

**Management Insight**

**Maintain Motivation**

**Should be easier than having to build it**

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## Introduction

I will just go ahead and assume that nobody demotivates his employees or team members on purpose. At the same time not each and every person with some kind of people responsibility can be completely incompetent in leading these people. And yet, motivation drains away almost everywhere one looks.

How does this happen?

How do we stop it?

Obviously there is no one-fits-all answer, but let me raise some claims as how we slowly but steadily kill our employee's motivation.

Claim #1: Everybody is initially motivated to do as good a job as possible.

Claim #2: Motivation is often ruined or diminished by employers.

Claim #3: It is easier to maintain motivation than to (re-)build it.

## How We Demotivate People

There are countless ways. Let's try to focus on those, which are most common and at the same time fairly easy to avoid.

### Drudgery

Doing the same task or activity day in, day out for any extended period of time is tedious, mind-numbing and eventually has to lead to a loss of motivation even in the best employees. Be honest: would it not be the same for you?

If you need any proof for this, take a look at those brave and at the same time poor souls sitting at little windows behind little counters and executing the unexciting yet necessary formalities for getting any kind of paperwork done. From car registration to insurance claim handling to credit requests to ... you get the idea. This just cannot be fun.

### Blame vs. Praise

Especially with new employees the responsible team leader or manager tends to have a very close eye on them. And for good reason. The newcomer is bound to have questions as well as to make mistakes. Hence her superior is watching out for those.

And that's wrong.

You should not wait only for mistakes to happen and point them out – however friendly – to the newcomer. Instead look for something she did well and point this out to her. Rather than being disappointed about a mistake, she will be elated and her confidence will grow – and so will her motivation to keep doing things well or even better.

This is not to say that mistakes shall be ignored. The difference is in the superior's attitude to consciously look for success rather than failure in what an employee is doing.

### Complicating Their Work Lives ...

That's a bad one. Not that the others are particularly good, but still.

Imagine you look forward to getting on with your work. But in order to do so, you have to follow some pesky, inefficient process. Everybody knows that this process sucks. Some even know, how it could be done better and more efficiently. A few even ventured so far as to feed their ideas back to the powers that be.

### ... And Not Listening

And then? Nothing.

Unless you are a distant relation of Don Quixote, you will give up at some point and just keep using the cumbersome way of getting things done. Every. Single. Day.



How would this impact your motivation? My guess is that it would not be in a positive way. Sooner or later, whether as a conscious decision or without even thinking about it, you will feel less inclined to do well. After all nobody cares about your feedback, your proposals for improvement and – last not least – how easy (or hard) it is for you to shine at what you are doing.

## Micromanagement

That's my personal nightmare. I despise being micromanaged and would never do so myself. It is not just a sign that you lack trust and confidence in your employee's abilities, it is also extremely inefficient and guaranteed to lead to frustration.

Micromanagement is not just bad and annoying for individuals. Due to its inherent redundancy of efforts and the resulting dissatisfaction of employees, which will eventually lead to them leaving your organization, it has a direct financial impact on your company.

On top of this – if you are responsible for hiring a certain candidate – it also sheds a terrible light on your hiring skills. Why would you intentionally hire anybody, who is not able to do his job properly? Surely you would not.

In conclusion this means that you thought the candidate would be able, which then turned out to be not so. So you made the wrong call during hiring.

There are no winners with Micromanagement.

## How We Can Do Better

Based on the four examples above the possible actions are as evident as they are simple.

1. Try to engage your employees in various and diverse activities. Don't let them get stuck on the same task or project without any perspective for a change.
2. Tell them that they did well, if and when they did. Don't wait for the performance review. Don't make a fuss about it. Just tell them and make sure that you mean it. They will know, if you don't.
3. Make it easy for them to be good at their job. If you cannot make it easier, at least don't make it harder. And listen if they tell you what they don't like and how it would be better.
4. Just don't. Never. Ever.

## Conclusion

It really is not hard to keep people motivated. Take a long and honest look at how you treat your employees or team members. Do you really not find any of the above – or one of numerous other motivation killers – in your behavior? Is it really so hard to stop this habit and do it differently – and better?

Surely not.

Start today. Tackle one motivation killer for one employee and get rid of it. Then look at the next one. Then look at those, which affect multiple people. Most likely you will not see immediate results. But stick to your guns and they will show up.