Improving Personal Productivity

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SIMPLY EASY LEARNING

About the Tutorial

Most people admit that they have faced times when they all wondered if it would be better to have more time in a day. That might not be possible any time sooner, however it's definitely worth trying an alternative.

This tutorial is designed to inform our readers about the various facets that an employee needs to take in consideration while planning his day, and how he can organize his work in such a manner that he doesn't feel the crunch of time.

In this tutorial, we will discuss the concept of personal productivity and what techniques are needed to implement it successfully.

Audience

This tutorial is for designed for working professionals and students who need to know how to get the best out of their daily schedule, how to set daily targets, and which methods to follow in getting them motivated to meet their daily targets.

Prerequisites

Before proceeding with this tutorial, you are expected to know about the basics of human's emotional quotient and human behavior. You also are expected to have basic knowledge on team-building techniques.

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1. Personal Productivity – Introduction

Most people admit that they have faced times when they all wondered if it would be better to have more time in a day. That might not be possible any time sooner, however it's definitely worth trying an alternative. There are various facets to being an employee that a working professional needs to take in consideration while planning his day, and how he can organize his work in such a manner that he doesn't feel the crunch of time.

To enjoy life's hidden moments of pleasure, it's essential that people learn how to design routines, make goals, create an efficient environment, and use organizational techniques to maximize their own output. Using **personal productivity** techniques properly, professionals achieve their targets effectively, and that too without missing a deadline. It helps them to keep a tab on multiple, concurrent running assignments, so that they can ensure that their personal goals are being successfully met, along with the team goals.

Dr. Aubrey Daniels had used the term **Personal Productivity** to explain the correlation between workplace conditions and getting expected results. He had propounded the theory that if a person's behavior can be modulated, then it will have a direct influence on the quality of his output.

Using this understanding in a formal setting, he found out that if the management can properly modulate the working conditions in their workplace through policies, incentives, and an effective reward system, then they will be able to draw much better results from their employees.

Personal Productivity and Performance Appraisal

Many people tend to mix up **Personal Productivity** with **Performance Appraisal**.

- Performance Appraisal is the process in which an employee's performance during a given time-period is evaluated, and is measured up against the expectations that the management of him. If his performance is found satisfactory, then he is rewarded for his performance through incentives, raises, allowances, etc.

- Personal Productivity refers to the entire set of programs, activities and processes that an employee can create to optimize his efficiency and productivity, subsequently his team, his departments and his manager. Unlike appraisals that are generally an annual process, personal productivity is a day-to-day phenomenon.

Every manager likes to have an employee in his team who is knowledgeable, hardworking, goal-oriented, and focused. In other words, a good personal productivity implementation will help the employees in getting good performance appraisals.

2. Defining Personal Productivity

According to the Office of Personnel Management, located in Washington, DC, personal productivity consists of a flowchart that begins with the employee planning his assignment properly and setting realistic expectations, then implementing a regular self-monitoring to see if his work is on schedule, while also checking performance and rating the quality of his output, receiving constructive feedback and finally ending in earning rewards as a deserving performer.

Just introducing a personal productivity system in the workplace is not sufficient. The employees must be taken on board and their feedback must be counted to design the system to be as productive and effective as possible.

To implement Personal Productivity successfully, the employee needs to interact with the management, learn the expectations of the management from them, know the areas they should improve in, their strengths and motivation factors.

Important Guidelines

Here is a list of a few important guidelines to design effective Personal Productivity Systems:

1. Clearly identifying the types of work that are supposed to be done.
2. Dividing these work-types into profiles with tasks clearly mentioned.
3. Using expertise in profiles after getting clear instructions from management.
4. Understanding the ranking order and getting expectations.
5. Understanding the standard of performance expected of key position-holders.
6. Engaging in quarterly reports on employee performance and feedback
7. Keep track of personal performance and productivity.
8. Keep track of personal performance records.
9. Create a personal reward system to gain motivation.

3. Case Study: Nurturing Employee Productivity

In this chapter, we will take a case study to understand the value of nurturing employee productivity.

Before their acquisition by JACOBS, **Sinclair Knight Merz** (SKM) was one of the largest infrastructure service-providers and construction companies. In this sector, companies compete mainly on the efficiency of its work-force with their skills, their excellent dealing with the clients, delivering output within deadlines, etc. So it was very important for their HR personnel to acquire, train, and retain top talent. The company encouraged an open and diverse management style.

