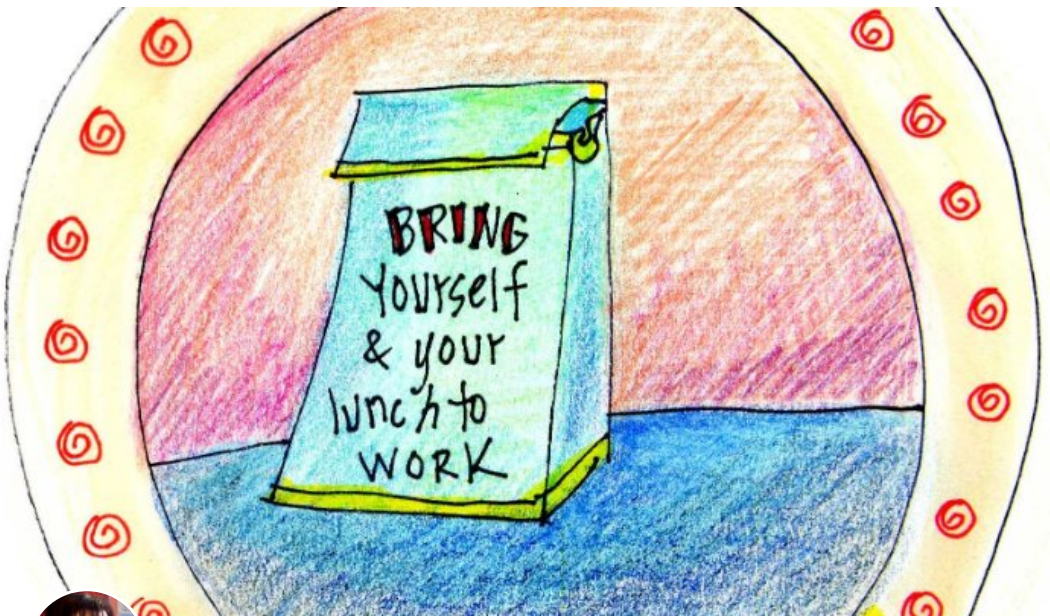


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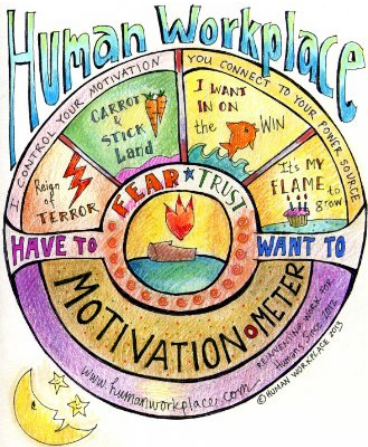


Liz Ryan  
Founder and CEO, Human Workplace

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# How To Kill Your Team's Motivation Without Really Trying

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There is a multi-billion-dollar 'motivation' industry that feeds on the fact that most people don't know what strong leadership looks like, or how to emulate it.

Companies bring in consultants to 'improve the team's motivation.' What a waste of time!

Nobody comes to work to do a bad job. We all want to use our brains and hearts, but too often corporate or institutional rules, hierarchy, conflict, lack of planning or bureaucratic fear

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## How To Kill Your Team's Motivation Without Really Trying

Liz Ryan

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We have been raised on fear-based management, on the carrot and the stick. It's the only kind of management most of us know. We're so used to it that we don't see how it hurts us every day to treat our employees like children instead of the talented and capable adults they are.

Thinking adults don't need rewards to spur them on or punishments to correct their bad habits.

Those methods are insulting and ineffective. They are heavy-handed. When you simply hire people you trust and set them loose to amaze you, they will!

We have lost sight of a manager's true job, which is not to push people to hit arbitrary goals on a yardstick. Who would ever be motivated to do that?

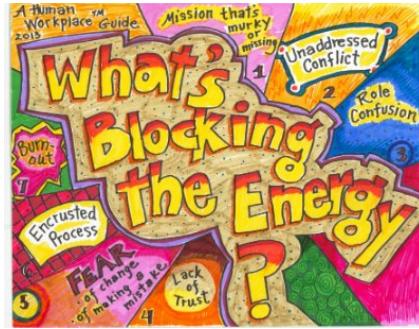


We don't see the pivotal role that a manager plays in his or her team's success. We even discipline employees for being insufficiently motivated, as though anybody likes to get up and come to work to be bored and thwarted. Job ads say "We want to hire a motivated self-starter!"

Here's the problem with the idea that you can simply hire 'motivated' people, then sit back and watch them work: motivation is a function of your environment.

It isn't something that your employees carry around with them, like a tape measure. Motivation programs are an expensive distraction and a waste of time. You can't prod and poke people into being motivated. You certainly won't motivate anybody by criticizing them.

