

A photograph of a person standing on a dark, rocky beach with their arms raised in a gesture of awe or triumph. They are looking up at a massive, powerful waterfall cascading down a dark, mossy cliff. A vibrant rainbow is visible in the mist created by the waterfall. The scene is dramatic and inspiring, set against a backdrop of rugged, forested mountains.

Leadership and Motivation

The Art of Positive Engagement

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1 Introduction

This book is relevant to the current issues we face in our competitive economic climate where it is essential to maintain a highly motivated team around us in order to maintain the edge over competitors.

In order to achieve this, we need to understand both our ability to be great Leaders, and what drives our Staff to be motivated. There has been a number of studies and publications on motivation and yet we somehow fail to get it right. The reason is simple, we live and work in a diverse cultural society where people have different expectations and needs. It therefore becomes essential to have the correct approach to firstly understand our Staff, and secondly, understand their specific expectations.

In this book we will identify some of those items we have control over and can implement.

2 History

Our workforce has changed and is still changing on a daily basis. As Managers/Leaders, it seems we have not adapted to this change at the same speed and at times, still rely on how management was taught in the early 1900's.

The first real 'introduction to management' came from the Industrial Revolution. All of a sudden the economy shifted and large organisations started forming based on acquisition and expansion in order to keep up with the mass production that became prevalent in this period. This could also be seen as the start of having to 'manage' a workforce.

Though the concept was new, particular studies and/or publications began to surface to 'educate managers'. One such publication was that of Frederick Taylor who published his "Taylors Principles of Scientific Management" in 1911. Although he recognises the shift in management and the need to study it, the following was also true as cited by Walter Kiechel in an article: "Behind the effort of Taylor and the so-called "Harvard Circle" was an elitism, a class arrogance, almost incomprehensible by today's standards. Dean Wallace B. Donham, who founded HBR, ardently believed that an educated managerial cadre—a "new managing class" was the answer to the nations problems:-

to the Depression, to inept government, to social upheaval. He and others on the banks of the Charles looked down on the typical worker as a lesser being, one to be manipulated in service of higher purposes (or as Taylor said of the type of man best suited to load pig iron, “so stupid and so phlegmatic that he more nearly resembles in his mental make-up the ox”).

This entire management process was driven by ensuring maximum production with the rules and processes laid down by management. No time was spent on understanding the employees, or for that matter, using their knowledge. This shift only came later. This period however had one goal: *Maximising output by measuring performance against a stopwatch.*

As with any business, there was always the drive to achieve better results and this was also where the next shift came. People started recognising/seeing the ‘knowledge’ of the workforce. To this point, it had been ignored as management dictated what and how on the entire production floor. This led to trying to manage and use this knowledge that the workforce had which brought on a co-operative state between management and workforce. This state is continuing to evolve and is where we are at today.

We have reached a point where the workforce is no longer content with turning up, delivering what is expected and receiving their paycheque. In today’s society, people are looking for a more meaningful experience from their careers and this is where we at times still miss the opportunity to recognise it.

3 Current Culture

We live in an Information Age. Today you can find information on just about anything on the internet. If we look at studies undertaken today, in particular toward an MBA qualification, it is clear we are still searching for the perfect way to manage people and business.

Have we found the ultimate solution? The answer is No, we have not. There will not be a specific methodology that can be applied across the board that will create the ‘perfect solution’. We need to continually focus on the cultural and behavioural shifts within our workforce and society.

Gone are the times when an average pay packet was sufficient to keep the workforce motivated sufficiently to turn up every day and deliver their hard day's work. Today our staff are looking for more, and we need to understand what it is that drives them.

Even while focussing on what we want today, the next generation already has their own ideas of the 'perfect employment'.

There are a number of things that we need to understand today like the expectations of:

- Life/Work Balance
- Recognition
- Fair Remuneration
- Career Path

These are just some of the expectations from employees in today's environment. It is now up to the Managers to find ways to achieve this whilst maintaining productivity and economic viability of the business.

Our employees now see their role as more than a mere 'link in the productivity chain' and expect to be recognised for their input. They want to leave behind their own 'Legacy' in the company. The other challenge is that not all employees are driven by the same expectations. Some are still happy to continue their role without any responsibility whatsoever. This means that there is no 'one size fits all' when it comes to creating the perfect work environment.