The Issues at SKM

SKM were wary that some competitor might someday beat them at their own game if they don't stay ahead of the curve. And curiously, it was their management style that was causing a situation. Their way of working lent almost complete autonomy to every employee to choose his style, time and pace of work, partly because the company was hugely dependent on its employees for getting clients, to maintaining relationships, to developing networks.

Accenture's Human Capital Development Framework

To find a balance between the freedom of operations for its employees, and staying ahead in the competition so that the right skill-sets be recruited, nurtured and marketed to clients, SKM asked Accenture to implement a Human Capital Development Framework. The objective of this framework was to enable HR personnel to effectively assess and analyze talent and recruit them. It provided them state-of-art tools of Human Resource Development and all the competitive evaluation methods.

The Outcome

When the Human Capital Development Framework was implemented, many of SKM's strengths were confirmed and validated. The company's processes, efficiency, finance all got high scores. However, it also found out areas on which improvements could be done.

The HR Department had scored very highly in the data collected from the framework, however the areas of improvement were identified as "workforce planning and local recruitment". Using this feedback, SKM renewed its central recruitment policy and started placing internal recruitment personnel in all its global units. This immediately reduced the time to recruit staff and maximized the company's ability to go for mass-recruitments as per the needs and demands of a project.

The framework was also able to identify that effective leadership development was an area of improvement in SKM. Because of the mode of operation, a person was more likely to be given a free-pass in the way he handled and interacted with his clients, however, these people were now also asked to groom people who joined the organization so that the inductees can learn the ropes from their senior colleagues.

SKM also made changes to their rewards policy. The employees' preferences were taken into account while making a reward offer to him. Efforts were given better recognition. The framework managed to determine the areas on which the management had to focus the most and working on these areas brought in further improvements that provided SKM great competitive advantage over its peers.

4. The Three-Phase Theory

The successful enhancement of an employee's personal productivity depends on self-evaluation. An employee should keep in mind that his self-evaluation should provide a clear picture of the standards of his performance and the quality of output. To achieve this clarity, he must hold periodic assessments of his own work, in addition to the quarterly performance reviews from the management, which the employee is expected to attend and take as a constructive step towards improving performance.

Steps like these help the employee to detect the areas in which they are supposed to make changes and improvements. It also helps him identify those individual areas on which he can speak to the management, so that they can provide a way to boost his productivity.

Evaluation doesn't determine only those performers who need to up their performances; it also helps to identify those people who are performing really well, so that their hard work can be recognized and rewarded. A relevant rewarding system provides a huge impetus to the employees and motivates them to give their best at the job.

Keeping the way employees react to changes in their workplace environment, Kurt Lewin has introduced the "**Three-phase Theory of Change**" that is related strongly to performance management. This theory states that any employee trying to adopt to change goes through three phases:
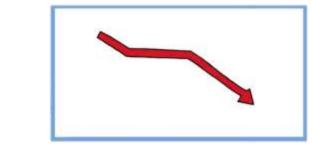
Unfreezing

This is a crucial phase for the employee during which he tried to understand the change and the reason it's taking place. After that, he starts preparing himself to accept the changes and tries to adapt to it.

During this phase, the person faces the realization that the environment he was comfortable working in is also going to change. At this point, they start to weigh the advantages of adapting to the change against the disadvantages of losing the comfortable working environment. This is called the Force Field Analysis.

Change

Lewin had mentioned that change is not a one-time event but is a process that depends on the transitions happening around a system. In other words, the changes a system faces are due to the changes in the surrounding environment. The reason this phase is so tough is because no one can be certain of what's going to happen in the future, so it's difficult to bring changes that will be good to last for long in an organization.

"What if we don't change anything at all
and something magical just happens

It's the same dilemma that people face while designing the curriculum for students to read in schools. Even if we aren't sure of what's going to happen the next day, we want to design content and education for them that we hope will stay relevant and help them in building their careers decades later.

In situations like these where people have to foresee situations and take decisions based on it in the present, the ideal approach is to try and think of challenging targets and try to achieve them, as compared to keeping really simple and low aims.

Freezing

This phase is the establishment of the new changes and the system gaining stability. This stage could take longer than the other two phases to be fully covered, and many times frequent unfreezing incidents happen during it, till it finally becomes stable for a long time.

5. Tools of Personal Productivity

Candidates appear for interviews, and subsequent rounds of evaluation during which the management determines their skill, aptitude, temperament and knowledge. Depending on the company, the management also administers annually, bi-annually, even quarterly assessments. These assessments also help them in determining which process an employee would be more suited to work in, depending on his profile.

