**Motivation Plan**

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Motivation Plan

Designing a motivational plan requires an understanding of the multi-facet system of business; which includes business state, structure, culture, communication, and supporting the right people. When one or more of these components is missing or underperforming, then performance of the teams and the larger organization suffers. To examine these elements several leaders from Microsoft’s Client Management (CM) organization were interviewed.

# Interviewed Organization

The first challenge in building a motivational plan is to first understand the business strategy and the company’s state. For example, a startup with critical upcoming deadline might be more motivated with fear and urgency; than would a well-established company with sufficient safety net (Robbins & Judge, 2013). In the case of the later due to its state, fear is more likely to cause demotivation.

## Business Description

This organization would be described as a well-established group where the members are primarily family men over the age of 38. Their collective staff of 610, generates around 2 billion annually through selling enterprise grade device management solutions. Nearly all members of the team have advanced engineering and business degrees. Many of the senior staff have stayed with the group for over fifteen years.

## Mentors Description

Due to scheduling conflicts it was not possible to have only one mentor during the period. This ended up being constructive resulted in a more diverse set of answers to similar questions. The positions held by the interviewed leaders ranged from managers, to managers of managers, and directors of managers.

# Improve Motivation

After analyzing the state of the business it became clear that the business was well funded, senior members had low turnover, and even intern level staff well being compensated.

## Through Proper Rewarding

Given that the employees are extrinsically saturated, the motivation plan needs to focus on intrinsic rewards (Robbins & Judge, 2013) (Lopp, 2012). These might consist of recognition, signs of approval, or small non tangible gifts (e.g. movie tickets).

Intuitively this makes sense, the person has invested a lot of time and mental resources into their project; now they want to know that it was meaningful and worth the effort. In contrast the same person already makes $100,000 annually giving them merit raise to $105,000 will have little effect on motivation.

This is caused first by the annual review being several months afterwards, decreasing psychological cause and effect (Lopp, 2012). Second the 5,000 while appreciated is not life changing. Once taxes are factored in taxes this is effectively a 1.50$/hour raise. The employee is already well compensated and the increase goes unnoticed. Third the raise is part of the person’s salary which is constant and therefore by definition not special.

## Mastery, Autonomy, and Purpose

In addition to these intrinsic rewards, people in creative positions find motivational value in mastery, autonomy, and purpose (Pink, 2012). One of the mentors described a motivation strategy where they present the business need as an open ended question to their team. The team collaboratively builds the ideas into a solution and owns the entire framework. This way they clearly know the purpose of the work, gain mastery of entire problem space, and control the implementation through autonomy.

## Ad Hoc Creative Opportunities

Both Pink and some of the mentors described the need to give creative people the periodic freedom to select a problem and solve it (Pink, 2012). For example CM has implemented this idea as “hackathon events,” where everyone takes three days off their normal job to build something of their choice. The participants are encouraged to work with people outside of their immediate teams, and the festivities conclude with beer and demos. The top project for each category is also given the opportunity to demo their invention to the corporate vice president.

Aside from lost labor the event costs a few hundred dollars for food and rejuvenises the participants while also promoting cross organizational collaboration. Many of the projects also address a gaps in the business strategy, which were missed by leadership planning but obvious to the front line engineers.

# Improve Satisfaction

There is a difference between being motivated to work through a situation and being satisfied in the meantime. Two key components toward satisfaction come from organizational culture and structure.

## Quality Culture

A common message from all mentors was that a good corporate culture requires an excess of diversity and a deficiency of rude people. The more diversity within the business the greater the number of ideas available, and the richer the solutions (Cascio, 2013). Having these wider ranges of conversations improves satisfaction; as the discussions are more intellectually stimulating.

Inversely beneficial is rude and arrogant attitudes; which can steal the wind out of the sails. These bad apples need to be quickly identified and corrected or removed from the lot. If this does not happen the remaining staff becomes demotivated and will quit the project.

Part of having a diverse culture also means that different personalities will exist within the environment. Leaders need to take the time to understand each personality and determine what that person needs (Lopp, 2012). Based on the personality the leader will “need to either kick, kiss, or wipe their butt (Kriegel, 2013).”

## Proper Structure

One of the challenges that the client management organization faced over several years was the structuring of their business unit. Initially there was a single Product Unit Manager (PUM), which has similar responsibilities of a CEO but scoped to the division. This enabled clear accountability and deliverables across the group.

Later it was decided that a “trio model” would be leveraged, which consisted of one equal say leader from each of the engineering branches. During this period there was no accountability and the staff became dissatisfied with the ever changing direction. This was replaced with a functional model where every ten engineers has one manager, and one M2 oversees five teams. As design hurdles are removed, creative people become more satisfied with their job (Lopp, 2012). In this example the structural change enabled autonomy and decentralization making it easier to get work accomplished.

# Improve Performance

After the troops are all fired up and content with their job, the final dimension is to harness that energy into business performance.

## Communication

When the Washington based organization was redefined in 2010, it gained a branch office in Utah and another in Boston. Each of these branch offices was satisfied with their work and motivated to be part of the larger effort, but lacked the performance.

This was due to poorly established communication and clearly defined charters. Over time this made them feel isolated and less valuable, meanwhile it caused frustration at the home office as there was no ability to reliably share projects. Once the work was better segmented, such as all of feature one went to Utah and all of feature two went to Boston; the latency and reliably issues were resolved. The company started to fly senior leaders back and forth on a regular cadence.

Because people now understood the larger issues while also having the autonomy to address the challenges, moral was increased.

## Emotional Support

People have to minds one logical and one emotional (Kahneman, 2011). While it is easy to focus on only the logical side, a complete motivational plan needs to also take into account emotional support. Consider if the employee has lost a loved one, or has a disabling illness. In these scenarios keeping their moral up is important or the quality of their work will decline.

# Conclusions

Defining a motivation plan begins with understanding the state of the business, this can be determined by interviewing members of the leadership team. Next challenges of motivation, satisfaction, and performance need to be addressed. These require reward systems, mastery, autonomy, purpose, culture, structure and communication.

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