



Personality's Role in Motivating Employees

In any organization, there needs to be a mix of personality types. Where everyone has the same personality type and a problem arises, the team is less likely to challenge each other and look at the problem in a variety of ways; thereby creating solutions that are less than innovative. The different personality types are not explicitly defined, and therefore there is no definitive list, but there is a set of soft skills which all workplaces require, and these are best met by different types of people.

Identifying Your Personality Type

You probably have an idea of your own personality type. A personality type is defined by the aspects of your character that emerge when around others or when doing important work. These character aspects are usually described as skills, or competencies, or characteristics. You may have been described as “maternal,” “skeptical,” “humorous,” “detail-oriented,” “big picture focused,” “goal driven,” or any number of other things. These may or may not relate directly to your work but can aid or restrict your ability to do the work, and can aid or restrict others in how they interact and collaborate with you. It is considered beneficial to have as many different types of personalities in a workplace as possible.

Perhaps the best way in the workplace to detect a personality type is to judge your reaction to a problem which affects a whole team, or a sub-group within the team. Are you immediately looking for a way of overcoming the problem? Are you instinctively worried by what happens, and do you look to other people to help out? Do you comfort people who are stressed out by the problem? Or do you perhaps sit on the sideline, making jokes to keep people relaxed? Strange as it may sound, all of these elements are worthwhile in a team. The person who immediately looks for the solution is a “problem solver”; the second type is a “consensus seeker”. The third is considered a “nurturer,” while the last listed is a “humorist”. All of these are classic personality types.

Equally, all of these people, and others, play a major part in making up a workplace.

- Without the problem solvers, an organization would be in trouble if things deviated from the plan as laid out.
- Without consensus seekers, it would be easy for a problem solver to become too autonomous, solving the problem to their satisfaction without being particularly concerned for how others felt about the solution.
- Without the nurturers, people would feel that a problem could too easily become a crisis.
- Without the humorists, a bad situation would depress everyone.

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Identifying Others' Personality Type

Most people know, or have an idea of, what personality type they conform to most. When meeting new people it can be difficult to get a handle on other people's personality types. The only way to really get a firm sight of what kind of personality you are dealing with is to speak to people and to monitor how they conduct themselves. One way of doing the latter is to hold "ice-breaking" or "getting to know you" games with employees and team members. By playing games designed to enable people to get to know each other, and by watching people, you can find out a lot about what kind of person they are.

Motivators by Personality Type

The different personality types have different ways of motivating the people around them as well as themselves. Someone who emerges as a conciliatory person is likely to motivate others by speaking to them one-on-one and allowing them to see where they excel as well as where they can improve. Being able to put bad news in a good way can be valuable.

Other people, who may have a more dominant personality, will have a different way of motivating positively or negatively. They will generally tend to prefer delivering criticism one-on-one, as doing it in the open will de-motivate others, but good news will be delivered loudly and shared throughout the team, as a way of spreading the joy and motivating other people to try to achieve the same, and gain the same kind of acclaim.

Depending on someone's personality type, they will have vastly different ways in which they can contribute to the team's motivation. It is becoming common practice in many organizations to have what are known as "champions" to take control of certain aspects of the team. This empowers people in non-management roles to play a significant part without pressuring them with the responsibility of the concrete performance of the team. By assigning people the correct champion's role, you can enable them to get the best out of themselves and others, and not let a talent go to waste.

Goals and Motivation

It is understood that an organization will get nowhere without having targets and ambitions to which to aspire. There is a phrase often used which describes people as "goal-oriented". The meaning of this phrase is that the individual seeks to achieve goals and defines their success by reaching those goals they identified as important. If they fail to meet a goal, they consider that they have failed overall, no matter the quality of the work they have done to get to a particular point, or any obstacles they have overcome. Though this seems a little negative given the numerous ways in which a person can fail to reach their goals, it does not mean that having goals and aiming for them is not a valuable way to work.

