



21 TIPS FOR MOTIVATING YOUR TEAM

WHAT IF
"TGI MONDAY"
BECAME
YOUR STAFF
MANTRA?

STORY BY CHRIS BURSLEM

Behavioral researcher and author Alfie Kohn likes to tell a joke that many small business owners can no doubt relate to:
 An elderly man who lives near a school is regularly harassed by a group of students. So, one day he approaches them with a deal: He'll give each one a dollar if they'll all return the next day and yell insults at him at a pre-ordained time. They do so eagerly and receive the money as promised. But the old man also tells them he will only be able to pay them 25 cents the next time. More or less still happy to be paid, the chil-

dren are there again the next afternoon to taunt him, whereupon the old man explains that, henceforth, the daily reward for hurling abuse at him will be one cent. "A penny?" The kids are highly offended. For such a pathetic amount of money it's not worth the effort. Forget it, they say, and never bother him again.

Like all good jokes, there's more than a little truth in Kohn's tale. Humans just don't behave in seemingly rational ways, never more so than when it comes to money and the energy they are willing to exchange for it. Rewards work in some cases, but in others, they seem to not only deter quality work but bring out people's worst sides.

The things that we humans tend to pursue with the most care and deepest motivation — like preparing dinner for a family reunion, coaching a Little League team, building a treehouse or running a marathon — are things that are challenging and complex and sometimes even painful. This suggests the things that motivate us — and which sustain peak performance — are things like a sense of achievement, progress, the welfare of others, what other people think of us — the intrinsic stuff. It also implies sustained performance is a result of people acting because they choose to — not because they feel they have to.

The final thing to appreciate about motivation is that it flows and morphs. Sometimes a surprise slice of free pizza will get the best out of an employee. Other times it is a heartfelt one-on-one talk. To unlock every employee's fullest potential, you will have to experiment — every day and every week. In the following pages, we present a few ideas to help you on your way in this most vital and often mystifying field.



1

TWEAK, TWEAK

→ Success in guiding employee behavior happens in the thousands of daily interactions and decisions between you and your staff. "Great managing is about release, not transformation," says Marcus Buckingham, an author, talent expert and founder of The Marcus Buckingham Company, a strengths-based management organization. "It's about constantly tweaking your environment so that the unique contribution, the unique needs, and the unique style of each employee can be given free rein. Your success as a manager will depend almost entirely on your ability to do this."

KNOW THE RIGHT TRIGGERS

2 "As a rule, money tends to be a poor motivator. You have to look deeper if you want to understand what motivates people. Leadership is not about imposing your will on others, it has more to do with understanding people," says Dr. Steve Vargo, a business consultant with IDOC and author of *Eye on Leadership, An Optometrist's Game Plan For Creating A Motivated and Empowered Team*. Buckingham concurs: "A manager's most precious resource is time, and managers know that the most effective way to invest their time is to identify exactly how each employee is different and then to figure out how best to incorporate those enduring idiosyncrasies and how to translate them into outstanding performance."

