



# rising to the challenge

Challenging times require confident, capable, motivated people to rise to those challenges, so how do we keep our people and ourselves energised and enthused? Margaret Zuppinger has some answers.

■ **Motivation has been the subject of much sound research, notably that carried out by McClelland, Maslow and Hertzberg. However, there are some misleading ideas circulating about motivation.**

First, it is said that there are people who are not motivated, when in fact, every living human being is motivated in some way, but that may not necessarily include being motivated to do what their leader and organisation need them to. Second, it is suggested that motivation is something that you can do to someone else, when in fact, motivation is an *internal* state that directs an individual *towards* certain goals and objectives. The prime task for managing motivation in others is to channel and direct their energies into the activities, tasks and objectives that move towards achieving what you and the organisation need.

Whatever level you work at within your team, it is worth starting with this simple premise: *accept what you cannot change and focus your energies and resources on what you can change and influence*. No matter how small a change you make, it will have a bigger

impact than you think and it will be also be moving you forward.

Ordinary people can achieve extraordinary results if they are given the right climate in which to flourish. To encourage a team's energy, enthusiasm and effectiveness to thrive, leaders need to communicate a strong sense of shared purpose. How can that be done? By sharing your objectives with your team and involving them as early as possible in the life of a project or idea, and by ensuring that staff are up-to-date on problems and progress.

The leader who welcomes change, demonstrates personal drive, is willing to admit they don't have all the answers and isn't afraid to ask others for their viewpoint *and* act upon what they hear, will surround themselves with a team who want to strive to succeed because they trust and believe in the leader and the team as a whole, and are clear about what is expected of them.

Shared knowledge encourages team members to be more aware of their roles; as a result they feel that what they have to contribute makes a real *difference* to the overall success of the team; add to

that individuals being recognised for those contributions, and the stage is set ready for the motivated team to perform.

#### four foundations

In addition, a decisive motivational leader understands the importance of building trust with people *before* any attempt to influence them positively is made. They focus on the four foundations required to build a 'trust track record', namely: *Competence; Openness and Honesty; Reliability; Integrity and Fairness*.

Consider for a moment two members of the same team, both on the same pay scale, doing work of a similar nature, working for the same manager. One is highly motivated, the other appears not to be: *what is the difference between them?*

We may never know the full answer. However, one thing we do know is that the same things that motivate *you* will not necessarily motivate those around you, so flexibility is the key. Know the people you work with and treat them with respect and as individuals: that way you will find out how they prefer to be motivated.

**TASK**

Rate yourself (or your leader!) against the following list of motivational pointers used by leaders who inspire teams:

Motivational pointers: leaders who inspire teams:	Yes	No
• share their purpose		
• are open to ideas		
• create a climate which draws quality people to join		
• motivate themselves first		
• know their people		
• use discipline sparingly, making it swift and fair		
• never bully: this only leads to compliance at the expense of building competence and confidence		
• take ability as a given		
• acknowledge a winning team		
• respect seniority within existing team members		
• advertise the team – share accomplishments, share the spotlight, share success with superiors		
• hire the right people for the right job		
• delegate and share tasks and projects		
• assign confidence-building projects		
• reinforce confidence		
• recognise achievement – no matter how small		
• encourage people to take responsibility		
• share the credit and take the blame		
• mentor others		
• have a mentor		

**How do you measure up?**

**16–20 Yes's:** you're there: focus on consolidation and consistency

**11–15 Yes's:** a little fine-tuning required: ask the team how they want to be motivated

**0–10 Yes's:** a work in progress: well done for recognising areas for improvement

After completing the task, above, where does this leave us? Anyone can criticise, condemn and complain – but it takes character and self control to be understanding and forgiving of others: the only way to get anyone to do anything is by making the other person want to do it.

The question then is *what do people really want from their leaders?* When asked, people responded as follows: recognition and

respect, to be listened to, and to be treated like an individual, and interestingly, money only becomes a real issue when personal financial circumstances become challenging or people feel undervalued.

Therefore, if we want to motivate ourselves and those around us, we may need to look at changing our **philosophy** and not just our **procedures**, to ensure lasting, sustainable, motivational change for the better, and that process starts with *us*.

In reality we know that the only person we can motivate is ourselves, but the ability to generate enthusiasm amongst other people is one of the greatest assets that anyone can possess. The way to develop that enthusiasm in another person is by appreciation and encouragement.

As leaders, we can create a climate in which motivation in others withers and dies, or we can create a climate in which enthusiasm and motivation in others can flourish. As followers, we can ask ourselves: what do I do and say each day that stifles motivation, and what can I do and say each day which will encourage and motivate my colleagues?

**it is up to you**

Which environment will you be working in tomorrow? The answer lies with you; it is worth challenging yourself on a regular basis by asking: what am I prepared to **continue doing or to change**, that will encourage a more motivational, can-do climate?

We have a collective responsibility to be the best that we can – regardless of the size or structure of the organisation we are working in. In today's world, striving for excellence is not optional: expect it from yourself and those you work with – after all, why would anyone want to settle for less?

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**About the author**

Margaret Zuppinger started her career with the Department of Employment and the Training Agency, experiencing first hand the challenges of striving to deliver a service against ever changing targets and political agendas, with a shrinking set of resources. What she discovered about creating a motivational climate in which you and your team can flourish and succeed, she shares with you in this article.

Margaret set up her own training and development consultancy, Margaret Zuppinger Partnership Ltd., in 1991, specialising in presentation and communications skills, and interpersonal and behavioural training and development. Margaret can be contacted at: [margaret@zuppinger.u-net.com](mailto:margaret@zuppinger.u-net.com).