

So, what is Performance Improvement and why is it on everyone's mind?

What is a motivated person? How do we recognize them? How do we define motivation? These are questions our clients ask daily.

How do you elicit performance improvement from your most important asset: your people? Academic and practical theories are abundant and may conflict, but in our experience the answer lies in the alignment of four things:

> **Communication** - Are your mission and objectives clearly defined? Does the message generate excitement and sustain interest?

> **Training** – Have you provided the necessary tools and education so that employees have the skills and competencies they need to succeed? Do they know what is expected of them?

> **Reward/Reinforcement** - how will you recognize success? Are positive behavior changes being spotlighted? Are you recognizing only those things you want repeated?

> **Measurement** – Have you set benchmarks? Can you determine progress toward your goals? Are you providing feedback and adjusting accordingly?

Lead by Example

If you want motivated employees, be motivated yourself! If you need your team to engage more fully with your client base, then lead the way and demonstrate how the job should be done. Never exhibit anything less than excellence. Walk the talk and others will follow.

Motivation is best when excited from within. When employees see behavior they want to emulate they will be given a reason to perform at higher levels.

Here is a definition of Motivation:

That which incites to action; anything prompting or exciting choice, or moving the will; cause; reason; inducement; object of desire; incentive

Are you prompting or exciting action?

Cultivate your caring, sharing environment

No employee should be motivated by fear or guilt. An employer may get what he wants in the short-term with these tactics, but in the long-term you are faced with a work force who knows it is being manipulated and in time will be angry, resentful and lacking loyalty. If employees feel that their employer is fair, and that they are valued and respected this will engender commitment and enthusiasm for their role and the company as a whole.

Incentives and Rewards

By setting up an incentive program an employer can reward his staff while tying in an individual's hard work and contribution toward the growth and profitability of the business. Non - cash rewards, whether on a weekly or monthly basis, give staff that added recognition that can motivate them to go the extra mile, not just occasionally, but on a consistent basis.

Be transparent

Don't be afraid to share your vision of the future for your company with your employees, and their place in it.

Have realistic expectations

Employees respond to reasonable, realistic requests. Many of us work in highly pressurized environment in which excessive demands from on high will not necessarily produce better results. Gradually raising expectations in line with personal development and confidence should help to ease any growing pains.

Flex to Grow

Gone are the days of nine-to-five, Monday to Friday, and along with reward and incentives, flexibility is another way to show your staff you are going the extra mile to keep them happy. A little flexibility on your part in the short term will help ensure a loyal, appreciative workforce in the long-term.

Giving Thanks

Without your staff, you have no business. It may be a small thing, and an inexpensive one too, but heartfelt thanks and appreciation from employer to employee for their hard work, will work wonders in keeping the team happy, loyal and pulling in the right direction.

Motivation, of course, is not a steady state. It needs to constantly be worked upon and invested in. But if you are looking around one day and find yourself in a happy place, the chances are you have hit upon the right blend of communication, learning, measurement and reward. And the chances are you are holding on to your best people, who continue to deliver great performance.