Types of Assessments

There are two types of assessments that an employee goes through:

- **Pre-screening**- this type of screening is used to get information about a candidate, his experience, skills, and record before hiring them. This helps companies avoid recruiting a person with shady reputation, or questionable intent.

- **Knowledge Screening-** candidates often confuse this screening as a part of the recruitment process itself, however people get screened here before being interviewed by the HR personnel. This screening follows a questionnaire format with process-specific questions having a set of multiple-choice options from which the candidate is supposed to select the right one.

Performance Reviews as a Self-Motivational Policy

Performance reviews are defined as "the task of assessing a performance within a specific duration of working, measuring it up with the expectations, and seeing how much of the objectives have been achieved".

Every employee has his own way of handling a performance review, however, they all expect a checklist of important areas to be considered while getting a review of their performance. Some of these important areas are discussed below.

Getting informed by Management

The employee and the HR personnel must be made aware of the review, especially the employee so that he can come prepared with a list of his achievements and inputs, along with data to back his claims. This may include a lot of one-one Q&As and involve plenty of discussion.

Focus on the review as priority

Performances are what drive an organization, so while reviewing performances, best practices are to keep it utmost priority so that no other task conflicts schedules with it

Sharing feedback in a positive environment

The employee mustn't be made to feel that he is undergoing an interrogation session. The atmosphere needs to be understandably formal, however that doesn't mean humor can't be

tastefully used. The person should feel he is getting a fair opportunity at presenting his point across.

Emphasize on expectations

While taking down notes, it's important for the management to reiterate the expectations on the employee by the management, and how the objectives given to the employees contribute to the big picture.

Clarity of speech

The employee should be clear on the objective of the meeting from the beginning. This is where a timely memo helps. If the employee veers off-course during the course of discussion, it's the job of the manager to bring the discussion back on track.

Discuss performances objectively

While discussing the employee's performances, it's always best to not only be objective and fair, but also empathetic. People generally tend to take feedback personally as a question on their talent or capability, hence such situations must be avoided.

Employee feedback

The employee must feel that he got ample time and freedom to speak his mind and express himself clearly. This will help him in putting forth his questions in a better way, which will improve the HR's understanding of the person and his motivations.

Goal-setting

In a competitive environment, there will always be very good performers who would be genuinely good at their jobs, and who would be exceeding expectations. They might not have any "areas of improvements" per se', however, such performers may be handed personal goals to meet so that they find the motivation and drive in their jobs.

Follow-up

The employee should be told of the follow-up date, which is the time when the meeting will be called again to check the improvements and outcomes of the meeting. The HR will explain the set of expectations/goals and mention the duration to achieve them.

Closing amicably

The meeting should end on a positive note, where the employee will have a renewed perspective on what the company wants of him, and an action-plan on how he can work things out. He should also be given the assurance that he can feel free to approach the manager whenever he has any queries in mind.

6. Factors behind Personal Productivity

Employees with a clear focus on Personal Productivity can motivate themselves to get employees with irreconcilable differences to work in sync with one another, keeping in mind their own goals of increasing productivity and efficiency.

The reason it works is because these employees learn to see beyond personal equations and try to achieve personal milestones while still being a part of a team. Every employee works in an organization to earn his due, however if an employee sees that his company is willing to appreciate his hard-work in the form of a reward, then he will be more than happy to put up with someone who he doesn't personally like, all so that gets what he deserves.

To work together with people with differing opinions towards realizing a common goal, it's imperative that an employee gets a clear job description drawn by the management. It's important to also know about job responsibilities, scope of work, and purpose.

The management too must check if the employee is performing as per expectation, or if he needs any intervention and if the project is going as per schedule or more resources are needed. In case more resources are needed, this will give plenty of time to the managers to hire and train new recruits.

The success of every business depends on proper planning, goal-setting and objectives-handling. However, at a personal level, planning for a project and setting the goals helps an employee identify his strengths and weaknesses, and the areas of his possible contribution in the workforce. That's why successful performers always draw short-term goals for themselves, along with long-term ones, so that they can check the achievability of these short-term goals, and change their strategy.

What does a Good Performer do?

Although many companies employ managers to encourage personal productivity in their workplaces by sharing progress-charts and performance feedback, it can only be done at an individual level. The job of an employee is to make sure that his individual performances are all doing justice to his potential.

