

# ENHANCING EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION

## Balancing Tasks & Relations

- Create checklists for tasks.
- Show concern for the well-being of others.
- Clarify job responsibilities.
- Express support for the ideas of other group members.
- Emphasize performance standards and expectations.
- Recognize others' unique contributions to the group.
- Keep the group focused on the goal.
- Resolve relational conflicts.

## Encouraging Motivation

- Set clear, compelling visions for the future.
- Be enthusiastic about tasks and procedures.
- Speak optimistically about the goals to be achieved/compelling direction.
- Express confidence in employees' ability to achieve goals.

## **Optimizing Workplace Motivation and Performance: The Effects of Leadership Style and Conflict**

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## **Optimizing Workplace Motivation and Performance: The Effects of Leadership Style and Conflict**

Many organizations face issues pertaining to low motivation among workers which leads to outcomes that negatively affect organizational performance. Motivation can be characterized by an employee's drive to execute tasks (Ryan & Deci, 2000). A lack of motivation may cause employees to both fail to complete tasks and struggle to find value in their contributions leading to decreased performance outcomes. This paper will seek to address employee motivation as a multidimensional issue and offer insights about how to achieve higher performance by exploring the relationship between employee motivation, leadership style as an intrinsic motivator, and relational conflict.

### **Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation**

Tremendous effort, amongst organizational researchers, over the past five decades has been made toward understanding the differences between intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors. Simply, this discrepancy is categorized by whether individuals do something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable, intrinsic motivation, or because it leads to a separable outcome, extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation can be difficult to cultivate within organizations as many necessary work functions are not enjoyable by nature. Instead, organizations commonly rely on easily established extrinsic incentives (e.g. pay raises, bonuses, promotions) to motivate employees. Instituting incentive structures is a great way to improve employee production of *quantity* tasks (e.g. sales calls made, dishes washed); for *quality* tasks (e.g. creativity, research proposal) it is intrinsic motivation that predicts a large portion of performance variability (Cerasoli et al., 2014). These *quantity* tasks are typically repetitive and

noncomplex, meaning an incentive can directly improve the focus and drive required for completion. Whereas *quality* tasks, which require more autonomy, benefit from individuals' interest in the topic to persist through obstacles.

Ryan and Deci (2000) illustrate that the incorporation of extrinsic incentives can negatively affect intrinsic motivation within individuals. This means organizations that utilize incentive programs for *quality* tasks may indirectly hurt performance. Cerasoli and colleagues (2014) argue in their meta-analysis that this negative relationship is accentuated when incentives are directly tied to performance outcomes. For more complex tasks it is imperative that organizations emphasize building intrinsic motivators, rather than extrinsic incentives. In doing so, employees are more capable of recognizing their contributions' value and will drive improved performance.

### **Inspirational Motivation**

Leadership style is a crucial component of intrinsic motivation within the workplace. Inspirational motivation is a component of leadership that encourages followers to complete tasks because of the leader's capacity to inspire followers through enthusiasm and optimism about the future (Anyiko et al., 2018). Inspirational motivation has a significant positive correlation with employee performance. By creating an attractive vision and inspiring individuals with positive attitudes, leaders can align employees' personal objectives with the goals of the organization. While establishing a compelling vision, leaders need to clarify their expectations of the team, which will generate the processes that allow the organization to achieve its goals. Inspirational leaders also set high standards and instill a sense of confidence in followers by emphasizing their capability to achieve challenging ambitions. In the face of challenges, while inspirational leaders must instill confidence in followers, it is also essential to grant followers the

necessary tools and support for the team to succeed. Leaders can support followers by maintaining a psychologically safe environment for followers to express their thoughts and feel that their ideas are valued. Leaders who can establish a compelling vision, convey high expectations of the group, be receptive to followers' perspectives, and demonstrate their commitment to the team's objectives can motivate employees to contribute extra effort to achieve the goals of the organization.

### **Balancing Task and Relational Leadership**

When addressing high-conflict and low-motivation challenges that companies face, it is essential to evaluate leadership styles that can effectively navigate these issues. In addition to inspirational motivation, leaders can consider the relationship between task and relational leadership styles in motivating their employees. Task-oriented leaders prioritize goal attainment and task completion, mainly focusing on efficiency and performance outcomes. Research by Fayyaz et al. (2014) suggests that task-oriented leaders who possess high levels of communication competence tend to achieve higher levels of employee performance. However, in contexts with high conflict and low motivation, a purely task-oriented approach may worsen tensions and further demotivate employees. Alternatively, relationship-oriented leaders prioritize building positive relationships, trust, and collaboration within the team. A study by Dua Mea (2023) found that a leadership style that combines task-oriented and relationship-oriented behaviors can be effective in fostering trusting relationships while ensuring effective task performance. This approach allows leaders to address both the interpersonal dynamics contributing to this conflict and the need for improved task performance. Research by Tabernero et al. (2009) highlights the different impacts these leadership styles have on group dynamics. While task-oriented leadership may promote group efficacy and positivism, relationship-oriented

leadership fosters greater cohesion. Integrating these insights can help companies develop leadership strategies that effectively navigate conflict, improve motivation, and enhance efficiency in the company.

### **Conflict**

While leadership style is an important factor in motivating employees to perform well in the workplace, motivational states mediate the relationship between leadership behaviors and team member behaviors (Chen & Kanfer, 2006). Researchers often isolate variables that positively or negatively impact motivation in the workplace, but the relationship between all factors is dynamic and should be considered holistically (Chen et al., 2011). In teams where effective leadership styles are in place, the relationship between leadership style and motivation may be negatively impacted by high conflict in the workplace. Organizational researchers have distinguished three main types of conflict within the workplace: task, process, and relational conflict. Relational conflict refers to conflict that is related to interpersonal relationships within the workplace (Ayoko & Callan, 2010; de Wit et al., 2011). In a study on the relationship between empowering leadership, motivational state, and relationship conflict, relational conflict negatively impacted the relationship between empowering leadership and motivational state, such that the positive benefits of empowering leadership were negatively impacted by high relational conflict (Chen et al., 2011). This is consistent with other studies that have found that relational conflict decreases employee motivation, teams where relationship conflict is high are more likely to disengage with their tasks (Jehn, 1995). Leaders must address and resolve relational conflicts to motivate their team members through leadership style (Chen et al., 2011).

### **Conclusion**

Overall, it is important to consider employee motivation as a multi-faceted issue. Intrinsic motivators that allow employees to value their contributions, approach their work with enthusiasm, and envision a positive future are a crucial component of employee motivation. Leaders can balance task and relational leadership approaches to effectively motivate employees provided that relational conflict remains low. In an interpersonally positive environment where balanced leadership styles are effectively utilized, leaders can motivate employees to contribute to their fullest potential.

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