



Motivation That Matters

“Motivating” employees to repeat the behaviors you want requires strategy and skill. How well do you practice reinforcement that really connects?

- 1. In reality, employee motivation is:**
 - a. Less important than it once was.
 - b. A critical key to performance.
 - c. Not something that can be “managed.”
- 2. A key to motivation is:**
 - a. Giving employees everything they want.
 - b. Making “undesirable” behavior harder to perform.
 - c. Making “desirable” behavior easier to perform.
- 3. Generally, your smartest approach with employees is to:**
 - a. Tell them what you expect, then leave them alone.
 - b. Let them guess what you want, then correct as necessary.
 - c. Clarify expectations, then provide feedback.
- 4. The most powerful motivations for change are:**
 - a. Need or opportunity.
 - b. Discomfort or pain.
 - c. Warnings from the HR department.
- 5. Employees tend to be motivated most by:**
 - a. Pay and benefits.
 - b. Job security.
 - c. Interesting work.
- 6. The best time to deal with employee behavior is:**
 - a. Immediately.
 - b. At the next performance appraisal.
 - c. Only when the employee asks for help.
- 7. Trinkets and other small tokens:**
 - a. Can help motivate most any employee.
 - b. Are appropriate only with the less educated.
 - c. Will reinforce good performance only if they are presented publicly.
- 8. The most common error in trying to motivate employees is:**
 - a. Rewarding with too little, too late.
 - b. Making assumptions about what motivates.
 - c. Focusing only on the poor performers.
- 9. The best thing a manager can do to build a high performance culture is:**
 - a. Say the right thing, and genuinely mean it.
 - b. Be an example to everyone on the job.
 - c. Show appreciation.
- 10. Being good at motivation and reinforcement primarily requires:**
 - a. Good listening and observation skills.
 - b. A willingness to understand other views.
 - c. A background in psychology or a degree in human resource development.



Each correct answer is worth 10 points

1. b. In today's economy, understanding and skill in motivating employees are more important than ever. With easy access to information, they are more aware of what they may perceive as "greener pastures" with one of your competitors.

2. both b and c. Motivation must be planned on both the strategic and tactical levels. Make the "old" behavior less attractive and more difficult while making the "new" behavior both attractive and easier. Remove rewards for the old behavior you don't want and add rewards for the new behavior you seek. As the saying goes, either you reinforce the behaviors of the desired change or you reinforce the behaviors of the status quo.

3. c. Friendly clarity is the lubricant for smooth relationships. Clarify up front what you expect of others, and ask for their expectations of you (even if you're the "boss"). Then build feedback loops into the situation so all parties feel "safe" in speaking up.

4. b. Discomfort and pain tend to provide the most compelling motivation for change. That's not to suggest that you create pain so people will change. But you need to help people understand the pain of *not* changing. That means providing a strong business case for action — in the frame of reference of the people you're trying to influence. Fear of the unknown keeps many people from making changes. Chalk up another point for clarity.

5. c. Study after study shows that "interesting work" tops the list of things that employees claim to be most motivating to them. That's followed by "appreciation," "being part of a team," "job security" and, then fifth on the list, "good wages." Interestingly, when

managers are asked to list what they think motivates employees, they place money number one on the list, and appreciation a distant eighth. This disconnect is a primary cause of eroding loyalty in the work place.

6. a. When your three year-old either misbehaves or does something good, you don't say "Bobby, let's take that up at your next quarterly review." You offer correction or praise on the spot. The same principle applies to adults. Practice the "PICNIC" approach to reinforcement. For behavior you want, provide reinforcement that is Positive, ImmEDIATE and Certain. For behavior you don't want, provide reinforcement that's Negative, ImmEDIATE and Certain. In high performance organizations, everyone is clear about what they stand for and what they won't stand for.

7. a. As long as they have relevant symbolic meaning, even very simple items can have strong reinforcement value. One CEO rewarded each of 200 managers with a small crystal elephant representing their role in "teaching the elephant to dance" — making the large company more flexible and nimble. Another company handed out brass "eggs" to people who made a special effort at self improvement — symbolic of Aesop's story about the goose that laid the golden eggs. The "token" can be absolutely anything as long as it is valued by the recipient. And remember that "value" does not necessarily have anything to do with dollars.

8. b. The CEO of a large retail chain thought he had a great idea for motivating his top producers: he promised to give them a ride in his new Porsche. In reality, the gesture was an insult and the secret joke was that "second prize is

two rides in the Porsche." Always take the time to *ask* what would be a good reward. The answer may surprise you. The American manager of a U.S. manufacturing facility in Mexico wanted to reward his workers for surpassing production goals. He asked them what would be the most valued reward they could receive. He was surprised to learn that they wanted a Catholic Mass held in the company parking lot.

9. c. Remember the EMR formula for success: Express, Model, Reinforce. First you express (talk about) the values or behavior you treasure. Then you consistently model it in your own actions. Then you reinforce (reward) it in others. Modeling is twice as effective as expressing, and reinforcing is at least three times as effective.

10. both a and b. There's really nothing complicated about motivating people to do their best work. Simply listen to and observe your people very carefully and select your strategies and tactics from *their* frame of reference. It's amazing how easy and inexpensive good reinforcement can be.

Quiz Scoring

Your score:

80-100 You scored high and that's good. But don't get complacent. Consistently good reinforcement management requires constant focus.

60-70 Next time you face an opportunity to reinforce (which is no doubt every day) try these ideas.

Below 60 Motivation troubles in your organization? Maybe you're part of the problem. Try to become part of the solution.