Most of employees are aware that their performance is evaluated many times over the period of a year. This includes their probation period, which typically lasts for 2-3 months during which the employee receives training on the product. After the probation, he is assigned a project and he continues to work on it.

If he is a good performer, then he will realize that during this period, till he completes 12 months of employment with the organization, his performances, behavior, attitude, and many other things will be observed. Although timely feedback will be provided, an ambitious employee will always make sure that he starts on the right foot. To achieve this, he needs to have a clear and constant **two-way communication** with his supervisors to make them understand what stage of the work he is at, whether there are any areas that he needs help with, and if he is going good.

In addition to this, he might also have a word with the rest of the employees, and offer them valuable inputs and suggestions on they can handle the challenges they are facing. A good performer will not only improve his performances, but also try on improving the team's knowledge, skills, and their attitude towards work through knowledge-sharing, assisting, and helping them draw self-goals.

7. Case Study: Incentives & Personal Productivity

In this chapter, we will have a small case study to analyze how incentives influence personal productivity.

Turnbuckle Fisheries was started with 22 employees in 1982. After the first year, it was found that the company was not able to expand beyond the current list of clients. Thinking that this would be a resource-related issue, he hired 10 more. However, after the dismal show in the second year, the owner of the company, Jonas Allroy decided to make a performance evaluation of the employees. It was found that all the employees were happy doing their work, however no one was pushing himself to do a better job for himself.

Allroy understood that even if his employees were satisfied at their jobs, they didn't have the drive to exceed their expectations because of the absence of any incentive system. He declared that any employee who gets new clients will be rewarded with 10% finder's fee and 5% of all the business that comes from that client.

In the third year, Jonas Allroy was thrilled to know that not only had the employee performances eradicated the business deficit of the last two years, but had actually earned him premium of 10% to invest further in the business.

8. SMART Goals for Personal Productivity

People often fail to achieve their goals, and one of the biggest reasons is that they had started out on a wrong goal in the first place. Philosophically speaking, no man should be told that a goal is unreachable for him, however when you are a valuable resource in an organization that depends on your healthy contribution for its development, it's imperative that you start off on the right note. In other words, you should make sure that your goal is a SMART one.

SMART stands for:

- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**ttainable
- **R**ealistic
- **T**imely

Specific Goals

As an employee, simply being told to improve performance is not sufficient. The employee should ask for specific instructions on what he is expected to do to get his performances up. Every instruction should be precise and the employee should have a clear understanding of the expectation from him. His job description should be explained to him clearly without leaving any scope for ambiguity.

Measureable Goals

If goals can't be measured, then they can't be monitored. Even authors divide their write-ups into the different sections to let the publishers know at what stage they are currently in the drafting process. An employee should design his goals in such a way that they are empirical in nature, so that he can see the numbers and gauge his progress.

Attainable Goals

If a goal is impossible for an employee to achieve, then he starts off on a negative foot, which doesn't let him operate at his peak. This is because he feels defeated inside, and feels no way convinced that he can achieve this target. Because he knows that he will be facing backlash at the review no matter how hard he tried, he will more likely give up any serious efforts. As a result of this, the quality of work deteriorates and a negativity spreads all over the workplace.

Realistic Goals

The difference between attainable goals and realistic goals is that attainable goals describe those goals that an employee feels he can achieve while working at his potential, whereas realistic goals are those that an employee believes that he can achieve because it's his area of expertise.

Most of the times, the employees are expected to be of a "know it all, do it all" type. Managers wrongly call it "career growth", however, they tend to forget that a jack of all trades is often a master of none, and if they need people with a specific set of skill-sets to work at their peak, then they should be asked to do jobs where their talent is utilized so that they are confident about their performance and the management gets their best services.

Timely Goals

Goals should be achieved within a time-frame. The reason people create goals is they feel that the getting work completed within this time frame is going to get them profit at a later stage. Even in day to day life, a man makes a monthly goal of saving a fixed sum of money so that it can help him in Medicaid and stuff later. This helps us realize that if a goal isn't achieved in a particular time-frame, then it loses significance.

Once a person has decided on what he is expected to do in his job, it's time to monitor his results himself. This is effective not only in checking his performance, but also in seeing whether a particular strategy is actually delivering the results. If not, then managers can make the changes that they feel are necessary to bring the strategy to right footing.

