

Motivation and inspiration are critical to success

By Mitchell Levy

Inspiration and motivation are two completely different concepts, but a majority of managers still make the mistake of interchanging the two.

It's easy to get lost in the semantics, but the difference can be boiled down to one simple observation: motivation can be manufactured, inspiration needs to be instilled.

Money, job security and career advancement are all effective means of motivation, but they're also solutions that can be delivered on a piece of paper. Salaries can be increased, contracts can be lengthened and staff can be promoted.

Inspiration, however, is a much more organic concept. An inspired employee is not only more engaged, but they are more empowered and more productive than their uninspired counterparts. They are more inclined to strive for excellence, most notably because they equate the triumphs of their organization to their own personal success. In other words, employees can be motivated because they are inspired.

Leadership expert and author Simon Sinek has long been known for his theories on how inspiration correlates to proper leadership. His mantra is simple. "People don't buy what we do, but why we do it."

It's a strange, if not counterintuitive assertion, but it's also an assertion grounded in truth. A customer will buy a product not simply because of what it does, but because they believe in what it does. The most recognizable brands in the world aren't simply successful because of their products, but because of our belief in those products.

Sinek meant his words in the context of customers, but it's easy to see how his insight can be translated in the context of leadership. When a leader nurtures a working environment that is motivated by inspiration, they foster a team that isn't afraid to act.

Inspired employees take the initiative to make great work not because their jobs depend on it, but because they believe in the importance of what they do. This, in turn, is a far more effective tool than any raise, or any job promotion.

Inspiration is the direct result of instilling power and purpose into your employees. One can't be done without the other.

Purpose is the rationale behind one's work, but it goes far beyond salary and formal job titles. It is the whats and whys of your organization. Why is what you do so important? Why is it important that you excel at your job?

Power, on the other hand, is not a characteristic of authority, but a characteristic of ability. For someone to be inspired, they need to know that they have the power to act on their purpose. They need to feel that their decisions and their actions have impact on the organization.

It's through the combination of both purpose and power that an employee becomes truly inspired. It is leadership without micromanagement, an organization fueled by initiative. When purpose and power come together, an employee realizes that they have the reason and the ability to excel at their job. They are motivated to decide, act and take initiative, not because they have to, but because they want to.

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