

INTELLIGENCE ON DEMAND

HOW TO MOTIVATE A TEAM

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The simple truth is that the ability to motivate people is the cornerstone of successful leadership. When a team is motivated, morale will be high and its members will be unified. They will dig deep and deliver amazing results for your organization. When a team isn't motivated, the results will be lackluster at best.

The challenge, of course, is to unify and inspire. To create a cohesive, relatively seamless unit of men and women who will work hard every day in service of a shared goal. But motivating people can be a challenge, one that requires thought, planning, communication, follow through, and an understanding of human nature.

Sometimes it's easier than others. When a goal is lofty or crucial or both, the job is a lot simpler. That's because people understand the stakes. But let's face, some projects and goals may be important to an organization as a whole, but they can be pretty mundane and prosaic to the team that has to make them happen. This is where the art and the skill of leadership really come into play.

Too often organizations rely on hyperbole, rah-rah meetings, slogans, and other facile tools to get people pumped for the job at hand. These are marginally effective at best. You're dealing with adults, and in today's savvy wired world, cheap displays of overblown zeal are as likely to elicit cynicism as stellar performance. The key is to treat

people with respect, working with them to bring out their best selves, as you simultaneously unify them and connect them to a common objective.

Motivation isn't a one-size-fits-all-projects challenge. It requires an approach tailored to the specifics of your team and the goals at hand. For any leader or manager it's an exciting opportunity to make a real difference in people's lives, to inspire great work, to nurture energy, enthusiasm, and creativity and to deliver spectacular results. Let's take a look.

- *It all starts with you.* You can't motivate and inspire your team unless you're inspired yourself. This is crucial. Think of the great leaders and managers in your life — each and every one of them believed in their cause, project, or product. They then communicated this passion. You *must* believe in the goal before you present to your team.

Some challenges get our blood flowing, make us leap out of bed in the morning filled with juice and boogie — and some, well, just don't. They may be too prosaic, too rote, too limited, too tough, or even too easy. This is where successful leaders really show their mettle. You *must* reframe the challenge in a way that enables you to connect with it. You don't have to pretend it's the most exciting thing you've done in your life, but it's absolutely crucial that you find something about the project or goal that you believe in, that ignites your passion. If the whole project doesn't thrill you, find that piece of it that sparks your adrenaline and build on that.

If there's no fire in your belly, you'll never ignite your team and you'll end up with a mediocre result. If you're excited and committed, it will make every step that follows immeasurably easier and exponentially up the odds of a successful outcome. You can't phone this in, you can't fake it.