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| Motivation |
| Module 2 |
| Exercise 2.12 |

What is motivation?

Motivation is the feeling that encourages you to start and finish a task. Or more broadly, it is the feeling that encourages you to exhibit particular behaviour. With that behaviour, you think you will obtain something that you need.

You can usually see from the outside whether somebody is motivated to perform a task. Therefore, it is usually not so difficult to recognise whether somebody has a motivation problem.

But what is happening inside a person in such cases? What makes him so driven or indeed apathetic? As a mentor, it is very important to take a close look at the motivation of your employees.

Motivation you can see!

| How do you recognise a motivated employee? | How do you recognise an employee with motivation problems? |
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| Radiates energy | Radiates apathy |
| Comes across as relaxed | Comes across as tense |
| Comes up with ideas and creative solutions | Often discusses things in a negative way |
| Looks for resources to perform the task | Openly expresses doubts about the usefulness of the work |
| Is open to discussion | Is very critical of the job and of the company |
| Works in a target-oriented way | Complains that certain jobs are impossible |
| Is not ill very often | Is often distracted |
| Produces more than colleagues and is ready 'on time' | Finishes very little work |
| Inspires colleagues and gives them attention | Is often absent |

An employee who is not motivated to perform a particular task which you as a mentor consider to be important is not necessarily lazy. He probably wants to commit himself to his work, but then for tasks for which he can use his qualities or which have a goal that motivates him. It is very important that you treat these signals seriously, sympathetically and **NOT** reproachfully. Of course you can respond to them with feedback, but that should be the start of a coaching interview or conversation in which you jointly try to find the root of the motivation problem.

→ **What motivates somebody in his work?**

Take a look at yourself. Do you know what motivates your enthusiasm for the company? Do you know which circumstances and meetings can negatively affect your feeling of motivation? And how does that work for your employees? Everybody is motivated by different circumstances. **Maslow's hierarchy of needs** looks like a simple model, but it is just the start. Every individual has different needs that are based on different qualities and attributes.

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs



What motivates people on the work floor to work with such concentration and enjoyment? Is it the prospect of a bonus, an extra holiday or a bigger company car? No, this type of direct swap actually achieves the opposite! The issue is much more complicated and subtle than that. As a supervisor, it is very important that you take a very close look at your own motives and those of your employees. Fortunately, we have Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which we can always use as an aid to explaining our behaviour.

People always want to 'get on' and 'go further'. Where that 'further' actually brings them depends on where they are at that moment. **Maslow** makes a distinction between the following 5 levels:

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| Self-actualisation: | Full development of your qualities. |
| Esteem: | Having respect for yourself and being shown it by others, having status. |
| Social contact (love/belonging): | The feeling of 'belonging', being accepted, caring for others and being cared for. |
| Safety: | Absence of danger or threat, tranquillity, order, feeling safe, good health. |
| Physiological needs: | Food, drink, shelter, warmth, everything you need to stay alive. |

First step 1, then step 2

You can only start gratifying a higher need after the need below it has been 'sorted out'. For example, if you behave like a tyrant in your role as a supervisor at your work, don't expect to be accepted as 'one of us'.

Behind every act there is a need

Everything that a person does is inspired by the expectation that it will gratify a need. When a person follows a training course in project management, he may think it might be fun to spend a day at a training course but he may also have thought that, as a 'born leader', it is useful for him to acquire particular skills.

Irritating behaviour is also the product of a need. A colleague who yawns demonstrably during a meeting probably wants to leave because he has a headache and needs to go outside. The subject doesn't interest him or he finds it too difficult and doesn't want to (or dare to) spend time on it.

Lack of gratification demotivates people

If a person is prevented from gratifying a need for a long time, the desire to work ultimately disappears. Or even worse, if the need is ignored, there is an even greater tendency to throw in the towel. The difficulty is that a person is sometimes not sure or cannot express which need must be gratified. Then it is sometimes impossible to even define a goal. The risk of 'getting bogged down in aimless behaviour' then becomes enormous!

Different need, same task

A need is particular to an individual. Of course, everybody feels the need to belong at some time or other. For example, this is why freelancers who work alone often like to build a network around themselves. Even if it is only to be able to 'spar' with each other every now and then. However, the members of a team that must work together may not all feel the need 'to put their shoulders to the wheel' at the same time. Developing one's qualities sounds very noble, but it is not always the most important goal. Sometimes people take on a job so that they can quickly earn some extra money for a holiday and gratify their need to relax for a while.

In a team, every team member can be driven by a different need, whereas the team must and wants to achieve the same result. So this does not always have to be a problem.

A person cannot be motivated from outside

You can NEVER persuade a person to feel a particular need. Suppose your boss tells you that you can take a week's holiday next month if you work until 10 o'clock every evening until then. This is not a very attractive offer if you really don't feel the need for a holiday at that moment. That means that you can only stimulate energy or enthusiasm in people if they already feel it or if it is already there.

