

Encouraging Motivation in the Workplace



Photo: Team motivation by [rawpixel](#) on [Pixabay](#)

It seems intuitive that employee motivation can impact organizational success and that managers should care about motivating employees, but the topic of motivation is complex. Supervisors can motivate employees by understanding individual motivational preferences; building trust and developing strong relationships; helping employees set and reach goals that link to larger institutional mission and goals; and facilitating intentional, ongoing development conversations.

This Supervisor Success Learner Guide is presented in two sections:

Section 1: Seek to Understand

Section 2: Do It

Content in these sections will guide you through resources, activities, and reflections relating to each objective. The learning is self-paced and you are encouraged to go at your own speed, allowing time to apply the learning through various activities, then returning to the guide to reflect on what you learned through application. For those who want to dive deeper into some of the content, there is a list of additional resources at the end of the guides.

Section 1: Seek to Understand

Not everyone is motivated by the same factors. To create a motivating environment, you first need to understand the basics of motivation; what motivates you; and what motivates your individual employees. This section includes the following tips:

- **Tip 1:** Understand the Basics of Motivation
- **Tip 2:** Understand Your Own Motivational Preferences and Those of Your Individual Employees

REFLECTION

1. Think about a time when you felt highly motivated at work. What factors might have contributed to that motivation?
2. How do you currently motivate employees and how is that working?
3. What barriers to employee motivation can you already identify as existing in your institution?

Tip 1: Understand the Basics of Motivation

Motivation: According to *Wikipedia*, motivation is a term that refers to a process that elicits, controls, and sustains certain behaviors. Motivation is a group of phenomena which affect the nature of an individual's behavior, the strength of the behavior, and the persistence of the behavior.

In simpler terms: Motivation is WHY you do things.

“People often say that motivation doesn't last. Well, neither does bathing - that's why we recommend it daily.” —Zig Ziglar

Learn

- Watch [RSA ANIMATE: Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us](#)

In this short video (10:47 min) based on the research of **Daniel Pink**, we learn that autonomy, mastery, and purpose describe the factors that motivate employees when it comes to creative or higher-level thinking kinds of work. Research indicates that these factors are better motivators than financial or other external incentives.



Image: screen shot from RSA Animate video

- Watch [More Than #MotivationMonday: Motivating Your Team Any Day of the Week](#)

In this 1-hour webinar, **Rachel G. Rubin**, Director of Library and Information Services at Capital University (OH), explores factors that influence motivation at work and reviews strategies for keeping teams motivated and productive. Published abstract: “Employees motivated to deliver top notch service are key to a library’s success. But many don’t know how to design motivating environments for employees. As a critical management and leadership skill, it’s important to know what motivation is and isn’t, what works and what doesn’t. In this session, we’ll explore factors that influence motivation at work and review strategies for supervisors to keep their teams motivated and productive. No matter the size of your library or your role, you will be inspired to find your own motivation and be able to catalyze others!”

- **Take action:** [Complete the Learner’s Guide](#) that goes along with this webinar and document how you will initiate change and motivate your team.
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Tip 2: Understand Your Own Motivational Preferences and Those of Your Individual Employees

The age-old maxim “know thyself” applies to all aspects of effective leadership, including motivating your employees. Your own motivational preferences influence your responses to and expectations of the people you work with. Understanding your own and your employees’ preferences will help to integrate everyone into a productively motivated team.

Your Motivational Preferences

Take Action

- **Take the [Self-Motivation](#) quiz**
This short quiz from Mind Tools will help you better understand how self-motivated you are. At the bottom of the test, click the Calculate My Total button to get your score.
- **Reflect on your score**
Scroll down to the Score Interpretation and Factors in Self-Motivation sections to reflect on the nuanced factors that form the picture of your own motivation.

Factors in Self-Motivation	Reflection
Self-confidence and self-efficacy	Which of the suggested steps do you think will help boost your self-confidence?
Positive thinking, and positive thinking about the future	Practice the strategies for shifting to more positive thinking. After a week, what changes do you notice? After a month?
Focus and strong goals	Try defining a goal for yourself, either in your personal life or your work. How many of Locke’s goal-setting characteristics does it have? How can you redefine it to be more meaningful?
A motivating environment	What environmental factors can you adjust to boost your internal motivation?

Your Employees’ Motivational Preferences

People differ in what motivates them to do their job well. Knowing what the key motivators are for each of your team members will help you manage their engagement with their work.