Understanding and exploring these expectations is what will set the Great Manager apart from the Good Manager. Utilising these will allow us to harness the power within our workforce and use it to further our company's ability to stay that step ahead of the competitors.

4 Traits of a Leader

Today's great leaders will all have similar traits in their management style. Having moved from autocratic/directive style to that of a participative style, they will have a team that follows them, not because they have to, but because they want to.

Participation

This style of leadership recognises the input from team members and involves them during the planning stages. The success from this comes from individual behaviour where we no longer embrace a decision if we were not part of the process. By recognising this, and using participation from the team, they feel a different passion toward achieving the outcome. They start taking ownership of the task and that becomes the driving factor.



This does not mean that managers no longer make decisions, quite the opposite. The old saying “you cannot sail a ship with a committee” is still true. Someone has to make the final decision. The importance is to gain input from team members. Be mindful not to just make this a window dressing exercise. Listen to the individual inputs, evaluate/discuss them and then proceed with the best decision.

The Big Picture

Managers will often try to do everything and this could easily result in delivering a number of ‘half completed’ tasks. It is important to evaluate what should be done in order to achieve the determined outcome, assemble the right team/skills to execute the task and closely monitor the results.

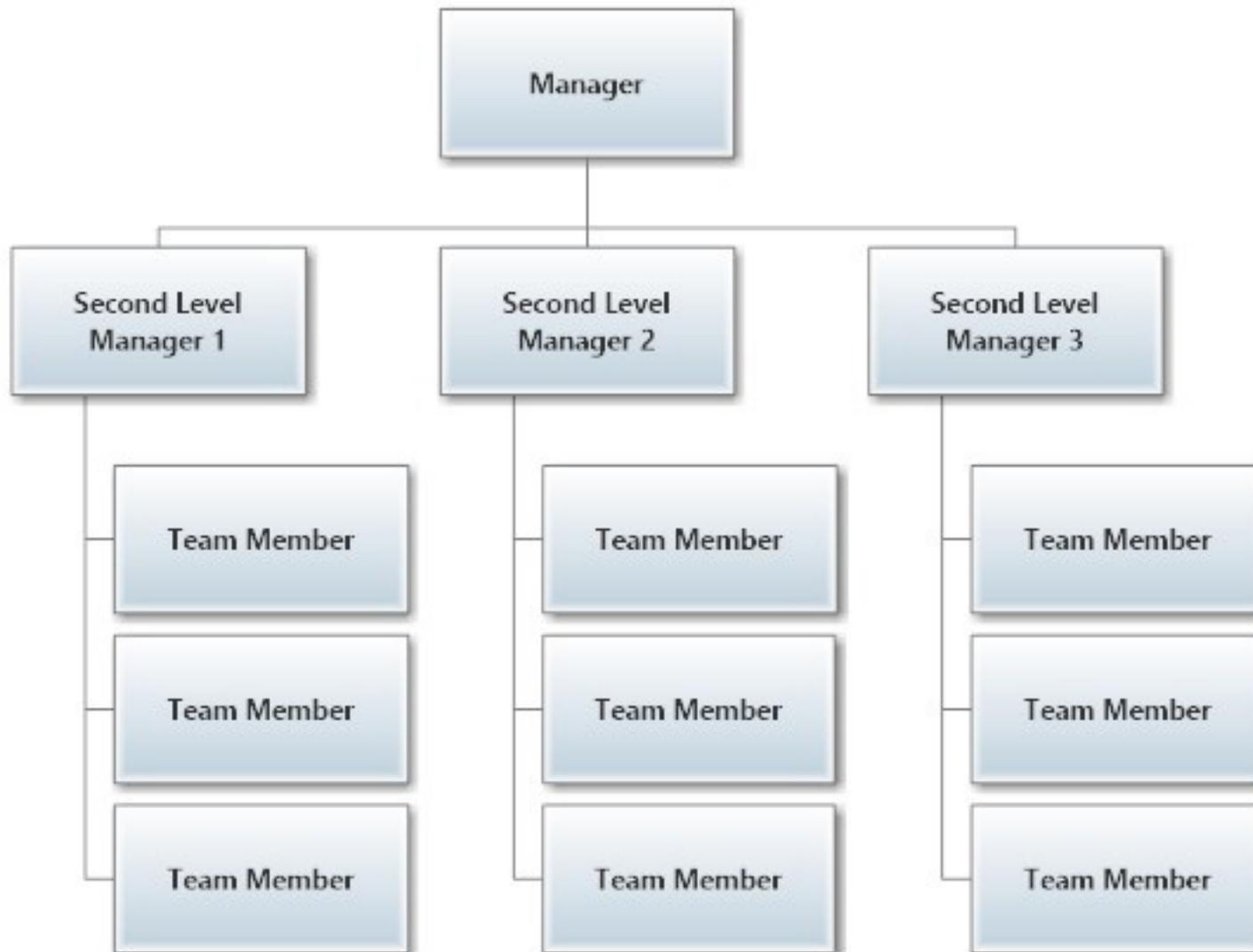
Keep your eyes focussed on the goal at hand and have a clear plan as to how you will achieve it. Working with the number of constraints of today, it calls on a special management skill to deliver the results and maintain a highly motivated team.