FOCUS ON SMALL WINS

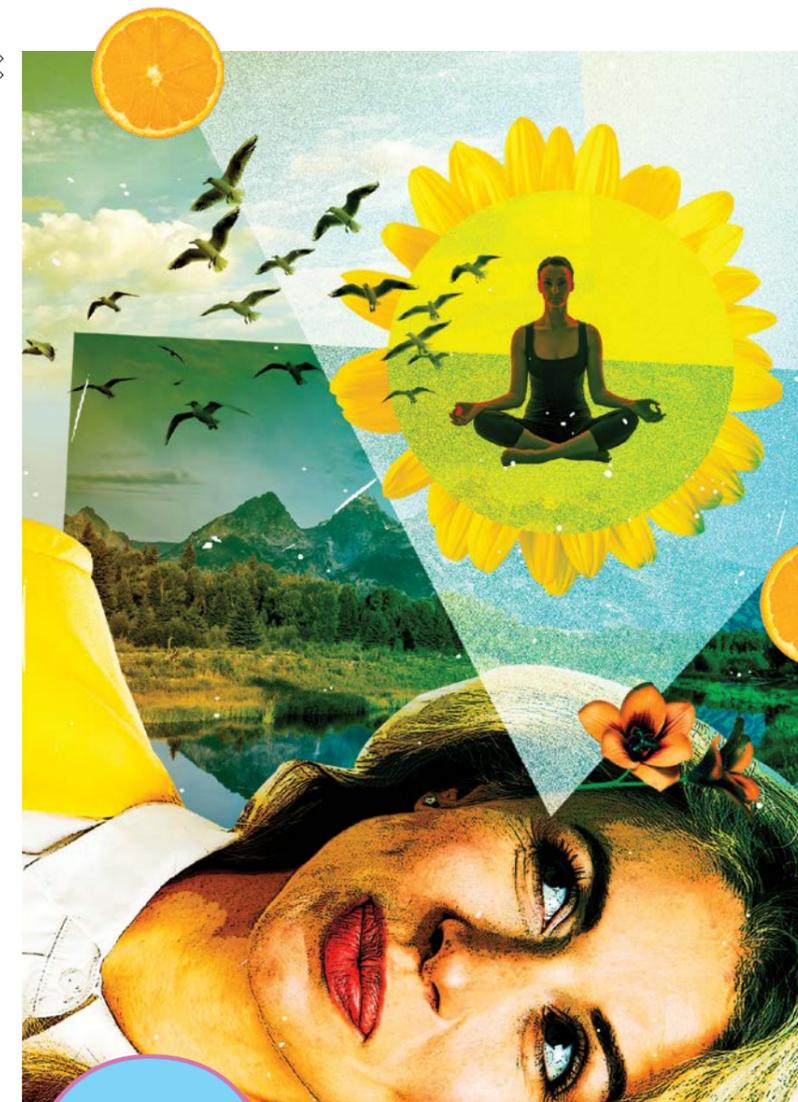
3 The psychology of motivation has moved away from the big goal approach in recent years and much more toward the idea of small wins. Indeed, Teresa Amabile's research at Harvard has found that the most motivating thing is "any" progress in meaningful work. Says Dan Ariely, professor of psychology and behavioral economics at the Fuqua School of Business: "The question for your staff should be, 'Can I do one small thing to get better today?' And the answer to that question is always, 'Yeah, I'm sure I can.'"

HIT RECORD

4 Logging certain aspects of your life can be a surprisingly powerful practice — not because there's much value in the record you create, but because the very act of recording exerts an interesting psychological effect. Get staff to spend a couple of days recording their time use in detail, productivity experts advise, and they're likely to find themselves using it more efficiently. The first observation is likely the discovery that they are frittering away many hours.

DITCH DEBBIE DOWNER

5 The Protestant work ethic basically equates labor with discomfort and looks darkly at levity in the workplace. But there is little in the way of science to support it as an approach to doing good work. Indeed, berating oneself for not working harder runs contrary to establishing a mood that gets things done. A fun environment, on the other hand, promotes innovation, healthy risk-taking, good morale and improved social connections.



6

LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

→ Promote positivity, says Shawn Achor, author of *The Happiness Advantage*, explaining that an optimistic mindset boosts intelligence, creativity and energy levels. "In fact, we've found that every single business outcome improves. Your brain at positive is 31 percent more productive than your brain at negative, neutral or stressed, and 37 percent better at sales," he says on his widely-viewed TED talk. Much of the reason has to do with a better ability to deal with challenges and setbacks. But just how to do it? Achor recommends meditation, gratitude lists, more exercise and acts of kindness like sending a 2-minute "thank you" email every morning.



GIVE THEM A MAP

7 In 1965, Howard Leventhal, a psychologist at Yale, wanted to see if he could scare students into getting a tetanus vaccination (still rare then) with a presentation of lurid images of patients struck by the disease. The students were duly alarmed – but not enough to get vaccinated. Leventhal found there was one intervention that made a difference, prompting 28 percent of students to get a shot, compared with 3 percent of the others. It was a campus map, showing how to get to the clinic and the hours it was open. Subsequent research has underlined the remarkable power of such step-by-step plans. Got something you want your staff to do? Give them a figurative baby-step map to get it done.

STRUCTURE MATTERS

8 *In Payoff: The Hidden Logic That Shapes Our Motivations*, Dan Ariely cites the case of different European countries' success in getting their citizens to sign up to be organ donors on their drivers' licenses. The disparity is huge and much of it comes down to a simple tweak in form design. In countries where people have to actively opt out, the willingness to donate is much higher. "It's not because it's easy. It's not because it's trivial. It's not because we don't care. It's the opposite," Ariely says of the study's findings. "And because we have no idea what to do (in such a case), we just pick whatever it was that was chosen for us." Design a work place where the default option is work, and people will be productive.

