



Book Creating Passion-Driven Teams

How to Stop Micromanaging and Motivate People to Top Performance

Dan Bobinski
Career Press, 2009
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Recommendation

Don’t try to motivate your employees by manipulating them; be honest with them and you’ll discover that they motivate themselves. Don’t humiliate them when they make mistakes; instead, treat errors as valuable learning experiences. Don’t automatically tune staffers out when they speak; listen and you will discover a lot. Don’t hold meetings just to meet; make sure every conference has a purpose. And above all, don’t micromanage, because that drives good people out the door. This is an ample list of management “don’ts.” But what should you do to manage well? Training expert Dan Bobinski says the answer is simple: Provide the conditions that will spark passion in your people. Although his anecdotes are overly simplified and may seem contrived, *BooksInShort* believes Bobinski presents his points persuasively. His colorful, elementary guide will give newbie supervisors and human resource managers much pause for thought.

Take-Aways

- Teams who are motivated by passion can accomplish great things.
- Managers cannot manufacture fervent enthusiasm. They must create a trusting, sharing and committed environment – the perfect conditions for a passionate work spirit.
- Managers are either selfless “Builders” or selfish “Climbers.” Only builders can develop zealous teams.
- To build an ardent team, learn what motivates the team members.
- Study your employees to see what makes them tick. Understand your employees’ knowledge, skills, attitudes and processes.
- Micromanagement will kill any enjoyment team members obtain from their work.
- Often, organizations are responsible for the evolution of micromanagers since they don’t teach people how to manage properly.
- To prevent a culture of micromanagement, coach and mentor new managers thoroughly and perform personality tests to discover each manager’s style.
- Teams often lack zest due to fear of criticism, rejection or failure.
- Learn to listen actively to your staffers. This reduces conflict and boosts passion.

Summary

Setting the Stage for Teamwork

Human beings have organized themselves into teams since squads of cavemen surrounded and killed wooly mammoths. The best teams are passionate about their work – and you can’t forge or force that kind of spirit. It bubbles up from within the hearts, souls and minds of team members. However, as a manager, you can create the emotional conditions from which passion will emerge. These include trust, sharing, camaraderie, commitment, common purpose and confidence. When you promote

these conditions, you set the stage so that team members can work together with enthusiasm to accomplish their goals.

“Teams can have problems when they have Climbers who think they are Builders.”

Every manager has a different style. Managers can be “charismatic, bureaucratic, Machiavellian, democratic, authoritarian [or] laissez-faire.” But basically, they fall into two categories: They are either “Builders” or “Climbers.” Builders want to develop the people around them, while climbers are out for themselves and don’t care what happens to others. Only builders can develop “passion-driven teams.” To become a builder, make these three commitments:

1. Develop yourself personally and professionally.
2. Never become complacent.
3. Study the members of your team to learn what makes them tick.

The “Management Matrix”

Every job in an organization has these three components: Some sort of “raw product,” a “process” and an end product or “outcome.” In addition, everyone in the hierarchy occupies one of these three roles:

1. **“Front-line employees”** – All new and experienced employees who do not hold a supervisory role. Their raw products are the materials with which they work, the process is how they perform their jobs and the product is the outcome of their labor.
2. **Managers** – Line supervisors and team leaders. Their raw products are the employees, their processes are training the employees and coordinating their work, and their product is “efficient operations.”
3. **Leaders** – The CEO and other top executives. Their raw products are “ideas” about the company’s “realistic capabilities” and direction, their process is the communication of these ideas and their product is an “effective organization.”

“Many managers bark out ‘grow’ commands to their teams and blame the workers if no growth occurs.”

Just as employees must understand their raw materials and production processes to create products and services, managers must understand their employees – including their knowledge, skills and attitudes – and the processes and systems they use.

To ensure that the company operates efficiently, managers must train their people and give them appropriate job assignments. They must organize and adjust their processes and systems to certify that they work well for everyone.

Why Micromanaging is Counterproductive

Scrutinizing every detail of your employees’ work is not managing; it is micromanaging, a destructive habit. Micromanagers ask for constant progress reports, are overly critical, involve themselves in every decision and tend to take over staffers’ work and do it themselves. Micromanagement has these negative outcomes:

- High employee turnover.
- Employees who won’t make decisions without first getting management’s approval.
- Team members who show little initiative.

“Not only is it important to get the right people on the bus, it’s equally important to have those people sitting in the right seats.”

Organizations may inadvertently create micromanagers when they promote front-line workers without providing practical management training. Now responsible for their teams, these new managers try to stay on familiar ground. When a problem occurs, they jump in and fix it. They fear that team members will make them look bad – either by doing a poor job or, paradoxically, by doing a great one and outshining them. Their contradictory fears paralyze the team.

Preventing Micromanagement

Micromanagers will never create passion-driven teams. To derail micromanagement tendencies, teach new managers about their roles, and train them in the skills they will need:

- **Draw up detailed job descriptions** – Include supervisors’ expectations.
- **Assess new managers’ skills and interests** – Use personality tests such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), which assesses “tendencies, preferences, strengths and weaknesses”; the DISC assessment of dominance, influence, steadiness and conscientiousness; or the Workplace Motivator assessment, which measures styles of thinking along six dimensions.
- **Provide coaching and mentoring** – Create an individual plan for each new manager. Give new managers time to develop. Becoming a truly skilled manager can take years.
- **Provide feedback** – At first, hold daily conversations with new managers, but don’t do all the talking. Encourage them to tell you about how their work is going. Help them rate their job performance realistically.