Make the goal clear to the team. Explain the desired outcome, schedule in which to have it completed and listen to inputs. Make sure you obtain their buy-in to achieve this goal. No doubt there may be concerns when setting the schedule. Discuss the schedule in detail and get their input on how to find ways to stick to the schedule. These could be overlapping of tasks, short term additional resources, some extra hours etc.

Accountability

We are aware of the typical pyramid style when it comes to the hierarchical breakdown of the different levels of the company structure. Nothing wrong with that as we need to understand the different levels of accountability. What is important is how we use this structure.

Below, see a typical structure as we know it:



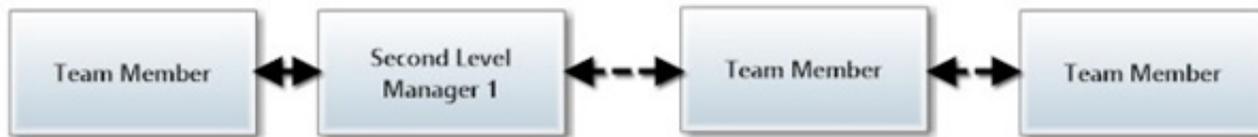
Let us say Manager 1 has now started working on a new task. He/she will assemble the team to work through the details of this task and get the planning phase underway. How will the structure look during this phase?

Remember:

Participation.

This shows the method of achieving buy-in and planning.

It does not alter the level(s) of accountability.



Notice how we have now ‘flattened’ the structure during this phase? Here we have the manager and the team working side by side to get this task underway. The ultimate decision is still going to be made by the manager. The difference now is that the team have contributed to the decision and team members take ‘ownership’ of this task.

This method of two-way communication sets the perfect platform. Team members will realise their manager is willing to listen to them, they are part of the company (sense of belonging) and have the freedom to approach the manager to discuss issues without the fear of retribution.

The manager shares the responsibility of specific tasks but not accountability. He/she still remains accountable for the final outcome, but by sharing responsibility, he/she has created clear goals/objectives, has the buy-in from the team and will be able to deliver the best possible result.

When issues arise, the communication channels that have been established will ensure it is communicated immediately and allows remedial measures to be set in place. When you do not have this in place, you are bound to get nasty surprises at the end of the projected completion of the task(s) which leaves you no time to react.



Recognition

We spoke about the expectations employees have to be recognised for their contributions and achievements. The old saying of “*recognise in public and criticise in private*” is very true. Always keep this in mind in every situation.

Now when we talk about recognition, be mindful not to just use this when it is not deserved. If you start using this where no real achievement was made, it will lose its value quickly and will have the opposite effect on the entire team.

When recognising an individual for his/her achievement in front of the team, it not only elevates the individual’s self-esteem, it also prompts the rest of the team do to the same. They want to get that recognition in front of others. You are thus also setting a platform for some healthy competition. ‘Who will be the next to have their achievements recognised?’

Reality

Up to this point our focus has been on the employees that are receptive of this management style and are happy to contribute to the overall goal of the company. Reality however tells us different. You will find the employee that is quite happy to provide his/her expertise, deliver the required results but want no responsibility whatsoever.

