of Management focused on the engagement of employees demonstrates the importance of intrinsic motivation. The five top reasons why people want to stay with their employer are:

1. Job satisfaction
2. Good relationship with co-workers
3. Good relationship with their manager
4. New and interesting challenges
5. Feel valued by the organisation.

Extrinsic motivators such as remuneration did not make the top five!

Motivation Theory

Extrinsic Motivators

Management scientists way back to Henry Gantt[2] in the early part of the 20th century had established that in the 'carrot-and-stick' approach to motivation, fear and the 'stick' had little effect, the 'carrot' and rewards had measureable effect. Based on these findings, most business approaches to motivation are based on extrinsic motivators:

- If you achieve 'A' we will reward you with 'B' and
- If you are really good and make '2A' we will give you '2B'.

The theory used by business is based on the assumption that provided the reward is commensurate with the effort needed and expectations of the person; the larger the reward the greater the motivation. It is assumed

[1] For more on ***leadership*** see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1014_Leadership.pdf

[2] For more on ***the work of Henry Gantt*** see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/PM-History.html#Gantt

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that as long as basic principles such as fairness are applied the increase in motivation will flow through to increased performance. More motivation = better performance[3].

More recent studies have consistently demonstrated that pay-for-performance rewards only work effectively for manual tasks and then only to a limited extent. Certainly it is reasonable to assume that if someone's take-home pay was cut in half, his or her morale would suffer enough to undermine performance … but it doesn't necessarily follow that doubling that person's pay would result in better work. And, research has shown that as soon as a degree of innovation or creativity is required, pay-for-performance rewards have a negative effect on people's output. Incentives do not create an enduring commitment to any value or action; rather, incentives merely, and temporarily, change what we do! Consequently, traditional rewards are nowhere near as effective as most organisations think for anyone in creative or leadership roles.

Intrinsic Motivators

More recent work by researchers has suggested other factors are needed to motivate knowledge workers and managers involved in creative activities. Some of the key theories[4] are:

- Hertzberg's Hygiene Theory (1959) – wages are a hygiene factor lack of adequate compensation is a de-motivator.
- Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) – Physiological needs (food) is at the lowest level.
- McGregor's Theory X, Theory Y (1960) – Theory X assumes management's role is to coerce and control employees. Theory Y assumes, management's role is to develop the potential in employees and help them to release that potential towards common goals.

The higher level motivators in Hertzberg and Maslow's theory's that support McGregor's Theory Y are internal to the person and centred around self actualisation. They include:

- **Autonomy**: control and self-direction over the work to be done.
- **Mastery**: the ability to excel at the work by getting better and better at difficult tasks. Research has shown that making progress in one's work, even incremental progress, is more frequently associated with positive emotions and high motivation than any other workday event.
- **Purpose**: the work is in the service of something larger and contributes value to the organisation and others. Often it is the leader's role to highlight the *meaningfulness* of apparently boring work. Kim Cameron, in his book *Positive Leadership*, observes that work is associated with meaningfulness when it has one or more of the following key attributes:
    - The work has an important impact on the well-being of human beings
    - The work is associated with an important virtue or personal value
    - The work has an impact that extends beyond the immediate time frame or creates a ripple effect
    - The work builds supportive relationships or a sense of community in people

[3] This theory underpins the use of KPIs. If a person achieves the preset 'Key Performance Indicator' they are rewarded. The challenge is setting KPIs that achieve the desired outcomes, bad KPIs can destroy team performance (why help someone else if it detracts from achieving your KPI), encourage the 'gaming' of the system by focusing effort on only those aspects of the overall responsibilities that link to KPIs and in the worst cases drive completely inappropriate behaviours; see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Mag_Articles/SA1018_What_you_measure_is_what_you_get.pdf

[4] For a discussion on motivational theories see, ***The Evolution of Motivation***: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Mag_Articles/SA1032_The_Evolution_of_Motivation.pdf