Checklist of areas for employees to monitor:

- Were the team goals achieved?
- Were the personal goals achieved?
- Was the time taken to achieve the goals within deadlines?
- What was the feedback from managers on this project?
- What is the Profit vs. Loss curve on the project?
- Was the response of the management timely and effective?

9. Worksheet for Personal Productivity

The following worksheet is one of the many that managers use to evaluate the performance of an employee. However, an employee can use it to monitor his own performances and productivity too. The employee is expected to be honest in self-evaluation, so that this worksheet gives him a good idea on what the management thinks about him.

Personal Productivity Worksheet

General Information	
• Employee Name:	• Designation:
• Department:	• Project:
• Review from (Month/Year):	• To (Month/Year):

Performance Factors		

Score- 0	Score- 1	Score- 2
Not related to the job	Related to the job	Crucial to the job

Factor	Rating	Expectations
Communication		
• Oral & written communication		
• Creates channels to interact		
• Likes exchange of ideas		
Co-operation		
• Concerned with team results.		
• Works well with co-workers		
• Likes to co-operate		
Customer Service		
• Makes effort to solve issues		
• Encourages team-spirit		

• Good listener		
• Empathizes		
Dependability		
• Has good attendance record		
• Respects project deadlines		
• Accepts responsibility		
Flexibility		
• Assumes new responsibilities		
• Adaptive to new conditions		
• Applies new knowledge		
Taking Initiative		
• Likes to complete assignments		
• Performs without assistance		
• Participates in planning		
Career Growth		
• Knows how companies operate		
• Has job-relevant knowledge		
• Seeks job knowledge		
Decision Making		
• Willing to make tough choices		
• Has a "root-up" approach		
Takes logical decisions.		
Leadership		
• Good at delegating work		
• Goal-oriented vision		
• Good motivator		
Organizational Skills		
• Handle multiple tasks well		
• Utilizes resources efficiently		
• Know work-prioritization		

Productivity		
• Utilizes time and resources well		
• Delivers work as per schedule		
Quality of Work		
• Work is accurate and thorough		
• Delivers good quality work		
• Follows policy/procedures		

Observation and Report	
Observation	**Factors Related to Observation**

Acknowledgement & Signatures

We have discussed and acknowledge the inclusion of the above performance appraisal factors, expectations, objectives or standards for the period stated.

Supervisor's Signature: _____   Date: _____

Employee's Signature: _____   Date: _____

David A. Kolb, the famous educational theorist, who is known for his Learning Style Inventory (LSI) has once propounded a theory known as the "Kolb's Learning Cycle" which states that learning is a product of experience, and it's important to be aware of the factors that lead to learning to manage people's performances.

According to him, **learning cycle is based on four factors**:

* Experiencing
* Observing
* Conceptualizing
* Experimenting

Experiencing

Experience is the knowledge that a person gains through the direct involvement of his senses, and because of this reason, experiential learning is one of the best methods of teaching new concepts and processes to people, because the knowledge gets hardwired into their brain. Hands-on-training is one such method where people are instructed and then asked to implement what they have learnt simultaneously.

Observing

Observing is a secondary method of learning where a person watches the outcome of an action and depending on the result, he either opts to go for the same action or rejects it and waits for another person to try something else. Kolb defines observation as reflective observation.

In a notable example, a trained chimpanzee was left in a cage with three more wild chimpanzees. The wild chimpanzees were digging up ant-hills to feed on them, however the trained chimpanzee took a stick, licked it, poked it into the ant-hill, then took it out and licked all the ants off the stick.

Within hours of watching this new action, the wild chimpanzees had given up breaking the hives and started looking for sticks. One of them went for sticks larger than the cave-mouths on the ant-hills and broke that side of the hill.

The other chimpanzee immediately dragged the stick from his hand, and after consideration, took a thinner stick. This new learning happened just from observing. The chimpanzees had changed years of habit in a few hours of learning a better method.

Conceptualizing

Conceptualizing is the method of getting knowledge without any direct source. In this learning process, the person neither gets involved himself nor observes others, but uses the data presented in front of him to formulate a logical way. Investigators use this method to recreate scenes of crime only through studying of evidence. Alternative examples are training manuals.

Experimenting

Experimenting is the method of learning where people put their knowledge to practice, and also see if anything new can be learnt from it. Going to the previous examples of chimpanzees, it was found that rhesus monkeys went even a step further and started experimenting with sticks from different plants.