The fact is that as long as they are performing in line with the expectations, that is fine. When you encounter the employee that performs below standard, the approach is going to be different. A good manager will firstly try to establish the cause for this below average performance. In other words, what is causing him/her to not perform. Be sure to evaluate this carefully and understand the cause. As important, once you have established the cause, what can be done to rectify/help.

Don’t simply remove this employee from the team without first attempting to help him/her. This will send the wrong message to the rest of the team. Equally, if you do nothing and simply hope he/she will improve, other team members will start questioning this non-action and wonder why they have to ‘carry’ this team member.

Understanding some of the possible causes for poor and/or below average performance means you will need to extract this information from the employee whilst knowing he/she will be reluctant to share the information at first fearing they may lose their job.

Possible Causes

- Lack of Skills
- Personal Problems
- Cultural Differences
- Health
- Group Pressure



Once you have identified the cause(s), put measures in place to assist the employee to get through it. Not only will you bring this employee back to the performance levels the company expects, you will also gain the respect from the entire team for recognising the problem and acting on it rather than just 'getting rid' of the employee.

The last section here is the employee that does not want to be part of the team despite all your efforts to help and understand. Unfortunately, you will have no choice but to replace this person with someone that wants to be there and will work at the desired performance levels. As harsh as this may sound, you will have no alternative and failure to act will start breaking down the rest of the team.

5 Understanding Motivation

Motivation is something a lot of managers have been, and still are, struggling with. With the large amount of research available, it is still proving to be a daunting task. In this publication we will look at the basics of motivation and how to set the platform to make sure you get it right. In order to get started, we will look at what it is that people need to fulfil their needs. Keep in mind we have highlighted earlier that people have been changing and as such, so have their expectations. Even though this is the case, the basic needs of the human have not changed. The changes are within their expectations, not necessarily their needs.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Most people will be aware of Maslow's theory on an individual's needs in order to gain the final self-actualisation phase. Although this is often portrayed as a triangle showing the different levels, Maslow himself never used a triangle to depict this. Below is the list as per Maslow:

- Physiological Needs
- Safety Needs
- Love and Belonging
- Esteem
- Self-Actualisation

Without going into the clarification of each of these needs, it is important to note that although these may be correct, it does not mean you are not able to move past a particular need to the next level without the primary need being fulfilled.

The power of the human mind is incredible and by failing to meet a specific need, an individual may analyse the reason for this and push him/her self to the next level in order to achieve a primary need.

Another aspect that has a great impact on the order of these needs is that of cultural backgrounds. Different cultures may put different values on a particular need. So what hope does a manager have of understanding this if there are so many different opinions? Let's sum the answer up in one single word:

Communication

Here lies the key in getting to know and understand the dynamics of your team. Talk to them, ask questions and find out what their own goals and fears are, what are they struggling with, what could be done to help them and what their aspirations are. In other words, you need to understand where they find themselves in their lives and careers at this moment in time.

Once you know this, you are halfway there. The next step is to get them to talk to you about those things at work that they struggle with. It could be something as simple as somewhere to make a cup of coffee! The reality is that to us it may seem insignificant, but to them, it will keep on getting a bigger problem the longer it lasts to a point where you end up losing them.

When we talk about motivation, the majority of managers immediately think it is all about more money. This is a misconception.

Money is not and never will be a long term motivational factor. (that does not mean paying minimum wage is acceptable though.)

Reward the person for what they bring to your business.

By using money to 'motivate' a person, you will achieve it for the short term only. Once a person has adjusted his/her lifestyle to match this higher reward, they quickly end up in the same financial position as before. People have a tendency to live according to their income.

What you need to achieve is to create an environment where a person enjoys being there. That is the biggest factor. Once you have that, you continue to coach and communicate thus getting to the point where individuals shift their thinking to positive and the motivation comes from within them. That is true motivation.

You will not be able to motivate a person directly. The motivation comes from the person him/her self, but that will only happen if they want to be there. That is what your task as a manager is. Create the environment, communicate often and understand the dynamics of your team. Implement changes where you can using the information you obtained from your discussions. Make the team realise that you are working with them to improve the conditions.

To learn more about Leadership and Motivation in the Workplace,
contact me for a free consultation.

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