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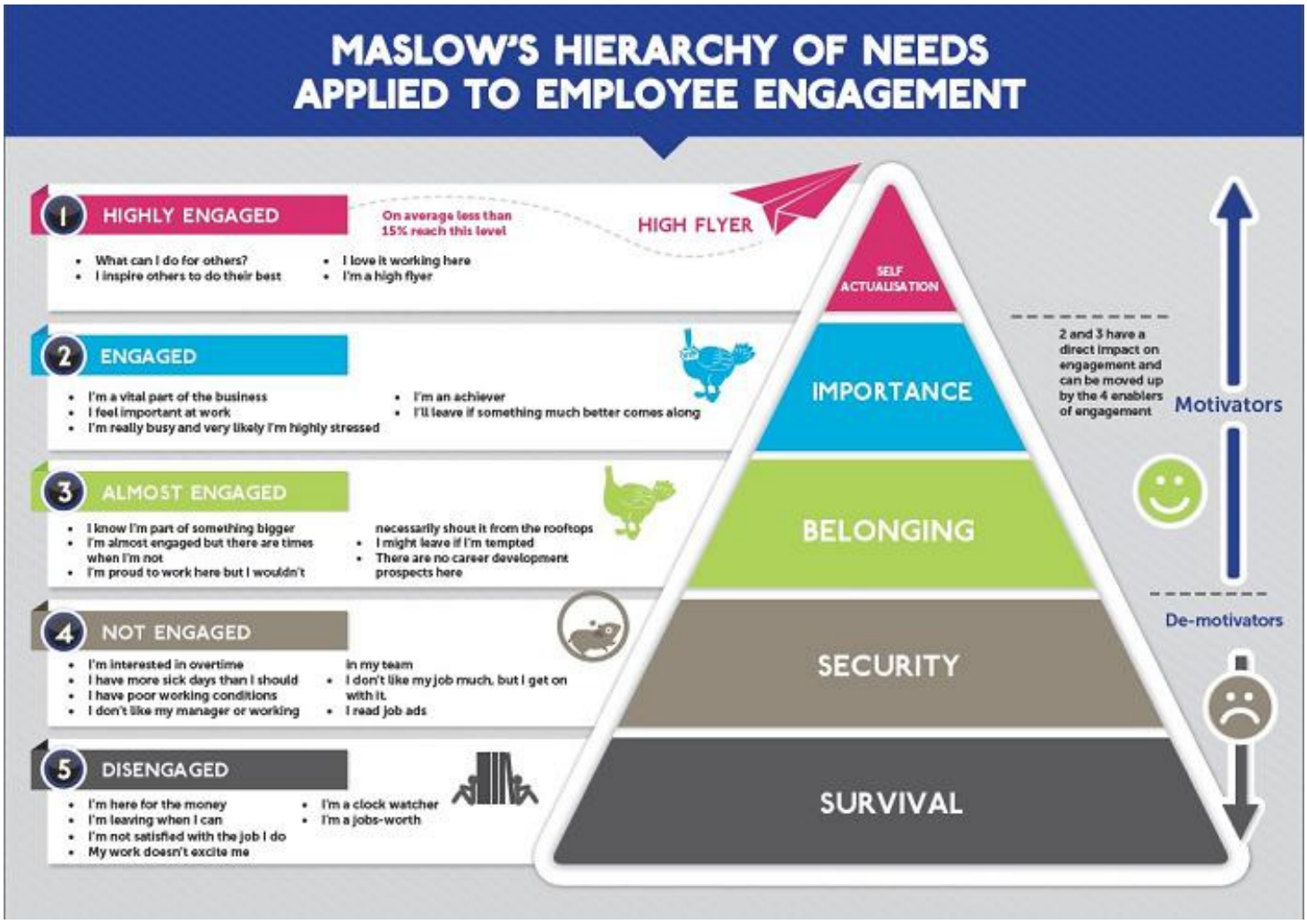

Within this framework, the ability of individuals to see 'real progress' each day is the key to generating positive feelings about their work. This requires each person having 'ownership' of their work, relatively stable objectives, to be able to implement their ideas to achieve the required outcomes, and importantly be allowed to finish the job properly[5]. The feeling of accomplishment created by this environment is underpins motivation. When changes are unavoidable, managers need to keep their team fully informed of the reason as well as the consequences to retain engagement and seek their input to the best solution to the challenges caused by the change[6].

