

Fire 'em Up! *

From the book 40 STRATEGIES FOR WINNING IN BUSINESS by Bud Haney and Jim Sirbasku

21 Days to a Winning, Motivated Team

Here's a distillation of all you need to know to motivate people – it's drawn from all of the great writers on the subject – along with a simple, 21-day plan.

Employees Want Management They Can Look Up to – Not Management that Looks Down on Them

An honest respect for all, a genuine recognition that everyone has something good to offer – this is at the heart of the successful motivator. Without respect, so-called motivation becomes manipulation, and manipulation is never successful in the long term. If you or your managers cannot show respect for your people, then, before you invest time and energy in motivational efforts, get someone who can – and have that person read on from here!

Take an Interest in the Career and Personal Goals, Aspirations, Interests, Lives and Families of Those Who Work with You

Do you know anyone who complains about getting too much recognition or praise for a job well done? Research consistently shows that people will go to extraordinary lengths for a leader who takes the time to catch them doing something right and, when they do, provides them with sincere praise and recognition in front of their colleagues. Praise and recognition are more motivating than money or any other single thing we can give to the people we lead.

Don't Criticize, Condemn or Complain

Dale Carnegie nailed it with this gem. When you must draw attention to poor performance, don't criticize. Coach. Don't pick at what is being done wrong, but focus all of your attention on the new behavior or action that will put things right; always finish with a positive comment to let the employee see that the reason you've raised the matter is that you have seen that he or she is capable of so much more. Correct the errant action, provide some positive feedback, and then forget it. Act like you expect better performance next time – and you'll get it.

Request – Don’t Order

Real leaders lead from the front – they don’t need to push from the back. Everyone rebels to some extent against being bossed around. No one minds being asked to help.

Discuss – Don’t Argue

Maturity is being able to disagree agreeably.

Be Careful with Humor

Avoid any kind of demeaning humor. If there’s the slightest chance of being misunderstood, keep it to yourself. “If in doubt, leave it out.”

Listening is the Greatest Compliment You Can Pay Anyone

Our opinions are all sacred to us. Listen – and hear the concerns of your people.

Most Importantly of All

Model the behaviors and attitudes you expect others to display. Show them it works.

21-Day Action Plan

Why 21 days? Research shows that it takes 21 days to establish a habit. Take the topics discussed above and apply them for 21 days. You will discover that by the end of this period, you will be doing all of these things naturally. And the level of motivation in your team in general, even in your toughest cases, will be at an all-time high.

To implement your plan:

1. Create a table with each employee’s name down the left-hand side, and each of the motivators listed above across the top. Rule your table so that each person has a box against each motivator.
2. Target improvements. Copy this strategy and put it in a place where you can review it daily. Each day, make a determination to apply each motivator as often as possible with as many members of your team as you can. Plan to speak to each of your team members often enough to get to know what turns them on and off; determine to catch them doing something right; praise them in front of their colleagues; listen to their opinions, and so on. At the end of each day, put a tick mark in your table for each motivator you effectively applied with each team member. Make

sure your table is filling evenly with marks; make sure all motivators are being applied across the whole team. Be careful not to fall into the trap of simply working with those you already get along with, those you like, those who least need real motivational lift, or with the motivators that come most naturally to you.

3. Review and repeat. At the end of your first 21-day period, stand back and admire the difference you have made. Pat yourself on the back, and start all over again. Select the next person you need to target specifically, and start a new table for the team at large.

Motivation is easy – if you care enough to put in a little extra effort. Anyone can motivate, and anyone can be motivated. All it takes is the right person in the right place, managed by someone who cares. Invest a little of your time over the next 21 days and fire 'em up like never before.

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