

Employee Development: Motivate Employee Participation in Professional Development Opportunities and Improve Performance

An [employee development and training program](#) is not something to be checked off on a checklist. The strongest organizations make employee development an integral part of their culture and strategies for success. Learn how to increase your performance by motivating the seemingly unmotivated.

When companies think of employee development, they often search for training programs, educational seminars, coaching or the latest book that might offer ideas on what employees can do to sharpen skills or strengthen expertise. However, none of these programs will be effective if the organization lacks one critical success factor: individual motivation. An individual must want to develop himself before any employee training and development program can be successful.

Some say they're 'too busy.' Some say they're 'already developed.' Some blame the boss. Some like burying their heads in the sand, afraid of what they might learn about themselves.

What can you do to help your employees achieve best performance?

Here are some tips to help motivate the seemingly unmotivated and increase your organization's overall performance

1. Target the highly motivated and strong performers

All organizations have individuals who are highly motivated. They stand out more easily. They typically like challenges and welcome growth opportunities for themselves. Engage them in activities to help them get even better. The improved performance of the highly motivated will help raise the bar for your entire organization. Those who are less motivated will have to step up the pace.

2. Focus on the future

Rather than concentrate on performance areas that aren't working for an individual, talk about possibilities for the future. It's easier to become energized about new possibilities than dwelling on weaknesses. Determine the positive outcome that will occur if a change/improvement is made. For example, you might say, "We can reach more buyers if you can speak more frequently to groups. What can you do to hone your presentation skills to help secure more business?" Help employees keep their eye on the goal, not their ego.

3. Open dialogue about desire.

Discussions about development should be positive and ongoing -- not limited to annual performance reviews. Let the individual lead. Rather than saying, "Here are areas you need to develop," ask "What would help you build on your strengths or increase your effectiveness?" When a particular approach has been identified, ask for commitment to

follow-through. Create a culture where ongoing development is expected, encouraged and rewarded at all levels.

4. Start at the top.

Executives should model the commitment to growth and development that they want to see throughout the organization. After all, many problems disguised as employee development issues reflect leadership deficiencies of the firm or organization.

Consider using assessments of some kind to help employees gain a more objective perspective about them. Assessments can be helpful or destructive depending on how they are used. In the end, it's all about achieving what both the employees and what the organization wants. Be clear about what's most important to both.

An employee development and training program is not something to be checked off on a checklist. The strongest organizations make employee development an integral part of their culture and strategies for success. They constantly seek new and innovate ways to engage their people in development opportunities to achieve best results.