Tapping into a person's intrinsic motivations requires a completely different approach to the 'old school' command and control ideas of management:

> *Intellectual creativity cannot be 'programmed' and directed the way we program and direct an assembly line or an accounting department. This kind of intellectual contribution to the enterprise cannot be obtained by giving orders, by traditional supervisory practices, or by close systems of control. Even conventional notions of productivity are meaningless with reference to*

[5] In manufacturing, these concepts are called HPWP - High Performance Work Practices. For more on HPWP see: http://mosaicprojects.wordpress.com/2014/12/06/lessons-from-manufacturing/

[6] ***Process and procedural fairness*** are a critical element in building trust and maintain motivation, particularly when there are negative issues to deal with. Simply imposing decisions is a powerful de-motivator; whereas involving people in developing the best solution (even if it has negative consequences) can help maintain motivation and commitment. For more on procedural fairness see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Mag_Articles/SA1029_Process_Fairness.pdf

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> *the creative intellectual effort. Management has not yet considered in any depth what is involved in managing an organization heavily populated with people whose prime contribution consists of creative intellectual effort.*
> Douglas McGregor essay, "New Concepts of Management"

To further complicate matters, the best intrinsic motivator for any particular individual may be different. What is extremely valuable to one person may be worthless for the other.

So while it is true that many of us look for autonomy, mastery and purpose in what we do, as a leader we should also be open to other 'currencies'. For example:
- *relationship and belonging* – the person values being in a 'family',
- *clarity of objectives and expectations* – the person just wants to know what to do and be able to do it,
- *proximity to key positions* – the person enjoys being with famous/significant people.

To really motivate someone, it is important to identify what is of value to that person and reward him/her in that currency. When seeking to motivate individuals, it is a subjective world and the subject rules the object. Change the subject and the world if changed.

Awards

Awards sit in-between extrinsic and intrinsic motivators; they are extrinsic, but generally have little tangible value, but are highly appreciated by the recipient. They are widely used in society and include the Oscars, Walkleys (journalism), Brownlow and other medals (sports), through to the 'Employee of the month' photograph in a fast food restaurant and the 'tokens' you can collect for participating in many websites[7]. Awards can be graduated to encourage steadily increasing levels of performance, avoid many of the drawbacks of KPIs and encourage loyalty. Where KPIs and other extrinsic motivators tend to be transactional and focused on the individual, awards tend to drive intrinsic motivation and loyalty to the awarding organisation. The person feels 'honoured' to have received the award.

Motivation - Summary

Reward systems can be designed to deliver both extrinsic motivation (a tangible value) and intrinsic motivation, (recognition of success and enhanced status); generally, the intrinsic elements are the most important and should be focused on encouraging desirable team focused behaviours rather than individualistic and selfish behaviours. You need to build a champion team, not a team of feuding champions.

Traditional rewards will work for simple manual tasks as can 'Theory X'. However, as soon as creative thinking is needed extrinsic rewards have repeatedly been shown to have the opposite effect by focusing effort in a narrow band and stopping the more creative thinking needed to solve the problem. The results are measurable negative performance, increasing as the reward increases. What's fascinating is most organisations reward their senior decision makers with huge pay bonuses to solve some of society's most difficult problems (and wonder why they fail so often…).

Command or Control?

The military doctrine of 'command and control' heavily influenced the structural approach to management[8] characterised as 'Scientific Management' and the works of Taylor (1911). Scientific management assumes, amongst other things, that 'supervision must be achieved through a clear chain of command and through the

[7] Awards are a key element in 'gamification', see: https://mosaicprojects.wordpress.com/2014/01/16/gamification-a-new-way-of-working/

[8] For more on the ***functions of management*** see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1094_Defining_Management.pdf

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application of impersonal rules' and that 'only those at the top have the capacity and opportunity to direct the enterprise'. This philosophy has strongly influenced the development of project management[9] but is ineffective in most modern management situations involving complex work and 'knowledge workers'. Auftragstaktik[10], or directive command offers a better alternative based on leadership and delegation.

The core concept of auftragstaktik is 'bounded initiative'. Provided people within the organisation hierarchy have proper training and the organisational culture is strong, the leader's role is to clearly outline his/her intentions and rationale. Once this is understood, subordinate personnel can formulate their own plan of action for the tasks they are allocated and design appropriate responses to achieve the objectives based on their understanding of the actual situation, exploit opportunities and mitigate problems. It is not an easy option, the team needs better leadership, better training and the willingness to engage in taking 'bounded initiatives' but overall it offers a much better way of achieving the project's objectives.