HARNESS TECHNOLOGY

➔ There's no shortage of apps to help your staff boost their productivity and stay motivated. One of our favorites is stickK (stickk.com), a free goal-setting platform created by behavioral economists at Yale University. Make a resolution and then if you don't follow through, a pre-agreed amount of money will be sent to an organization you really detest. You then decide what's worse, getting to work on time 20 times in a month or handing your cash over to Bernie or Donald or whoever else gets your hackles up. Another, HassleMe.co.uk, will remind you by email about anything you want, but does so at unpredictable intervals so that your brain can't easily adapt to ignoring the prodding.



FLATTER PEOPLE

10 One of the most predictable and poignant (or pathetic, depending on your viewpoint) things about humans is our need to bathe in the warm glow of a compliment. Our brains light up even when we know the flattery is insincere. Think then of the power of a sincere compliment. Be on the lookout for chances to praise your team members.

GO EASY ON MEETINGS

11 For the most part, people want to work; they gripe when things like meetings stop them from doing so. Indeed, a 2006 study showed there's only one group of people who say meetings enhance their wellbeing – those who also score low on "accomplishment striving." In other words, people who

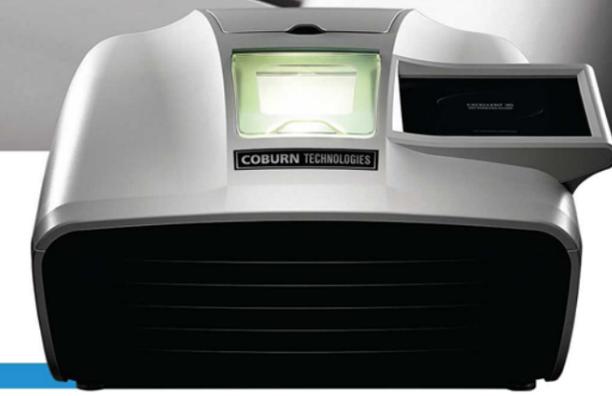
enjoy meetings are those who don't like getting things done. The key question for distinguishing a worthwhile meeting from a worthless one seems to be this: is it a "status-report" meeting so employees can tell each other things? If so, handle it with email or paper. That leaves much fewer "good" meetings, whose value lies in the meeting of minds, for example, a well-run brainstorming session.

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PLAY PAVLOV

12 One of the reasons slot machines are so addictive is the unique power of “intermittent variable rewards.” As Pavlov showed with his dog, random rewards are more motivating than predictable ones. Make a bonus guaranteed, and it loses its power to motivate. Give employees a perk out of the blue, such as free lunch instead.

WHO MOVED MY CHEESY QUOTE?

13 The power of words tends to be fleeting, but that doesn’t mean you shouldn’t try to harness their uplifting power. Whether it’s on the notice board, a store Pinterest page, or the fridge door, look for places to adhere words of wisdom. Update regularly.

ACKNOWLEDGE PEOPLE

14 “Acknowledgment is a kind of human magic,” Ariely says. Indeed, some neuroscientists go as far as to say we need attention almost as desperately as we need food and warmth. Studies suggest that almost 50 percent of people who leave jobs quit because they feel underappreciated. Therefore, simply acknowledging a team member’s contribution can go a long way in making them feel appreciated and motivated.



→ Recent research says there’s something behind the bad apples theory: If a toxic worker sat next to a nontoxic worker, the toxic worker’s influence won out, with proximity increasing the probability that one of them would be terminated by 27 percent. Firing someone is, of course, a last resort measure. But if you have provided training, counseling and patience and the person evidently does not have the inclination to be there, it’s time for you to go your separate ways. And there’s also the sobering impact it has on other staff; firing the least productive employee serves to show staff that their jobs are not sacred.

MIND YOUR Ps AND Qs

16 In her book, *The Gratitude Diaries*, Janice Kaplan cites a recent survey of American workers:

→ 81 percent of respondents said that they’d be willing to work harder for an appreciative boss.

→ 70 percent said they’d feel better about themselves and their efforts if their boss thanked them more regularly.

And yet, gratitude at the workplace appears to be a pretty rare thing, with just 10 percent of the survey respondents saying they were regularly thanked. Want a more motivated staff? Be more generous with the thank-yous.

CLARITY OF EXPECTATIONS

17 Define excellence vividly and quantitatively. “Paint a picture for your most talented employees of what excellence looks like. Keep everyone pushing and pushing toward the right-hand edge of the bell curve,” says Buckingham.