Anyone in a job will have some targets to meet with regard to their performance. The extent to which they achieve that, the number of times they do so, and the quality which they apply is all considered

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worthwhile material for target setting and attainment. Some companies set organization-wide goals, while others focus on team goals, and yet others set individual goals for each of their employees, or some combination. Whatever the case, these goals are used in a number of ways, and are considered an important part of every job.

One way in which goals feed motivation is the obvious one of performance-related pay. While just about every job will come with a basic salary, the importance of ensuring that work is done to a satisfactory standard means that bonuses are paid out for achieving and surpassing goals. This feeds into people's need to be financially rewarded for doing a satisfactory job, one of the major motivations for working. If you feel that you are undervalued in your job, one complaint you may have is that it does not pay well enough. Therefore it is important for your employer to motivate you by paying you well enough, and for you to ensure you are well paid by meeting goals. But remember, money alone is rarely a motivator over the long term. An employee may initially be motivated by money, but if other motivation factors do not exist; eventually money is no longer a motivator.

Another way in which goals aid the motivation of employees is that goals introduce an element of competition. For example, a sales department may have a "results board" which carries the names of team members and their performance in sales. Depending on how seriously you take competition, you may feel that being top of the list is the important thing – or that being ahead of a specific individual is more important. Regardless, no one wants to be last, and the public displaying of goals can make sure that people do their level best to perform – since, as Herzberg contends, recognition is a major element of motivation.

Setting SMART Goals

It is one thing to set goals, and another to set meaningful goals. Anyone can set themselves an easily achievable goal, and meet it without really trying. This is not beneficial for motivation; by the same token it is non-beneficial to set goals for someone else that they simply cannot attain. The result of doing this is that they will fail to meet these goals and be discouraged, which leads to be disengaged and demotivated. Rather than striving to meet them next time, they are as likely to exhaust themselves through futile effort or to let their frustration overcome them and fall ever shorter.

It is important to set SMART goals which, though achievable, are not in any way guaranteed. This increases the challenge while keeping the real possibility of success.

The SMART acronym means:

- **Specific:** Goals need to be definite and defined. They need to be on a level where only people who are prepared to work hard will achieve them.

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- **Measurable:** Goals need to be something which can be assessed and plotted against previous months and co-workers. They need to be worthwhile, and to constitute something that people will be proud to achieve.
- **Achievable:** There is no point in setting goals arbitrarily and unilaterally. Setting goals which a member of staff cannot achieve is counter-productive, and may have the opposite result from that intended.
- **Realistic:** As mentioned before, there is no point setting goals that cannot be achieved or which are too easy to achieve. They should not be set in regard to a minor element of the job, and achieving them should have tangible benefits. They need to be stretch goals but ones that are achievable.
- **Timed:** Setting a goal of selling 100 units is relatively meaningless unless you specify a time period. Also, during the time period it should be possible to check in and see if the employee is set to meet their goals or miss them.

Evaluating and Adapting

The importance of goals is not only in setting them in the first place, but in learning from the experience of achieving or missing them. Sometimes what looks like a realistic goal can be difficult or impossible to reach in the current situation and either the goals need to be re-set or the employee needs to be retrained or coached. Sometimes the goals will be achieved easily and ahead of schedule with a minimum of effort, in which case they may well need to be revised to be more challenging. What is certain is that realistic and accurate goals can be used to evaluate an employee's performance and to see where changes can be made.

Based on an employee just narrowly missing their goals a few months in a row, it may be possible to find out one factor which is holding them back and preventing them from achieving what they are capable of. It may also be that they are hitting all but one of their targets, but just failing on the final one. In these cases, a target or goal can be used as a way of motivating the employee. If they can just hit that last target, then they will be rewarded. There are ways that they can improve their performance on that front, so they know what they need to do in order to hit it. This can be a very useful tool in ensuring that people take training seriously and are motivated to apply it.

What can be said for certain is that misapplied targets and goals can have a detrimental effect on employee motivation from either side. Too easy and the employee becomes complacent; too hard and they become frustrated. This is why it is necessary to set SMART goals for an employee, and to fine-tune them if they cease to be SMART.

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