We all work on every level

A person working as a cleaner, for example, also wants to develop and expand his qualities. But he will do his job in order to gratify other needs, namely those on the lower two levels. After all, cleaning in itself offers few or no possibilities for development. He may have a hobby or play a sport that he is very good at, or he may feel the need to be the best father in the world.... In the same way, a top manager can also end up in a situation in which he has to go back to Step 2, because his wife has kicked him out and he has no idea where to spend the night. The need for shelter, safety, order and peace and quiet then demands his attention.

What does the model not explain?

It is important to understand that this model does not explain every type of behaviour. Suppose a programmer works through the night because one particular component in the new software he has developed is not working properly. As a manager, you might wonder whether that one component is really so important. And then you might conclude that his behaviour is not very productive and think to yourself: which need is the programmer satisfying now, for Heaven's sake?

The programmer simply wants to solve a problem and cannot relax until it is solved. If you ask him which need is driving him to work through the night and why he expects to satisfy this need in this way, he will probably think you're crazy.

What is your role as a company mentor?

If motivation is so closely connected to individual needs, can you then influence the motivation of your employees as a supervisor? Must you feel responsible for their enthusiasm? **YES!**

Although you cannot motivate them 'directly' – after all, motivation is not like fuel that you pour into a machine to make it work – as a supervisor you can certainly influence them. After all, if your employees start performing badly, the accusatory stares will be directed at you. In your management role as a 'stimulator' and 'mentor' you are expected to stimulate your people to develop. And that also means helping them to resolve possible problems with motivation.

How do you do that?

In the same way as you tackle your own motivation problems.

1. Observe, keep asking questions and reflect
2. Recognise the need
3. Help people to define a motivating goal (SMART)
4. Delegate
5. Give feedback and help to create realistic expectations
6. Get people to do what they are good at and what they like doing
7. Give people the attention they need!!

Observe, keep asking questions and reflect

Look at yourself. Are you motivated? Do you enjoy your work? Are you passionate about it? Do you believe your work is important? Does it gratify your need? And if so, which need is that?

Take another look at Maslow's hierarchy of needs and see which levels are topical for you. If there is friction, what is causing it? Look at your employees in the same way. If you see behaviour that signifies a motivational problem, do something about it. Talk to the employee in question. Ask '**open questions**' to find out whether he or she has an ungratified need. Don't judge, but take time to reflect on what you have heard. Come back to it after you have thought enough about it. Also reflect on your own behaviour. Did you ever use a tactic in the past that didn't work very well? How did that come about?

Recognise the need

Behaviour is ruled by needs. You can see how the employee is behaving, but you may not understand straight away which need he thinks he is satisfying with this behaviour. Behaviour that is irritating (to you!!) is particularly difficult to understand right away. Ask searching questions to find out which need is behind the behaviour and then make it clear that you respect that need. Together with the employee, try to find out whether there are tasks and/or activities that you can adapt. Or you might consider a transfer so that his need can be gratified. If that is not an option or if there is no real space for it, you can always advise him to look for another job that is more consistent with his needs.

Help people to define a motivating goal

If an employee has lost his way a little, this is often because he has lost sight of the ultimate goal (mission, vision, goals in lesson 1). Or the goals that he is working towards no longer motivate him. Talk to him to see whether you can make his goal more stimulating. Rationalise this from his perspective and not your own frame of reference! If you are a project manager and are overseeing an entire project and the completion of the project as a whole is your ultimate goal, then you are indeed motivated. After all, you have a clear image of the end result. On the other hand, the project administrator who only keeps track of the project costs and the hours worked cannot see the ultimate goal unless you tell him how that ultimate goal looks and what he can do to help achieve it! He can then use this information to set his own goals. Here, it is very important that you allow him to influence the formulation of the aim. In that way, you create an excellent support base!

Delegate

Delegating (letting go) is a difficult but important management skill. When you invest in delegating, you give yourself more space in the longer term. Moreover, you are working at the same time on achieving a team that performs better and is more motivated and you give employees the opportunity to develop themselves even more!

Give feedback and help to create realistic expectations

Suppose an employee thinks he is unable to do something. In that case, he lacks any positive energy for the task and feels only fear. If you are sincerely convinced that he can perform the task, you must convince him that he can do it! You do that by giving him concrete and positive feedback about his performances!

Don't say, "Come on, you can do it!", but try to find examples from the past when he performed very well. Then say "You really did a great job with that customer who bought the digital TV. You were clear, calm and convincing. The job you're now going to do is now very similar to that. So I really believe you can do it." In this way, you help to build his self-confidence. He starts thinking positively about his chance of success!

Get people to do what they are good at and what they like doing

Make sure you have accurately mapped out the 'task maturity' of your employees. What are their core qualities? Try to find goals and tasks for which they can utilise their qualities – this really helps to motivate them. Don't expect a quiet, meticulous, careful administrative employee to spontaneously and convincingly hold forth during the team meeting. That is not his style. Give people the freedom to organise their work themselves.

Give people the attention they need

You yourself could not keep performing well if nobody ever told you were doing a good job or if your 'problem' was not taken seriously. Take a sincere interest in your employees and use what they tell you to help them feel motivated!