Take Action

- **Ask team members to take the [Self-Motivation](#) quiz**
This will give individuals a sense of their own motivation factors and will give the team a common language with which to discuss adjustments to the workplace. Ask each of them to fill out the reflection chart above.

- **Use the Seven Motivators activity from [The Employee Engagement Group](#)**

This activity asks each staff member to rank the 7 motivators from 1 to 7, with 1 being the most important and 7 being the least important.

- | | |
|----------------|-------------|
| 1) Achievement | 5) Esteem |
| 2) Affiliation | 6) Security |
| 3) Authority | 7) Equity |
| 4) Autonomy | |

- **Debrief on the activity**

- Individually: Explore the results of the key motivator activity with each employee individually to gain more insight into why they chose the rankings. Be aware that an employee may feel motivated in an area but lack the skills (now or ever) to perform the particular job. This is a good opportunity to sort out motivation from skill level in order to respond better to their needs.
- Team: In a team meeting, talk about the different types of motivation. Allow staff to share what they learned about their own motivation types (only if they want to). Have the group brainstorm what this motivation looks like in the workplace and how they can support each other.

REFLECTION

As a manager, how will knowing each employee's motivators help you better engage with each of them? Looking at the different rankings of your team's key motivators, what alignments or disparities do you see? What adjustments could you make in the way the team works together?

Section 2: Do it

Once you understand the basics of motivation, your own motivational preferences, and those of your individual employees, it's time to start the work of intentionally motivating your staff and creating a culture of motivation. This section includes the following tips:

- **Tip 3:** Build a Culture of Trust
- **Tip 4:** Help Employees Set and Reach Goals That Link to Larger Institutional Mission and Goals
- **Tip 5:** Make Space for Intentional, Ongoing, One-on-One Development

Tip 3: Build a Culture of Trust

Is trust linked to motivation? It seems to be, according to the work of neuroscientist Paul Zak. Zak suggests that “Compared with people at low-trust companies, people at high-trust companies report: 74% less stress, 106% more energy at work, 50% higher productivity, 13% fewer sick days, 76% more engagement, 29% more satisfaction with their lives, 40% less burnout.”¹

So how can a manager foster a culture of trust?

1. Read [The Neuroscience of Trust](#)

In the section *How to Manage for Trust*, Zak details eight management behaviors that help build trust.

1. Recognize excellence
2. Induce “challenge stress”
3. Give people discretion in how they work
4. Enable job crafting
5. Share information broadly
6. Intentionally build relationships
7. Facilitate whole-person growth
8. Show vulnerability

Take Action

You are encouraged to reflect on all of the above behaviors, and focus on three that may be less understood.

Induce “challenge stress.”

How would you summarize “challenge stress?”

¹ Zak, P. J. (2017). The neuroscience of trust. *Harvard Business Review*, 95(1), 84-90. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2017/01/the-neuroscience-of-trust>

What are one or two opportunities for including more challenge stress with your team?

Give people discretion in how they do their work.

Think about a time when you were given discretion in how you were able to do your work. What did you appreciate about that experience?

What opportunities do you have to give your staff more discretion in how they do their work?
How will you manage their discretionary work?

Facilitate whole person growth.

What does whole person growth refer to?

What questions can you ask during one-on-one meetings with your employees that might foster whole person growth?

2. Refer to Tip 2: Model the Right Behavior in [An Ounce of Prevention: Establishing a Positive Workplace Culture](#) (part of the Learning Round Table Supervisor Success series).

Show vulnerability is the eighth management behavior in Zak's list and it may be the most challenging transition for any supervisor to make. The **Model the Right Behavior** section guides you through video, articles, assessment, and techniques for enhancing your emotional intelligence and enabling you to open up to your vulnerability.

Take Action

The next time you need the expertise of one of your employees, show your vulnerability by asking them for help and being transparent about the fact that they know more about this particular topic than you do.

Tip 4: Help Employees Set and Reach Goals that Link to Larger Institutional Mission and Goals

Numerous reports across business and industry indicate that not only are employees more effective if they can clearly see how their individual goals fit into the big picture, they are also more motivated to work to achieve their goals. Employees who don't understand how their individual roles contribute to company success are more likely to become disengaged.

REFLECTION

How often do you talk with your staff about connecting their work to the library's mission and goals? What are the formal ways this information is documented in your institution?

Setting Aligned Goals

Although it may be obvious to you, not all of your staff members may be aware of where to find the library's mission statement, goals and strategic plan. Provide easy access to this information for everyone on your team, no matter what position they hold.

