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Motivation

From the Editor

I was curious. "What do you do when the choir doesn't sound tight?"

Matthew was matter of fact. "The Director starts us off, we're in our sections, and then as we're singing, we move around the room to find the three other voices that aren't our own."

"So you can practise blocking them out and just focus on what you're doing?"

"Nope. Just the opposite. The only way you get harmony is by listening to the other voices and then making adjustments. The choir comes together as a unit only if everybody is listening."

Harmony can only happen if you listen. Nifty notion, I thought. That's what we do at LIVE — help team members listen to one another so harmony is possible.

LIVE Consultants Inc. is a team of management educators who sponsor this publication.

Marilyn Baetz, editor

About the Author and the Article

Most managers know that you can't motivate anybody who doesn't want to be motivated. Motivation is an inside job and each of us is responsible for motivating ourselves.

But a manager also realizes that it is their job to *create an environment* where other people on the team want to make extraordinary contributions.

Just how do you get people to do that?

Stephen Baetz offers six ideas he picked up when he was on the other side of the seminar table.

Stephen is a principal partner of LIVE Consultants Inc.



Stephen Baetz

Motivation Musts

Maybe you've been to one of those programs or led one. Either the program developer or the internal sponsor has woven a senior manager into the fabric of the day.

They usually arrive having scanned the content outline and they have some vague notion of what they are there to do — either to tell war stories of how they have used some of the material in *real life* or reinforce the value of learning and making personal change.

If you're the program leader, this is usually the time when mild panic strikes. You worry about extremes ... either that they may soap box or that they will do nothing more than stick their hands in their pockets and say, "Well, what would you like to talk about?" It never feels like you've done enough prep to manage your worry. Sure you've talked with them about what needs to be achieved; sure you've sent some written follow-up; sure you've phoned them to answer any questions ... but you've also done this long enough to know that even the best prep isn't always enough.

And that's where I was — fearing the worst while, at the same time, hoping that I might luck out and have an exec who could inspire and stimulate thinking.

This day, I got lucky.

We had just finished a major piece on leadership and the group had drawn some pretty solid conclusions about the nature of leadership competencies in the contemporary organization. The group had a solid list:

- less command and control but more encouragement and support,
- less focus on *who* messed up but more focus on *what* went wrong with a process,
- less answer-giving but more question-asking, and
- less reading what the boss wants but more reading what the customer needs.

Now it was time to bring on the exec ... a former army guy who had thus far survived the battles of the boardroom and the challenges of peacekeeping — it wasn't clear, he had told me, which had taught him more. He had war stories from both.

His beginning was strong. "How do you get

people to do dangerous things, psychologically dangerous things? It is at the point of danger that risk meets opportunity."

The participants joined in easily. They were eager to uncover the fundamentals of motivation without having to endure the tedium of Taylor, Mayo, McClelland, Maslow, or Herzberg ... all of whom were long on theory but short on practical counsel about how to create an environment where people wanted to make extraordinary contributions or even do the dangerous.

I began to relax: this was going to be productive time.

He talked about his experience in the army and drew the parallel to the corporate world. He had a 6 pack of motivation fundamentals.

Provide a well understood *local* goal.

Every soldier, every worker, has to understand the broader vision or purpose, sure enough. But they have to have something present and immediate that they can identify with and be part of.

For example, a soldier must understand that the broader purpose is to keep the peace between two warring factions. And more importantly, the team needs to understand the specific goal of what they are to do. It is the local issue that they can see, that they can relate to, and that they can do something about. At the local level, a team can see and measure what success they are having and they can make corrections if required.

No goals, no motivation. An individual or a team is not likely to engage in dangerous, innovative initiatives if they don't have a specific understanding of what they are supposed to achieve. As individuals, we have to be able to answer why it is worthwhile to make the emotional investment and take the risk.

Train.

Individuals are more likely to take on difficult and challenging assignments if they know they

have the skills, knowledge, and abilities to be successful.

Training builds competence; competence builds self-confidence.

There's a bumper sticker that reads, "If you think education is expensive, think of the price of ignorance." The price of not training, of not developing, of not educating is a team who either plays it safe or keeps repeating yesterday's mistakes today. And both of those outcomes don't resemble motivation.

Provide tools and equipment.

The difficult, the dirty, or the dangerous will not be undertaken if people feel they don't have the appropriate tools or equipment to get the job done.

A soldier may agree once to dig a trench with his helmet — especially if there is a crisis — but is less willing to do it a second, third, and fourth time. Provide the tools and equipment and the task feels like it is more *do-able*.

It's no different in the work environment. Motivation drops when an employee doesn't have the right equipment, the right software, the right hardware. They would rather fight the problem in front of them than fight faulty tools.

Have a plan.

Plans define how you will move from where you are now to where you want to be. And it is a leader's responsibility to ensure that there is a plan that can move the team toward the well-understood local goal.

Having a plan doesn't mean, however, that it is the leader who has to define it. The plan can evolve from the team and the experience it has. In reality, when the team crafts its own plan, the commitment to a successful execution of the plan increases dramatically.

The leader in the boardroom or in the field camp owns a second responsibility relative to planning — making sure that it is communicated and understood by everyone before the plan is implemented. A plan made but not communicated and understood by all

the stakeholders is no plan at all. Without a plan, few will agree to do the dangerous.

Take care of the *basics*.

In the army, this means making sure the soldiers get mail from home on time, the meals are good, and that they have dry clothes. The basics stop the grumbling ... they prevent people from being distracted, from losing focus.

In the world of work, the basics have to do with making sure people get regular feedback, they are fairly compensated and rewarded, they have a work environment that is safe, they have a supervisor who treats them with respect, they are valued for the ideas and skills they have, they know what is going on in the organization, and they have processes that are reasonable and productive.

Demonstrate that the leader is committed to the mission and team survivability.

If leaders are going to encourage remarkable initiatives, they must take the same risks to communicate that they are committed like everybody else to the mission. In the armed forces, the person who packs the parachutes, selects one at random, and jumps with the team. This ensures that the job is done right.

In the day-to-day work environment, leaders must take the same risks as everybody else on the team or nobody will jump to new turf and territory or even attempt to establish a beachhead of innovation.

If people get the strong and clear impression that we-are-all-in-this-together and that we are an interdependent unit, they will be willing to abandon their own self-interests in favour of the interests of the team and they will take chances because they have the secure knowledge that they will be supported.

Not bad, I thought, six motivational musts that will encourage outstanding contribution. We had one more for the leadership list: less searching for motivational magic, more emphasis on the leadership basics.

Select Your Best Facilitators

Think about the cost of education and development.

Got it in your mind's eye?

Now consider what it would cost if your people weren't skilled, knowledgeable, and supportive of the organization's goals, strategies, and values.

Calculated that one broadly? An even larger number.

Go one more step. Imagine what opportunities you will have lost or sacrificed if you have invested in education and development but have program facilitators who aren't skilled at helping adults learn.

Sure, there are train the trainer programs that can be used but maybe you're missing an important prior step — *selecting the best facilitators possible*. That challenge is particularly important if you are using line managers to help make the learning relevant.

To help you *select the best*, we have developed a Facilitator Assessment Centre. At the end of the day-long process, each candidate will know whether they are suited for the classroom or not. As well, each candidate will receive a report which identifies their strengths and their areas of development. The report is based on more than a dozen key factors that we know lead to facilitator success.

The net result is that the facilitators that do qualify, come to a train the trainer program focused, ready, and eager to learn.

Imagine the cost if you don't select the best!

For more information about our services, contact us at (519) 664-2213.