FOSTER TEAM SPIRIT

18 Kind words and deeds count when it comes to motivating colleagues. According to research by Dan Ariely, complimentary remarks and pizza outpaced cash bonuses

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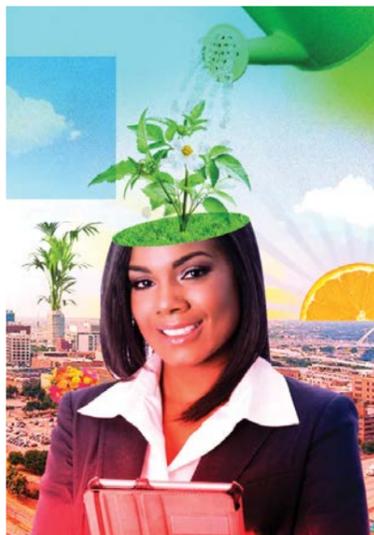
as ways to encourage workers to put forth more effort and show greater productivity. The results mirrored previous research by the London School of Economics and Political Science showing that people will work harder if they believe their work is appreciated.

MEET ONE-ON-ONE

19 Don't assume employees know that you think they're doing well or poorly. You have to tell them. According to Gallup research, employees whose managers hold regular meetings with them are almost three times as likely to be engaged as employees whose managers do not. "To get the best coaching outcomes, always have your 1-on-1's on your employee's turf not yours. In your office the truth hides," says Buckingham, who recommends you spend at least 10 minutes with each employee each week, asking them just two questions: What are your priorities? How can I help?"

INVEST IN YOUR BEST

20 Spend the most time with your best people. Talent is the multiplier, says Buckingham. The more energy and attention you invest in it, the greater the yield. In one example from *First, Break All the Rules*, they studied great employees in data entry roles. Initially,



they found that top performers were 50 percent better than average. However, after investing in them, they were nearly 10X better than average. "Ever get bogged down trying to squeeze passable work out of a bad employee? How did it feel?" he asks.

SHORTEN YOUR YEAR

21 Consultants Brian Moran and Michael Lenington aren't big believers in the value of a year, at least when it comes to setting goals. A

year's too big to get your head around, they argue in their book *The 12-Week Year*, and there's too much unpredictability involved in planning for 10 or 11 months in the future. Besides, it's awful for motivation: the New Year surge of enthusiasm fades rapidly, while the feeling of racing to the finish line — that extra burst psychologists call the "goal looms larger effect" — doesn't kick in until autumn. In its place, they advocate dividing your year into quarters, and to think of each 12 weeks as a stand-alone "year" — a stretch long enough to make significant progress on a few fronts, yet short enough to stay focused.

THE 7 DEADLY SINS OF DEMOTIVATION

Don't be overly negative — criticism has a tendency to overwhelm praise.

DON'T PUNISH FAILURE — MISTAKES ARE PART OF BEING HUMAN.

DON'T MICROMANAGE.

Don't assume that what inspires you will inspire others.

DON'T REWARD BAD BEHAVIOR.

Don't undermine the worth of an employee's work. If they've done something, try to find a use for it.

Perfection isn't a worthy goal.



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GET YOUR MOJO BACK

ECPs are a zealous and resilient bunch, but everyone loses the passion sometimes. Here's how a few rev themselves back up when there's nothing left in the tank.

Burnout. According to retail consultant Vince Rath, it starts “when we experience the world in a way that doesn’t align with our expectations,” leaving us feeling that we’ve lost control of our lives.

Whatever the factors involved in your particular case of burnout — and it affects everyone sooner or later — the basic solution will always lie in making some kind of conscious change. And even if you’re still loving every day at work, don’t wait till you’re tapped out; implement one or all of these fixes now, whether it’s to recharge your mojo, or to just keep things copacetic...

HELP OTHERS

Researchers call it the “helper’s high.” Donating your time or volunteering can release dopamine, the feel-good chemical that causes the sensation you get when you eat chocolate. According to *Psychology Today*, “Brain scans show a surge of dopamine when we give or volunteer our time.” Annette Prevaux-Matejko of The Visionary in Allen Park, MI, makes time to “donate services and materials to someone who is down on their luck. Making a real difference in someone’s life makes me feel better about everything.”

CHANGE IT UP IN THE OFFICE

Melody Wilding, a performance coach and human behavior professor at CUNY Hunter College in New York, identifies “under-challenge burnout” as one of the three main types (the others being “overload burnout” and “neglect burnout”). What does Jeff Grosekemper at Casa De Oro Eyecare in Spring Valley, CA, do to ward off boredom or crankiness when it threatens? “I switch jobs with my co-worker. Right now I’m pre-testing and she is selling.” Caitlin Wicka at San Juan Eye Center in Montrose, CO, tried a different approach.

