

Stop Trying To Motivate Me!

Article Rating: NA

Submitted by: articlediner on 2006-11-18 and viewed 29 times.

Total Word Count: 813

Author Rating:

Sample of Content:

Motivation is seen as something to be supplied to the workforce in discrete lumps by paid third party gurus. The "motivated" workforce is then sent back to exactly the same conditions that demotivated them in the first place. Why not spend that time and money figuring out what demotivated them in the first place, and just stop doing it.

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Motivation is seen as something to be supplied to the workforce in discrete lumps by paid third party gurus.

The "motivated" workforce is then sent back to exactly the same conditions that demotivated them in the first place.

Why not spend that time and money figuring out what demotivated them in the first place, and just stop doing it. Stop Trying To Motivate Me!

Some years ago while working with an NHS Primary Health care trust I was in conversation with one of the ward sisters.

In the course of the conversation she revealed that she thought she should be doing more to motivate her staff, but with a roll of her eyes, she told me how difficult it was to find the time to get through the normal business of the ward without doing anything extra, like motivation.

I did not feel there was any value in remonstrating with her at the time since her perception of what was required of her was deep rooted and supported by an entire industry that agreed with her idea that motivation was something that she was responsible for handing out in discrete packages.

We have been brought up in an age where motivation is seen as a commodity that can be bought and distributed to the workforce in the same way as candy.

The Ward Sister held the common view that motivation was something that came on prescription and it was her job to hand it out at frequent intervals, except that like aspirin, did it really matter too much if you missed a dose.

In her case having missed one dose, missing the next one did not seem so serious until missing out on motivation became the norm.

This view, that motivation can be applied in discrete lumps by management, is a common one that is supported by the industry from whom we purchase speakers, workshops and techniques to infuse our workforce with this mysterious management candy called motivation.

What we seem to have missed in this rush to spray the latest brand of motivation on the workforce, is the follow up.

We rush out of the motivational workshop ready to do battle with giants, then we all assemble underneath a large banner that says "Now What".

The reason we feel that the workforce needs motivating is because the environment they work in has demotivated them.

But as soon as we have applied a dose of motivation to the workforce we put them back into the same environment that demotivated them in the first place.

A more effective use of the workforces time would be to find out what is going on in the workplace that demotivates them, then stop doing it.

This would avoid putting the workforce back into the same environment that caused the problem in the first place and would in all probability avoid the need for an injection of

motivation in the first place, because the workforce would not be demotivated.

The nurses on the ward were not demotivated because the sister failed to give them motivational talks.

They were demotivated because the sister would not consult them before allocating the off duty, they were demotivated because the administration would not give them enough pillow cases to cover all the beds, they were demotivated when they had to look after healthy people because there were not enough ambulances to take them home, they were demotivated when wards were closed by accountants who could count numbers without seeing the real cost.

Nurses are one of the most highly motivated groups of people on this planet. They become nurses because they want to be able to care for people.

For this they go through a long and taxing process of education and training until when they finally qualify they are fitted for the task and proud of their ability to carry it out.

They are the most motivated people on this planet.

Then when they go to work they are not allowed to apply for the holidays they want because they have not been on the ward long enough. They are not allowed to park next to the hospital because the administrators have taken all the spaces and instead they have to pay to park in the public car park. They are not allowed the basic tools that they need to do their job because the budget allocation for that year has been used up.

It would not matter how many motivational talks they received.

While the same conditions persist that first caused their frustration they will always return to the source of that frustration and the same banner that says after motivational training, "Now What"

The nurse is one example, in one industry, in one sector. That example is by no means unique.

The view of Motivation as a commodity to be dispensed at intervals by paid third party gurus prevents Managers from accepting responsibility for the way their own staff feel about what they do.

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Article Source: <http://www.ArticleDiner.com/>

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