“Don’t force new managers to adopt practices that aren’t comfortable for them.”

By the way, managers are not the only employees who need training. The second most common reason people leave their jobs is “lack of opportunity for growth.”

If you are a micromanager, put aside the outdated thinking that got you where you are today. You may have started as an outstanding front-line employee, but now you need a different perspective. As a manager, you are a “coordinator and trainer,” not a superworker.

“The ability to stand up and talk does not a trainer make.”

Ask for management coaching that will help you to eliminate your micromanagement tendencies. If necessary, pay for coaching yourself.

How Fear Dampens Passion

Often, teams suffer not from lack of motivation but rather from personal, internal fears:

- **“Fear of criticism”** – Many people withdraw into themselves when they receive criticism, and withdrawal destroys passion. Keep your criticism of team members constructive.
- **“Fear of rejection”** – People take rejection personally. Never summarily rebuff ideas and suggestions from team members. Even if the idea appears to have no merit, treat it and the person who submitted it with respect.
- **“Fear of failure”** – Everyone flops from time to time. The trick is to get up, dust yourself off and try again. Show people that you continue to trust and believe in them, even after they fail. The faith you place in them will energize them to keep trying.
- **“Fear of not getting what you want”** – This fear can lead to counterproductive actions or no action at all. Of course, you can’t ensure that all team members get everything they want. However, you can help them achieve their goals.
- **“Fear of losing what you have”** – People fear losing both material possessions, such as a house or a car, and intangible assets, such as authority or reputation. Counter team members’ fears of loss by showing them what they will gain.

Motivating Your Team

Motivating others is impossible. People do what they do for reasons of their own, which probably have nothing to do with you. However, as a manager, you can create an environment in which team members work together to achieve common goals.

“If you seek to create a team driven by passion, then you must look within each person on your team, for it’s there that the passion resides.”

Explain the “big picture,” that is, what your organization is all about, and why its goals are important. Research shows that only 7% of employees know what their companies’ business strategies are. Make sure your organization has a mission statement that is straightforward and easy to understand. Discuss it with team members.

“What holds people back from moving forward is not a lack of motivation. It is the presence of obstacles.”

Show team members how they can help the company to accomplish its mission. Explain the connections between the company’s goals and individual work tasks. Employees will see that when their work backs up, they prevent the whole company from moving ahead.

Delegate by following this five-step procedure:

1. Examine the big picture and then split it up into discrete tasks.
2. Assign jobs to the workers who can do them best.
3. When delegating a duty, explain its role in the overall effort.
4. Make sure you and the employee agree about the end product.
5. Check in regularly with team members.

Hold Productive Meetings

The best way to keep everyone on track is to hold regular meetings. Not all meetings are the same, however:

- **“Informational meetings”** – Project updates. Keep these short and sweet.
- **“Problem-solving meetings”** – Structured events that have agendas and may last one to two hours.
- **“Planning meetings”** – Times for discussion and debate. The focus of these kinds of meetings is “What should we be doing and why?”
- **“Teambuilding meetings”** – Often take place outside the office. They enable team members to get to know each other, regroup and refocus.

Learn to Listen Actively

All the meetings in the world are useless if people do not listen to one another. Listening is not the same as hearing, which is merely “perceiving a sound by ear.” When you listen, you work to “understand another person’s point of view.” Listening is an active skill that you can learn.

“Failure is an option.”

Take these two steps:

1. Silence your own thinking and focus on the other person.
2. Make sure you understand what the other person is telling you. Ask: “If I understand you correctly, you’re concerned about...?”

Often, people fail to listen because they are afraid. They worry they will hear something that tells them they’re wrong or they fear that they won’t get a chance to explain their ideas. Avoid these seven listening errors:

1. **“Filtering”** – Sifting through what others say, looking for points of agreement and disagreement. When you do this, you’ll miss their point.
2. **“Second guessing”** – Assuming “hidden motives” on the part of others.

3. **“Discounting”** – Automatically rejecting what another person says because you don’t respect him or her.
4. **“Relating”** – Assuming that others’ experiences and feelings are just like yours.
5. **“Rehearsing”** – Failing to hear what others say because you are planning what you will say when they stop talking.
6. **“Forecasting”** – Focusing on only one point and its implications, and ignoring everything else.
7. **“Placating”** – Nodding and seeming to agree with every word, when in fact you’ve tuned out the conversation completely.

Conflict

Conflicts occur in even the most harmonious of work environments and among the most collegial of teams. Resolving conflicts involves some of the same skills as active listening: Focus on the other person. Make sure you understand what he or she is saying. “Look for trust” – pay attention to body language. “Discover the truth” by finding out “what needs to be done” or “why something cannot be done.” Maintain your faith that you’ll arrive at a good outcome. Acknowledge and celebrate team members’ achievements.

About the Author

Dan Bobinski is a training specialist, executive coach, consultant, columnist, author and keynote speaker. He is president and CEO of a leadership development and management training firm.