Their education didn't end just by finding the right length and thickness of sticks, but they were also interested in experimenting with the type of wood. After a few days, the monkeys were found using twigs from an aphid-infested tree. The aphids had made the tree sap, in turn making the twigs sticky. Using this twig, the monkeys were able to multiply the number of ants they used to get earlier with one lick. However, an interesting thing happened in a few days. Because of the aphid infestation, the plant twigs had got infected, resulting in sap formation. By licking the sticks, the sap entered into the monkeys' system, causing mass stomach upset to one of them.

Understanding the risk, even when they themselves weren't afflicted with it, all of them changed the twig and went for some other wood. Similar to this cycle, people also learn through the same steps and methods. However, unlike the case with chimpanzees who only suffered on the health front, our mistakes might cause or trigger many related losses. In spite of that, people should be encouraged to experiment and take risks, so that they can learn for themselves the negative effects of their actions.

Example

Ratan was hired as a Software Developer in a software company. He was allotted a workspace, and made to go through a brief interaction with his manager who told him what tools he can use in designing the software. There was a manual given to him for each program he would use.

Initially, Ratan was hesitant in using the tools. He was afraid of making a mistake and causing great inconvenience to the entire project. His productivity was, at best, average for the first week. Then he himself ventured and observed how his colleagues were operating. Slowly his performance started picking up.

11. Herzberg's Theory

Frederick Herzberg, the famous American psychologist and an authority on "Business Management", had said that an employer is hiring a group of people to work in such a way that they manage to achieve what his goal was, then the best way to get them motivated is if they identify with the goal and see their personal achievements with it too.

Motivation is more than getting excited about your work. It's about being the best in your work, or giving the best result. Motivation is closely related to pay and work conditions, although an increased pay and better work conditions won't necessarily motivate an employee.

Herzberg found out that four factors matter the most while motivating an employee. Any employee would get motivation if he gets these much-needed motivators in his workplace:

- **Ownership –** Employees should feel that they have ownership of their job.
- **Nature of the work –** The employee must be in a job worthy of his talent.
- **Recognition –** An employee must have his efforts praised and acknowledged.
- **Achievement –** The outcome of the efforts must feel like achieving a goal.

Herzberg's Theory of Hygiene Factors

Herzberg had once mentioned in an interview that to prove his theory of "hygiene factors", which meant that certain things in the workplace might not motivate an employee to work harder, but their absence could demotivate him, he took the case of a printing company.

This company has started before two years, and was offering the most competitive salaries to its employees. However, many employees complained of the location of the company being too distant from the main town, causing inconvenience in commuting. The other issue was the improper air-conditioning facilities in the office.

The management took notice of this fact and after a year, they moved to another location. They got good air-conditioning and the office was at a location where everyone can easily arrive from across the city. In addition to that, they also reinforced their inventory and went for an interior redecoration.

It was observed that the employee productivity spiked initially, and the employees were excited to work in the new environment. However, after a few months, they were back to the same numbers. The management tried to remodel the place and offer a different look, but it didn't make any difference.

The managers then moved on to increasing the pay and providing good performance-based incentives. This saw a growth in some people's productivity, whereas some of the top performers kept delivering way below potential. It was at this point when the HRs stepped in and had a frank, one-one discussion with the employees.

It was found that employees had many different concerns, ranging from long working hours, time spent in commuting, work-life balance, flexible timings, etc. They realized that just ensuring that the employees get paid timely and competitively doesn't give them motivation. To get them motivated, every employee should get his personal motivating factor addressed. They introduced policies that addressed every employee's concerns and found that the productivity of the company rose by 35% since the time they moved to the new building.

12. Why Employees Lose Interest to Work

Successful employees realize that the tags of "disobeying, uncooperative" etc. are attached to those in a team who were once selected to work for them by the company itself. In other words, the said person was never short of talent, nor he has any negative attitude towards work. Something in the company must have changed him. It could be the working environment, it could be the co-workers who have ignored him, or many other issues.

A person might get disappointed with the working conditions very soon if he doesn't have the real picture in front of his eyes. That doesn't mean that the talent inside him has died. What it takes to bring out that talent and rejuvenate such employees is trying to understand their issues.

Reasons behind Lack of Interest

There could be many reasons behind the lack of motivation in an employee's life. The chief reasons are discussed below.

Lack of required capability

In the times of retrenchment and recession, many aspirants accept whatever job offer they are made, as a result of which they end up working in a sector that they never had any interest to work in, nor did they have any talent in it. In such cases, further motivation is impossible, unless the employee is given professional training in the needed job set. In such situations, training programs after work-times could be arranged.

