

### *Develop a motivational plan*

What are the core behaviours leaders use to motivate employees?

Interestingly, when I ask leaders this question, I rarely get the same answer. To get agreement, I follow up with, “Do you believe leaders motivate employees?”

The answer for the majority is yes, with qualifiers such as, the leader’s ability to motivate is one crucial element for organizational success.

Organizational psychology, organizational behaviour and human resource management literature doesn’t define one uncontested or universally accepted theory or model for motivating employees.

Though there may not be one theory or model, there are actions a leader can take to better understand what will motivate employees in their organization. Taking action to discover this puts the leader on the right track for unlocking the leadership motivation equation in their organization.

When it comes to motivation, it’s often easier to get agreement among employees as to the kinds of behaviours that demotivate the majority than what motivates them. Universal examples of what demotivates employees include not following through on commitments, showing favouritism, not being interested in employee well-being, not engaging nor taking an active interest in employees, and poor communication.

One action leaders can take to understand the motivation equation is to first discover what demotivates employees. Doing this and avoiding these behaviours is a positive first step for unlocking the leadership motivation equation.

#### **Unlocking the Motivation Equation**

- Become a detective by asking what kinds of behaviours demotivate your employees. Take your time and get the facts. The bigger the organization, the more data points needed to increase accuracy. For example, an organization of 200 people requires input from a minimum of 30 employees from different levels. The end goal of this exercise is discover the top five demotivators.
- Discover in the same conversations with employees what kinds of behaviours motivate them. From this feedback, learn the top five motivators.



- Ensure both top-five lists have clear definitions and examples, to reduce misunderstanding. In fact, go back to employees once you have written out the two top-five lists, to test your definitions to ensure they are accurate.
- Discover the blind spots. Seek out three to five trusted advisors who know your leadership style and ask them to give you honest and direct feedback in regard to how you perform against the top-five lists.
- Feedback asked for is often the best kind, because the party asking is typically motivated to learn. When getting feedback, don't respond or challenge it. Just listen and let it soak in. Thank the person and let it settle for 48 hours.
- Why 48 hours? If you have been given honest critical feedback and after 48 hours you have not rationalized how the feedback is not accurate, then you are probably ready to take action and make the necessary changes.
- Once you have committed to making change, it's necessary to write a plan that's designed to replace any demotivational behaviours with motivational behaviours, as well as to increase activities around the defined motivational behaviours.
- Practice, practice, practice the leadership motivation equation. Each day, focus on the action you can take as a leader to help motivate employees in your culture and to stop any demotivating behaviours.
- Monitor and track your progress. In about six months, have a 360 leadership assessment completed on your performance that is developed around your motivation equation.

A leader facilitating demotivational behaviours may not understand the magnitude of their actions. Don't automatically assume they're creating these behaviours on purpose; sometimes it's a blind spot. Following the above points provides an opportunity to uncover blind spots.