“Getting more involved with training and with patient interactions helps with burnout,” she says. “Seeing the positive feedback on social media really helps me.” If you’re an administrator, ask your boss if there’s a task you can be assigned occasionally out front. Nikki Griffin, owner of EyeStyles Boutique in Oakdale, MN, gets back out on the sales floor to “do my thing. I get all my energy from fitting an amazing pair of eyewear and lifestyle dispensing. The administration side of owning is a soul suck.”

Son Nguyen, OD, recalls a radical change in the optical that shook things up at Bakersfield

Eye Care Optometric Center in Bakersfield, CA: “Adding mostly independent frame brands to our practice. Our opticians were skeptical at first about eliminating some of the biggest name brands in our business, but, as a result, we’ve been told it has made them fall in love with their jobs all over again.” Mark Perry, OD, of Vision Health Institute in Orlando, FL, finds renewal by trying “to focus on some new and different aspect of optometry.” This has included accepting externs from two different optometry schools into his clinic.

CHANGE IT UP OUTSIDE THE OFFICE

Paula Hornbeck at Eye Candy & Eye Candy Kids in Delafield, WI sums up her revitalization strategy in one word: “Silmo!” Similarly, William Chancellor of Eye Can See Eyewear in McDonough, GA, tells us that, “Trade shows rejuvenate me. Attending Vision Expo West was a big exciting show that made the heart fonder!” Learning something new is another popular way for ECPs to find their second wind. Christine Howard at Attleboro Vision Care in Attleboro, MA, says, “Networking and attending conferences always ‘refills my cup’ when I’m feeling drained.” Sometimes, just nosing around another optical will do the trick. BJ Chambers at Carrera Optical, in McQueeney, TX, will occasionally visit a competitor, “and then I feel better about myself.”



GET CREATIVE

Burnout isn’t always a function of too much work. Repetitive or unstimulating work can land you in the same psychological territory as doing too much — feeling numb. “I’ve found coming up with a new project or marketing campaign to be rejuvenating,” shares Carissa Dunphy at Duvall Advanced Family Eyecare in Duvall, WA. “It brings the excitement [back] into what we are working on and it’s great for workplace morale.”

GET IN SHAPE

Jeff Migdow, MD, an integrative physician in Lenox, MA, told the Everyday Health blog in a recent posting that even a few minutes of physical movement serves as a powerful stress reducer, forcing us to breathe deeper and helping us “feel more like ourselves.” You don’t have to wait for the weekend or even until you get home: “Burnout is usually a sign that your work and your life outside the office are no longer in balance,” says Becky Furuta of Avenue Vision in Golden, CO. “I have always made sure to plan an hour in the middle of every workday to go for a run or a ride. I come back happier, more productive, and feeling good about where I am.” Robert M Easton, Jr, OD, in Oakland Park, FL is surely the gold standard



bearer among ECPs in this category: “I do kickboxing, bodyworks, walk on the beach and weight lifting to lift the stress,” he tells us.

DECOMPRESS

We think of electronic devices as stress inducers, but your phone

just might be your ticket to peace of mind. “I meditate and practice mindfulness daily, sometimes at work, using the Calm iPhone app,” says Vlad Cordero at Focus Eye Care in Hackensack, NJ. Sometimes burnout can edge into something more serious. A 2015 University of California study suggests that nearly half of all people who start a company

“I’ve found coming up with a new project or marketing campaign to be rejuvenating.”

**CARISSA DUNPHY
DUVALL ADVANCED FAMILY
EYECARE, DUVALL, WA**

say they have struggled with some form of mental illness. Don’t be afraid to get outside help. Tom Brillante, OD, of Decatur Eye Care in Decatur, GA, champions his “Regular visits to my therapist. Can’t recommend it highly enough.”

Billy Isgett at Eyecare of Florence in Florence, SC, shared what works for him: “Prayer.”

AND IF THOSE DON’T WORK...

Jen Heller reminds of us another sure-fire way to get your mojo going: “I read *INVISION!* It gets me excited about frames, fashion, new developments.” Sorry, we had to. But okay, she has more: “I’m also rejuvenated by just sitting and entering claims payment, or reconciling the books. Somehow looking at all the details of everything we do calms me down when I’m stressed, and reminds me that we’re superstars on a daily basis.”

