



Motivation or engagement? What's the difference?

Can you have motivation without engagement or engagement without motivation? Absolutely. During a recent consulting engagement where I participated in a goal deployment workshop, I observed an interesting discussion. The workshop's participants were having conversations about how to improve the culture when the CEO remarked, "We need better engagement from the workforce." A senior vice president responded, "We have engagement; what we need is motivation." A debate was then facilitated that answered the question, "What's the difference?" The simple answer is a want-to versus a have-to culture. Now how do we accomplish this?

A simplistic overview of motivation theory says needs drive behavior to reach satisfaction and avoid dissatisfaction. There are many types of needs. Consider Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: physiological, safety, love or belonging, esteem and self-actualization. These needs largely move from external motivation to internal motivation. They also reflect the evolution many companies attempt when moving their cultures from have-to cultures — e.g., keeping their jobs

and benefits and providing for their families, which are largely fear-driven needs — to want-to cultures — e.g., friendships, self-esteems, challenges, senses of contribution and accomplishments.

Motivated people are excited and have energy they want to use to make things. However, motivation is not aimless. Rather, it has a specific focus on what those motivated are fixated on. In addition, if the high energy and focus do not result in productive action, they were not truly part of motivation. Motivation is high-level energy focused on productive action.

Motivation is different than engagement. An employee might be engaged in something but not absorbed in it because he or she is feeling a sense of "have to." Motivation is the "why" or reason we act; engagement is typically the "what." However, engagement can also be an emotional commitment. Consider the things that motivate us to be engaged or disengaged. What motivates us to be emotionally committed to something, like the quest for safety excellence, and what motivates us to care less about something else? The problem is often two-fold. First,

there is rarely a documented agreement about what engagement really means or what it should look like if it existed in employee or leadership behaviors. Second, efforts to increase motivation tend to start with external nudges — e.g., edicts or incentives — rather than looking at the environment or identifying what currently demotivates the desired motivation and engagement.

In your organization, do any of the following common demotivators exist: constant change, withholding information, hypocrisy, dishonesty, unfairness, unproductive activities, internal competition, lack of follow-up, over control or ignoring input? These demotivators are critical to identify prior to attempting to add motivators like input, ownership, involvement, teamwork, scorekeeping, improvement, winning, variety and recognition.

To increase engagement and motivation in your organization, follow this five-part plan:

1. Hire motivated people.
2. Define engagement and what it would look like if observed.
3. Ensure the work environment facili-

tates engagement by removing demotivators, the things that rob people of their inner motivations.

4. Add motivators to increase employees' desires to be involved and willingness to participate in efforts that allow them to use and improve their talents on something meaningful.

5. Recognize and reward people who are doing more than required for their discretionary contributions.

With this plan, over time you will move your culture from have-to to want-to and will no longer debate the differences between motivation and engagement.

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