No challenges in the job

A lot of good candidates find themselves plain bored after the first few years in a company. That's because they feel that their skill-sets are not being put to use, and their talent is not being given an opportunity. Multi-talented people get frustrated working in the same job and this boredom can cause poor attitude and low motivation.

To improve this situation, such employees may be tasked with other extra—curricular activities like training new inductees, getting them in committees and taking their suggestions in different team projects. This will keep them interested and also motivated in their jobs.

Efforts aren't appreciated

No employee in this world likes if his hard work is ignored or taken for granted. Every person wants his efforts to have some impact on the outcome of the company. When a person is made to feel that his work is not contributing to the success of the company, he loses the drive to work hard, and his productivity starts to lag as a result. This makes the employee feel jealous of others when the other person gets praised, or is promoted. Instead of being happy for a colleagues' professional success, the disgruntled employee ends up resenting them.

It's the responsibility of the managers to make sure that people feel valued and needed in a company. They should be proactive in sharing feedback and let a person know where he is going right and what changes he should make in his approach for better results.

Unfriendly workplace

Most of the employees don't get along with their colleagues, however some of them might be really getting ignored by all due to poor communication skills or introvert nature. The manager should explain to the team that the objective of the team is to get the work done as a cohesive unit, and it's impossible to work in a disjoint manner.

In addition to such team-discussions, it's also important to arrange for team outings, gatherings, etc. to keep the communication in a team healthy. Forming small teams and delegating work to them will also help in this.

Personal problems

Life is full of uncertainties and one can never truly prepare himself for the situations that may arise in the event of things. Often situations are so tough that they encroach upon both personal and professional life.

To address such sensitive issues, many companies have counselling guides who provide employee assistance. The good news with such issues is that it's often temporary and there's nothing a bit of understanding, empathy and frank talk won't set straight.

They've developed an attitude

People develop a negative attitude towards work when they either don't do well in their jobs, or do excessively well. In the former case, the negative attitude is more damaging in that affects the working environment and brings negative tendencies in the rest of the employees too. The old saying "one rotten egg spoils all the eggs in the basket" holds good here.

The latter case might not be that responsible in creating a negative workplace environment but it isolates individuals and makes them overconfident. No one likes to interact with someone who acts like he knows everything in a much better way that them.

In the previous case, it's always better to have a frank conversation with them and check what reasons are making him develop a pessimistic approach towards his job. As far as the over-confident attitude-bearing people are concerned, the best way to deal with them is to give them a challenging task, something that will test their knowledge and capabilities.

How to Address These Concerns?

Most of the times, the poor attitude and the casual approach to work could be deviant behavior for some management-generated policy. In other cases, it could be improper reward policies, or even poor work culture.

A good motivator is not someone who skims of the top best of his team and works with them, and ignores the rest. The best manager of resources won't allow people with talent to waste their skills. They would like to know the reason behind the resentment so that they know what's the best for all in the end.

Many times, a poor performance could just be the result of not having often frank discussions, not appreciating hard work, not giving due credit, and leading by example. A good motivator understands that it's important to gain the trust of the person whom he is motivating to reach his potential.

13. Evaluation of Work

All companies have a formal review system that they implement annually for all the employees, however it's always advisable to have frequent informal review and feedback processes taken in 2-3 months.

Most supervisors like to go for a team-meeting once a week, just to discuss what the team has achieved in the last week and what the agenda is for the next one. Managers typically like to go monthly or quarterly reviews.

Here is a typical **Performance Review Form** to keep track of weekly progress:

Work delegated in priority order	**Success Ratio**
Due Date for project	**Probability of meeting deadlines**
Employee's opinion about job	**Date of conversation**
Supervisor's Previous Feedback	**Date of feedback**
	Date of review

The Role of a Manager

As a performer, it's very important to keep a record of your team's goals and accomplishments. Many companies implement a performance journal where every achievement, big or small, is registered. This progress graph is then shown to the employees to get them motivated and encouraged. Comparing goals and performances of one another will also make the employees competitive and more aware of the strength of their own team.

To make all policies directed toward improving employee's performance effectively, the manager should have a good working relationship with his team. The relationship should be professional, ethical and transparent. The manager needs to inform the employees of any important changes that need be done and a logical explanation behind it.