The Role of Happiness

Research has shown emotional intelligence (EI[11]) is a key component of exceptional performance and how our emotions can affect our thoughts, language and behaviours which, in turn, affects performance, productivity and morale. Intrinsically motivated people tend to be happy in their work, but interestingly, it is the happiness that leads to success rather than success leading to happiness.

Richard Branson, of the Virgin Group advocates: *'Have fun, success will follow. If you aren't having fun, you are doing it wrong….. If you are having a good time, there is a far greater chance a positive, innovative atmosphere will be nurtured…'*.

In a recent survey on working habits commissioned by Wrike, one of the questions asked of 2,000 team members, managers, executives and business owners was, *"What stimulates your efficiency at work?"* Good mood was cited as the second strongest motivator of productivity, only a sense of responsibility received more votes.

Leaders need to create a place where people can be happy and then work to achieve success[12]. Achieving this is partly creating the right environment and partly engaging the right people. External or internal negativity is one of the primary threats to happiness. We often get in our own way and start out with the words 'I can't' (or as a manager, 'you can't').

Negativity can be removed by regarding this phrase as simply a statement of fact that is valid for the present moment only. For example, *I can't juggle* simply means *I can [not juggle]*. It is very easy not to juggle - anyone can do it.

Believing that ***I can't*** is a description of your potential capability, instead of being a description of your current behaviour, programs your brain to fail; this prevents you from finding out your true capability. To quote Henry Ford: ***Whether you believe you can do a thing or believe you cannot, you are most probably right***.

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[9] See ***The Origins of Modern Project Management***: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Resources_Papers_050.html

[10] For more on ***auftragstaktik*** see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1091_Delegation.pdf

[11] For more see ***Social and Emotional Intelligence***: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1008_Emotional_Intellegence.pdf

[12] For more on ***The Power of Happiness*** see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Mag_Articles/SA1019_The_power_of_Happiness.pdf

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Engagement

Employee engagement is a condition, manifested by the inspiration an employee unleashes in his or her work when he or she is deeply connected to a mission, purpose, and the values that connect the project team. The leader cannot 'motivate' engagement (or innovation, growth, or succession for that matter); instead, he or she must inspire the kind of outcomes needed by living a set of values, being in the grip of an idea worthy of dedication and commitment, connecting the team around a meaningful and shared purpose, and aligning everyone around a common, deep, and sustainable set of human, societal, and environmental values.

Achieving this needs the organisation to work in a systemic manner to ensure alignment of its purpose and mission to its business strategies and vision, and then cascade this inspiration through its core values into specific leadership behaviours. Only when observable leadership behaviours are identified, communicated, measured, tracked, managed, and integrated into the project management processes will the conditions be right for engagement to flourish.

Leaders[13] can create engagement and enhance motivation by:

Communicating effectively[14]. Communicate with transparency, authenticity and clarity and make it a priority to make time to talk to each and every member of your team on a regular basis. You may be busy, but you really can't afford to allow communication black holes to develop.

Uncertainty creates a void. Unless you, the project manager, fill that void with clear and positive communication, people will assume the worst and act accordingly. Fear and negativity will creep in and dominate their thoughts, behaviours, and actions.

Building trust and empathy. Travelling to meet with team members in person is an investment in building trust as is asking questions. When you show an interest people's culture, families and personal lives, often they will open up and by expressing interest, you can establish a much deeper connection that leads to a much deeper level of trust

Building relationships. Relationships are the foundation upon which winning teams and organisations are built. It's much easier to motivate someone if you know them and they know and trust you.

Creating a shared vision. Create a vision statement that inspires and rallies your team and organization; a short, simple, rallying cry that means something to the each person on the team. This vision statement must come to life in the hearts and minds of team members. Share it, reinforce it, and inspire your people to live and breathe it every day. A positive vision for the future leads to powerful actions today. Make sure everyone is tuned in to the #1 'most important goal' - no team can focus on more then 2 of thies 'wildly important goals' at any one time.

