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Motivation as a Value Driver

So much of what drives value and greatness in any organization resides in how the people are managed. Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great*, has repeatedly emphasized the importance of attracting and retaining the best people. However, a big part of this has to do with motivating your people. When you focus on this single element of value, namely motivation, you can really unleash so much value and performance within any type of organization.

One reason to fully understand motivation is due to the fact that so many managers are blindsided by it, having to spend so much time keeping people motivated and those managers that ignore run a high risk of losing their best people, not to mention the decline in performance from the workforce as a whole. So motivation warrants a lot more attention from all managers and organizations.

"Surveys show that 73% of workers are less motivated today than they used to be, and 84% could perform significantly better if they wanted to. Perhaps most shocking of all, a full 50% of workers say they are exerting only enough energy to hang on to their jobs. This crisis needs a radical treatment . . ." – Supermotivation: A Blueprint for Energizing Your Organization From Top to Bottom by Dean R. Spitzer

The good news is that all employees have the capacity to be motivated. The bad news is that most companies fall back on traditional forms of motivation such as promotions and pay increases. It's true this can help with motivation, but this is very short-lived. The key here is to motivate from within and not fall back on the external techniques such as pay and promotion. These internal drivers of motivation depend upon some critical cultural issues within the organization:

1. Communication – You must communicate clearly and concisely with your employees. You must listen to what they have to say. Communication should not be simply top down, but also horizontally across organizational layers.
2. Recognition – Recognize the accomplishments of your employees. On the spot recognition and encouragement are very easy.
3. Learning – You must make an investment that grows the employee in terms of their skills. And as employees are trained they need opportunities to apply their skills for real growth. Without "experience" the investment in training goes no where.
4. Responsibility – Give employees real ownership over the work including lead roles over important work.
5. Personal Side – Don't put all emphasis on work. There needs to be some emphasis on the fact that people are people and some time should be spent on the personal side; such as drinks after work or recognition of birthdays, weddings or other personal events in the life of the employee.

"People are dying to be connected, invited, involved. They don't like having things shoved down their throats in a formal way. They show energy and commitment when they can be players and influence an initiative's outcome." – Kenny Moore of KeySpan Energy

When you have motivated people you literally create a passion for excellence across your organization. As authors Mike Veeck and Pete Williams point out in their book *Fun is Good*, passion is behind greatness and this leads to things such as innovation and incredible levels of organizational efficiency. It's worth noting that we are not talking about transforming people into workaholics, but more on recognizing basic principles behind how you must manage people. For example, more and more people have concerns about their future and they want direct input into decisions. If companies can recognize these critical internal factors behind motivation, then you will invariably create a lot of value in the long-term.

Finally, don't forget that many companies are riddled with de-motivators, things like policies and rules, numerous job titles that divide the workforce, a high tolerance for poor performance, and under utilization of highly skilled workers. The emphasis should be on the fact that people seek purpose and meaning behind their work. This requires things like involvement, training, and shared responsibility.

"Companies with a highly committed workforce repeatedly outdistance their rivals in both profits and returns. As all evidence indicates, the source of competitive advantage is shifting from technology, patents or strategic position to how a company manages its employees." – Competitive Advantage through People by Jeffrey Pfeffer