

Member's Quarterly

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President's Message

Motivating a Split Workforce

The times are changing

There's a new challenge for managers when it comes to motivating their work teams. Did you really need another one? Well, it's here and likely to stay. How do we manage a split workforce with some in traditional offices, some working remotely and others who go back and forth between these options?

We all have our special ways to get the best out of our employees. While some experts may not approve, many of us like some stick to go along with a lot of carrot. That doesn't mean that bullying or meanness are ever appropriate, but there should be some known consequences for not following the rules or procedures. On the carrot side, there is a lot we can do to push people positively. This includes giving regular feedback and recognition when a job is done well.

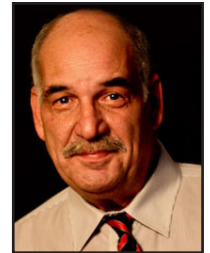
Giving recognition is a bit more difficult when people are working remotely, but a positive email or verbal acknowledgement in an online meeting can still go a long way in keeping your staff engaged and productive. You could also give gift cards or rewards when a team or an individual goes beyond the usual service standards. Everyone loves gift cards that can be handed out or sent electronically.

There's also some new research on positive and negative motivators that can improve or decrease workplace performance. *The Harvard Business Review* identified three negative motivators that often lead to reduced work performance: emotional pressure, economic pressure and inertia. The coronavirus and subsequent pandemic likely made those even worse as some people struggled with all three of them. Even those who were able to continue working felt these drag them down as well.

On the positive side, the researchers found that purpose, play and potential were things that helped people cope at work while the world was going crazy outside their office or kitchen window. For those in a traditional workplace, they found that most benefited from a sense of camaraderie and problem solving together which combined all three of these aspects. Those working from home had more difficulty having fun and continuing to grow and achieve their potential while working alone.

Given that information, how do we motivate employees in this split workforce? We must adapt our methods to suit their environment and not expect that things will be the same as they once were. Like most workplace situations, communication will be key. Talk to your employees in person or on Zoom and try to encourage them. Most of all, keep them connected to you and your organization. We do have the technology to make this happen. While the output is up to your employees, the motivation is up to you.

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