



# Demotivate, Motivate, Reward, and Recognize: Improving Performance

At work, management creates an environment that either motivates or demotivates people.

**M**any people wake up motivated to do a good job at work. The problem is, they get beaten up throughout the day. The key to more motivation, participation, and engagement? Stop demotivating people. Since humans began working together to accomplish shared objectives, getting people to do more than they have to has been a challenge. Stora Kopparberg, a mining community in Falun, Sweden, is allegedly the oldest commercial organizational-structured corporation after obtaining a charter from King Magnus Eriksson in 1347. One can only wonder how undesirable performance was addressed back then.

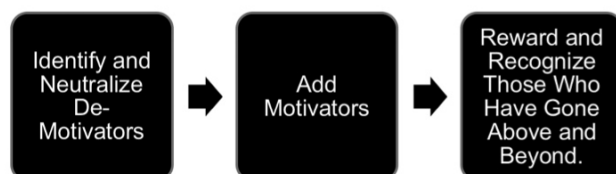
Fast forward almost six centuries: Frederick Winslow Taylor published his Scientific Management Theory in a 1911 paper prepared for a presentation to the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. The theory was intended to improve production efficiency and productivity through management control of employees. He defined his theory as “concerned with knowing exactly what you want men to do and then seeing that they do it in the best and cheapest way.” It basically contained three steps: 1. Break complex jobs down into simple ones; 2. Measure everything workers do; and 3. Link pay to performance (bonuses to high achievers and sack sluggards). Unfortunately, there are still companies today with this same approach to performance improvement.

In 1995, Dean R. Spitzer wrote a fascinating book, “SUPERMOTIVATION: A Blueprint for Energizing Your Organization from Top to Bottom,” which transformed the thinking on motivation. He made the argument, “Nothing has done more to ensure the failure of previous efforts at improving organizational motivation in the American workplace than the problem of demotivators.”

## Identify and Neutralize Demotivators

Spitzer listed the major demotivators as “politics, unclear expectations, unnecessary rules, poorly designed work, unproductive meetings, lack of follow-up, constant change, internal competition, dishonesty, hypocrisy, withholding information, unfairness, discouraging responses, criticism, capacity underutilization, tolerating poor performance, being taken for granted, management invisibility, overcontrol, takeaways and being forced to do poor-quality work.”

How many of these exist in your organization, and what impact do they have on performance? If you do not address these, they will suck the life out of the motivation that exists within. In consulting to improve performance and culture, many of our clients follow



© 2018, ProAct Safety, Inc., All Rights Reserved.

a simple three-step process: reduce demotivators, add motivators, reward and recognize those who go above and beyond. How can you work to identify and neutralize the demotivators within your company?

**Rather than trying to work on your people, work on the motivational climate they work within.**

## Add Motivators

Motivation is within a person. At work, management creates an environment that either motivates or demotivates people. Adding motivators that facilitate want-to is the next step. Because motivators increase desire, they supplement internal motivation. Spitzer went on to say motivators work because they “make people want to work, want to get involved, want to learn, want to achieve, want to gain recognition. . . .” He listed the major motivators as “action, fun, variety, input, stake sharing, choice, responsibility, leadership opportunities, social interaction, teamwork, using strengths, learning, error tolerance, measurement, goals, improvement, challenge, encouragement, appreciation and signification.”

## Reward and Recognize Those Who Have Gone Above and Beyond

*Incentives* are things promised for certain performance and, when not administered correctly, can do serious damage to trust, relationships, and the overall culture. *Rewards* are not promised, but are given unannounced after desirable performance, to recognize and reinforce it. Essentially, ask people to do the right thing (more than what is required and at their discretion) for the right reason and reward, or at least recognize them, when they do.

Some quick guidelines to consider for effective rewards are: Reward the right things. Make the rewards symbolic and, where and when appropriate, give with a little excitement. Minimize cost and create an earning mentality. Attach rewards to specific improvement goals. Set realistic and believable expectations. Don't let rewards become entitlements. Make rewards equitable and don't let team rewards discourage individual performance.

What motivates and demotivates an individual is specific to both the individual and the work environment. This is what makes motivation difficult and incentives, unfortunately, appealing. If we have hired the right people and have them in the right positions, rather than jumping too quickly to incentivizing performance or bonusing high achievers and sacking sluggards, first answer this question with people within your culture: Are we creating an environment that motivates or demotivates people? Rather than trying to work on your people, work on the motivational climate they work within. **OHS**

*Shawn M. Galloway, President of ProAct Safety, has helped organizations within every major industry improve safety strategy, culture, leadership, and engagement. He can be reached at 936-273-8700 or info@ProActSafety.com.*

