Mastering the art of motivating employees

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Managers can motivate employees using both positive and negative reinforcement techniques. As a doctor and/or as a manager, it’s important that you clearly understand the four basic motivational techniques that are commonly used to influence the behavior of people in the workforce. They each are different and have their own unique merits and shortfalls.

Some are certainly more effective than others. By understanding these four primary techniques, leaders can influence their workers and discover greater opportunities to improve employee performance, leading to extraordinary results.

As a manager, if you really want to motivate your employees, you must first understand the underlying reasons why they are willing to do certain things.

Staff members generally will not be motivated by the same reasons you are. “What’s in it for me?” is a question employees ask themselves all the time. As a manager, it becomes your responsibility to figure out what motivates them besides their paycheck and use that to influence their behavior in a way that improves their performance-level and motivation while allowing them to play a bigger role in the overall success of your practice.

Here are the four commonly used employee motivational techniques.

Fear and manipulation

When workers are motivated by fear and manipulation, they are often operating in a defensive mode, trying to avoid losing their jobs or preventing a disciplinary action being taken against them, instead of focusing their energies on accomplishing something greater. This approach often leads to resentment of managers by their employees and can severely undermine communication and cooperation.

The short-term results achieved by using fear to get employees to perform typically won’t last and will eventually backfire on the practice and the manager.

The carrot on a stick approach

Also known as incentive-based motivation, this technique, although more appealing to the employees, also can undermine performance. Sure, people will temporarily work harder to get a reward, but what happens afterward? You will have to keep coming up with newer and better rewards (sweeter carrots) because you have conditioned your employees to expect bigger rewards for doing anything beyond the minimum amount of work that is required of them.

Empowering your employees

Empowerment leads to motivation, and motivation leads to success. If this is true, why not allow your employees to feel powerful? If you really want to pump them up, then prepare to share your power.

Smart managers and leaders have been using this technique long before it became a known management protocol. When workers feel strong, confident and capable, they accomplish more.

On the other hand, when staff members feel unappreciated or insignificant to the overall operation and when they lack responsibility and authority, they tend to perform below expectations. Employees who feel this way also tend to whine and complain more often.

When you give your power away, you are allowing your employees to share your responsibility and authority. They will find greater motivation and excitement in their work.

Using this technique consistently will free you from the hassle of using whips, carrots or other extrinsic forces to try to influence the behavior of your team members.

Self-motivation

When employees rely on themselves to stay motivated instead of others, they’re accepting self-responsibility. To encourage this behavior, give employees direct responsibility for achieving a specific task or project to make it their own and give them full authority to do it their way.

This is a hard concept to follow for those who like control; however, if done regularly, you will unleash a tremendous amount of energy and motivation among your staff members.

Remember, one of the greatest de-motivators is to assign responsibility to someone and then turn around and tell him or her how to do the job. Top managers never make this mistake.

The managers who understand the factors that drive the behavior of their employees are most likely to hire and retain better talent than the ones who don’t.

Mastering the art of motivating employees not only helps managers accomplish their goals, but it also aids in creating a rewarding and professionally satisfying workplace for the employees.

To learn more about management skills, case acceptance, marketing and building a successful schedule, you are invited to attend Orthodontic Management Solutions’ upcoming “Orthodontic Training Workshop” in San Diego on March 20–21, at the W Hotel. To find out more about the workshop, please visit orthoconsulting.com and click on “Events & Seminars.”

About the author

Scarlett Thomas is an orthodontic practice consultant who has been in the field for more than 23 years, specializing in case acceptance, team building, office management and marketing. As a speaker and practice consultant, she has an exceptional talent to inform, motivate and excite. Contact her by phone at (858) 455-2149 or by e-mail at scarlett@orthoconsulting.com.