The good news is that it's easy to bring out your team's natural motivation to solve problems when their work is interesting and worth doing, and when they are given the tools, time and latitude to do a great job.

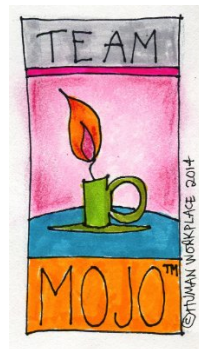


All you have to do to tap the amazing power supply your teammates bring to work with them is to take away the barriers to forward motion that most organizations erect without meaning to.

Some organizations make it nearly impossible for a team member to move forward an inch. They don't trust their employees enough to let them do the jobs they were hired for.

Here are ten roadblocks to forward energy -- what we at Human Workplace call Team Mojo -- that you can start to dismantle immediately. The more easily you allow the energy to flow in your shop, the more easily your team will reach its goals!

### **Ten Energy Blockers That Kill Motivation**



#### Murky or Nonexistent Plan

When there's no plan, nobody knows what the plan is or the plan changes every two weeks, you can kiss your team's motivation good-bye.

#### Role Confusion

In a healthy organization roles may be flexible, but your team won't get far if more than one person feels they are responsible for the same things or if there are chunks of your mission that no one is responsible for.

#### Mixed Messages

You can't tell your team they are the industry's best and then cut their tuition benefits or their lunch hour the next day. Mixed messages send the loud message "Our manager's support is mostly lip service."

#### Unaddressed Conflict

You won't make conflicts go away by ignoring them. Honor everyone in the mix and don't designate winners and losers as you resolve conflicts. Keep your team's

mojo in mind!

### Lack of Visibility

When your teammates have no idea where the organization is trying to go or how their team can help get there, how can they care? Everybody needs visibility into the future. Your job as a manager is to get your team the information they need to make good decisions.

### Elephant in the Room

An elephant in the room is an important topic that should get airtime but does not get it. No one wants to talk about the elephant in the room, so everyone pretends not to see it.

### Red Tape

Red tape is excess bureaucracy. It chokes the life out of a team. Don't write any more policies -- get rid of some policies, instead!

### Too Many Approvals

When your employees can't take a breath without getting signatures from God and the Dalai Lama, something is broken.

### Disturbance in the Force

A disturbance in the force is a negative change in the energy field -- such as your team's chilly reaction to a new bonus plan. Talk about it and get things straightened out! "I can't change the policy" is not something that a real manager says. "Let me start a conversation and see what happens, and keep you posted" is a step in the right direction.

### Burnout

Burnout is a stone cold mojo-killer. You have choices: you can ease up on the workload or watch your teammates wither on the vine and give up.





As a manager you can choose to ignore any or all of these energy blockers, and many managers do just that. They don't believe that they can fix their team's problems, so they pretend the problems don't exist. They try to manage through the thick sludge that gums up their processes, communication and daily life at work.

You won't get great ideas from beaten-down, exhausted or frustrated people. You won't get innovation or collaboration from them. The most you can hope for is grudging compliance. As a manager, is your mission to wring grudging compliance from your teammates, or to inspire them to new heights?



When we are fearful of rocking the boat, we pretend that we can manage our teammates just by telling them what their goals are and letting the mechanism of fear do the rest of our job for us.

What is the mechanism of fear? It's the unspoken but well-understood relationship between doing your job and having an income. We lead through fear when we assume that people must care about their work because if they don't care, they'll get fired.

You can't bully or threaten people into caring about their work, even if the threats are passive ones.

It is time for us to tell the truth about fear and trust and to bring ourselves to work every day. We can't keep pretending that forecasts and budgets make our companies go, when we know in our hearts that it's only the commitment and goodwill of our teammates that makes anything worthwhile happen.



It is a new day, and we can tell the truth about the currents of fear and trust swirling around us at work. We have to, if we value our customers, our shareholders, our teammates and our own health.

We can find our voices and speak up about what's working and what isn't working in our organizations. We can start today!

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Liz Ryan

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**Andrea Luquesi Scott**

Content and Publishing Consultant | Author

I've worked in various places where my initial enthusiasm and motivation was sucked out of me because of all of the above. I told a previous manager that the team was demotivated, and his response was that 'they better get their passion back or they'll all be out of a job!' Nice answer. Needless to say that more of that attitude from him saw me handing in my resignation a couple of months later. It's a pity. I was affecting change there but ultimately, that change has to be fostered and championed from above.

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**Katie Baron**

Information Systems Analyst at University of Rochester Medical Center

I can 100% relate to this post as well... I always start my new jobs with enthusiasm and a sense of ownership for the company to make sure I do a great job and keep a positive attitude. I have experienced many of the points listed in the article above and management of companies (especially the large bureaucratic ones) could learn a lot about how much ROI you will realize when increasing employee happiness and job autonomy throughout the organization.

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