If the employees don't trust their manager and vice versa, the overall productivity of the company suffers. It is therefore important that the managers learn to see things from the employee's perspective so that they can properly deal with the employee evaluation process.

Performance managers occasionally function as performance coaches to help people address those concerns that's stunting their growth and improvement. It involves open communication, encouragement, and suggesting corrective measures. In such cases, performance managers also resort to providing skill-based training.

How to Get Desired Results

One of the most important steps in achieving consistent outcomes is to prioritize goals. Every employee should select for himself a priority list of goals and objectives, where the maximum focus should be given on the 'Top 3" goals. This helps him channel all his energy into delivering the best output because he knows exactly what he is supposed to work on, and what he is supposed to be doing.

Measurable Performances

Performances must be measurable. Without empirical data, it will be very difficult to evaluate an employee's productivity. However, people need to exercise caution while measuring performances as it's often difficult to put it in numbers.

Areas like software coding can have strict, measurable performance indices as the work progress can effectively be traced back to the output, however in industries like writing, forcing employees to deliver high quantities can result in dilution of the standards of output.

In this chapter, we will take a case study to understand the value of expanding your horizons and how it plays a critical role in improving one's personal productivity.

DreamReads, a leading chain of bookstores, was seeing a steady decline of customers over the period of a year. The management was perplexed as to what could be the reason. They had the best employees and were in business for long enough time to have a recall value. They had almost all the major titles in the world, and had customer-reliability factor in their favor. This only made them wonder as to what could possibly be going wrong.

Traditionally, the staff at bookstores wasn't needed to take care of a lot of things. Most of the times, the availability of a book that the customer wanted was good enough. Add good customer service, courteous dealing, and proper small-talk into the equation, and nothing else was needed from the people in a bookstore. However, it was clear to the management that this method of dealing is not cutting ice with the customers any longer.

Going for assistance

In order to understand what is going wrong and where, they constituted a personal productivity program targeted towards customer demands and sales. They contacted **Upsales**, a leading service-provider in personal productivity exercises, to see if they could find out where exactly they are going wrong.

Identification of Issues

The team of Upsales started by observing the way DreamReads did business. They interviewed the people who walked out of the store about their experience. They collected feedback and took notes on what the customers looked for when they visited DreamReads. After an observation period of three months, the team submitted their report.

It was found out that the sales dipped because the customers were not always aware of what was good for them. The staff was used to the customer walking in and asking for a title. These customers had a very specific interest and always had a book in mind before shopping. However, that constituted a fraction of the crowd that visited the bookstores. Most of them just walked in to the store, and wandered around looking at the books, undecided which one to buy. They were looking for someone who could help them with what kind of books would be good, but this being a matter of personal preference, they were embarrassed about asking help from the staff.

DreamReads realized that the way their employees were dealing with customers has gone out-of-fashion. Today, the customers are accustomed to being offered the help of assistants wherever they go and whatever they shop. They can even ask for a recommendation from the waiters at the restaurants, or from the staff of a boutique about the dress that will look good on them, so it's only natural they will expect someone to offer some recommendation on the type of books they would like to read.

Proper Training Boosts Personal Productivity

Keeping the issues in mind, DreamReads completely revamped the way they looked at customer service. For the first time in years, employees were asked to share their ideas. Some of the good ideas were to train people on the products they sold, and to arrange books according to genres' and placed in separate aisles.

This way, a guy interested in say, "Science Fiction" can straight away go to his aisle. In addition to this, the staff started being more observant while identifying customers who looked like they could use a bit of recommendation.

The employees of the stores started writing the titles of the top-sellers in respective genres and placed them in all the aisles. A short thematic note was given to explain the gist of the book. They started sharing reviews of the books by top critics.

The staff had pleasant, helpful conversations with customers that not only put the customers at ease but also helped the staff narrow down on the kind of books that the customer would like to read. This helped them in getting a familiarity with the customers, their likes, their preferences, based on which the staff could determine what the customers would like to read.

The Results of Corrective Measures

Each staff-member was made responsible of achieving a "monthly sales expectation" to keep him focused and motivated towards his job. The ones who met or exceeded their targets were given good incentives.

It was observed that in a period of six months, the sales of the stores had increased by 30%. Customers were increasingly visiting the stores and were frequently seen having conversations with the staff-people. Many just simply asked the staff what would be a good read for the weekend. This customer service and an increased aptitude for their work saw DreamReads become one of the largest bookstores chains in the US.