- **Look at the [SLCPL Strategic Roadmap Field Guide](#)**
The Salt Lake City Public Library (SLCPL) has taken goal alignment to a new level by involving all library employees in their strategic planning process. The Field Guide is a handbook in which each staff member is invited to participate actively in the flexible, ongoing, community-focused planning process of the entire system. It builds shared understanding by asking each individual to describe what the overarching concepts (goals) and strategic focus means to them, which aspects resonate most with them, and where they feel they can best contribute.

Take Action

Using your existing organizational strategic plan as a guideline, work with your staff members to create a department or branch plan that mirrors and supports the same goals. List the department/branch goals here:

Now, with those focused goals in place, help each staff member to identify at least two individual, measurable objectives that they can work on to support the organization's success and to grow and develop their own skills and contributions:

Tip 5: Make Space for Intentional, Ongoing, One-on-One Development

Tip 3 included information about whole person growth: caring about your staff's long-term goals rather than just about their growth in their particular positions. To foster whole person growth, you'll need to make time and create space for ongoing development conversations. Through these conversations, you'll discover your staff members' professional interests, goals, and hopes for their long-term career aspirations. From there, you will plan a way forward together, proactively identifying opportunities that will contribute to their unique long-term growth.

REFLECTION

If someone asked you to describe your employees' long-term aspirations, could you do it?

Do you think your boss could accurately describe your own long-term aspirations? Why or why not?

Take Action

1. Start by adding time for development-related conversations with your staff to your calendar. You may want to schedule formal quarterly check-ins and then informally check in during your other one-on-one meetings. Find a balance that works for you.
2. Use the individual objectives they recently created as a basis for your conversations. Check in to see how they're progressing. What additional training or support might they need? How can you celebrate and share their successes?

3. Prepare for the conversation.
 - a. Develop a list of questions to start the conversation. Review this list to get started: <https://mysuccesslab.com/effective-career-development-discussions-questions-ask-employees/>

4. Create a plan to continue moving forward together.
 - a. What will your employee need to do or learn to meet their long-term goals?
 - b. What small steps could be taken now to help get them closer to their long-term goal?
 - c. What learning opportunities and experiences could be useful for their long-term growth?

Tips: Be sure to document aspects of your conversation so you can review it prior to your next conversation. Ensure that part of your employee’s yearly goals include at least one to two goals that relate to their long-term goals.

5. Continue to review your employee’s progress and look for opportunities that align with their goals.

Conclusion

The magic bullet for motivation does not exist. As you learned in this guide, there are many facets to motivation and just as many strategies for activating those facets and guiding employees toward greater self-esteem, alignment with the purpose of their work, and sense of challenge and achievement. Watching motivation grow on your team is like watching a garden grow – it takes time and repetition and patience.

There is also the reality that for some employees, it seems that nothing will motivate them beyond doing the minimum and collecting a paycheck. If the behavior is negative enough to impact the morale of the team, it becomes a performance issue. The Supervisor Success series will continue with a third Learner Guide on performance management, coming in the fall of 2019.

FINAL REFLECTION

- What content in this module resonated with you?
- What practices will you carry forward?
- What institutional challenges or barriers will you need to overcome to better motivate employees?

Additional Resources

This list of additional resources is provided for those who want to further explore the topic of motivation.

Dive into the research

- Alajmi, B. & Alasousi, H. (2019). Understanding and motivating academic library employees: Theoretical implications. *Library Management*, 40(3/4), 203-214. <https://doi.org/10.1108/LM-10-2017-0111>
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- Kanfer, R., & Chen, G. (2016). Motivation in organizational behavior: History, advances and prospects. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 136, 6-19. doi:10.1016/j.obhdp.2016.06.002
- Nohria, N., Groysberg, B., & Lee, L. (2008). Employee motivation: A powerful new model. *Harvard Business Review*, 86(7/8), 78.
- Ramlall, S. (2004). A review of employee motivation theories and their implications for employee retention within organizations. *Journal of American Academy of Business*, 5(1/2), 52-63.
- Rowley, J. (1996). Motivation of staff in libraries. *Library Management*, 17(5), pp.31-35. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01435129610119610>

Watch related presentations

- This list of six motivation-related TED Talks was curated by Stuart Hearn: <https://www.clearreview.com/6-employee-performance-management-ted-talks/>
- [Strategic Planning in a Deeply Weird World: The Flexible Roadmap Field Guide Approach](#): A one-hour webinar about Salt Lake City Public Library's ground-breaking approach to library strategic planning that is community focused and staff empowering