Leading with optimism. Transfer your optimism and vision to others. This inspires others to think and act in ways that drive results. Great leaders inspire their teams to believe they can succeed. As a leader and manager, you are not just leading and managing people, but you are also leading and managing their beliefs and you must utilise every opportunity to transfer your optimism to the team. Both optimism and pessimism are contagious, make sure everyone catches the optimistic bug.

Creating purpose-driven goals. Break the vision down into practical, purpose-driven goals. Real motivation is driven by a desire to make a difference; people are most energized when they are using their

[13] For more on ***leadership*** see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1014_Leadership.pdf

[14] For more on ***communication theory*** see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1066_Communcation_Theory.pdf

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strengths for a purpose beyond themselves. When team members feel as though the work they do is playing an integral role in the overall success of the company, they are motivated to work harder.

When they feel as though they are working for something more than just the bottom line, and the overall purpose of the project is aligned their personal goals with they feel good about the work they are doing.

Staffing the team thoughtfully and nourishing their team. Belief plus action equals results. If you don't believe that something can happen, then you won't take the actions necessary to create it. If you believe that your team can do big things, they will believe it, too. And that belief will fuel the fires of action and provide you with the results you're looking for. Surveys consistently demonstrate that employees who think their managers care about them are more loyal and productive than those who do not. If you nourish your team and take the time to invest in them, they will pay you back in productivity, creativity and loyalty. If your team members know that you care about them, they will want to do good work for you. It's the greatest motivator of all.

Motivating Project Managers

The project manager's level of motivation is critical for the overall motivation of the project team. A survey of Project Managers in Switzerland considered 47 different motivational factors and found that all of the elements in the list contributed positively to the motivation of project managers. However the bottom elements in the list had only a marginal effect, whereas the top factors consistently showed a significant positive motivation. The top factors were:

1. A clear understanding of what to do[15].
2. Working in a trustful environment
3. Working with others who have a will to achieve results
4. Having clear project goals
5. Producing identifiable pieces of work

The bottom of the list included:

42. Having the opportunity for promotion and a career in the organisation
43. Having a secure job
44. Having a performance based total compensation package
45. Having a state-of-the-art working environment
46. Getting non-materialistic rewards
47. Getting materialistic rewards above expectations.

This fairly large survey suggests the best motivators to inspire project managers are based in providing a clear project definition and good people to work with. Whereas provided the pay rate is offered is reasonable, bonuses and other 'rewards' have little motivational effect. The conclusion to be drawn from the overall results is the best way to motivate your project managers is to offer them a clearly defined challenge and give them the support needed to be successful. They like to do a good job! Things that prevent them doing a good job are disincentives, extraneous elements such as working conditions and rewards are largely irrelevant. The survey supports with data many of the points outlined above.

[15] Understanding is based in having the objective clearly explained. For more on ***effective explanation*** see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1090_Effective_Explanations.pdf

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A GRAM of Motivation

This White Paper has covered a lot of ground and the linked Blog on the ***Evolution of Motivation***[16] lists a diverse range of theories. For more professionals, a ***GRAM*** of motivation will suffice:

- **G = Growth**: we all need to feel as though we are learning and getting better at what we do.
- **R = Relationships:** our workplace relationships are as important as any - most people spend more time relating at work than they do at home!
- **A = Autonomy:** allow people sufficient control over their work to remove stress, avoid micro managing and excessive 'control' but be prepared to provide support and assist in learning.
- **M = Meaning:** develop and communicate a strong vision that provides real meaning for the work.

There's certainly more to motivation than this simple starting point but a 'gram of motivation' (pun intended) is worthwhile - its certainly a good starting point.

Summary

The challenge for leaders seeking to develop an engaged and motivated workforce is to shift the belief structures to a positive view and provide the 'bounded freedom' to allow their team to use their intrinsic capabilities to the full. Achieving this needs the right people, training and support within an aligned organisation. It's not an easy option but can be highly effective in driving improved performance and innovation.

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to view and download a wide range of published papers and articles see:
http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/PM-Knowledge_Index.html

[16] See, ***The Evolution of Motivation***:
http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Mag_Articles/SA1032_The_Evolution_of_Motivation.pdf

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