MOTIVATING OTHERS

**Basic Premise:** Everyone acts in her/his own self-interest. This self-interest may be base or noble. The more self-interest is rewarded, the greater is the motivation.

**Overview of motivation:** Abraham Maslow’s *Hierarchy of Needs* is central. In short, we have basic needs that are largely physiological (food, water, sleep) or psychological (affection, security, self-esteem). We also have higher needs or meta needs (justice, goodness, beauty, order, unity, etc.) Once basic needs are generally fulfilled, meta needs will kick in. Basic needs might be fulfilled by money, tenure, promotion. Meta needs are in much less pragmatic realms. Highest on Maslow’s hierarchy is at the transegoic level – above what Freud terms the *ego*. Herzberg also has developed a list of factors classified under Hygiene or Dissatisfies (working conditions, policies, salary, etc.) and Motivators or Satisfiers (recognition, growth, achievement, etc.). Vroom’s Expectancy Theory states that an individual will act in a certain way based on the expectation that the act will be followed by a given outcome that is attractive to the individual (i.e., The Basic Belief dressed up).

Whether or not an action is taken depends on weighing the desire for the reward or the fear of punishment vs. the work required. Bryan Bell (*Motivating Others*) lists the following suggestions for how to maximize motivation in a workplace situation (I have editorialized to some degree):

1. Ask others for advice – including *What are you motivated by?*
2. Keep those around you fully informed.
3. Look for opportunities to publicly praise folks. Quickly note and praise growth, initiative, courage and leadership.
4. Handle reprimand privately. In this be sincere, compassionate, respectful and kind.
5. Provide opportunities for others to solve problems. Make certain they know where they have autonomy. (Remember the management triangle?)
6. Admit when you are wrong.
7. Have frequent informal conferences based upon *How is it going?* to monitor motivation.
8. Don’t tell employees how to do a job. Tell them what the goals are and them let them do it.

9. Remember that money is a very short-term motivator.

Lessons Learned:

- Trying to motivate someone to do something that they don’t want to do can be very expensive.
- Motivational speakers or pep talks produce very short-term motivation and are rather “plastic” in nature.
- Taking time to “read” people – intuiting “what makes them tick” – is helpful.
- Motive is clearly the root word behind motivate. As such, what we are searching for when we are attempting to motivate others is the stimulating motive that works.
- Motivating by power is far less constructive than motivating by leading (or, capturing passions).
- Persons who frequently require external motivation are in the wrong job. Get rid of them.
- Forming teams to determine how a goal will be met spawns ongoing motivation.
- If I am the leader of a task and lose motivation, it is critical that I get instant help in exploring where my ennui comes from.

Exercises for self-study:

- Take ½ hour of reflection with your journal and determine what three (or so) things motivates you the most.
- Take another ½ hour with your journal and determine what three (or so) things quells your motivation the most.
- Ask a colleague who seems highly motivated what it is that motivates her/him.
- Have a conversation with someone you supervise who seems to lack motivation to discover what is missing (what motive). Be compassionate and generative, not judgmental.
- Take another ½ hour and come up with a short list of your lessons learned with regard to motivation.

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