

Motivation is what we need...

A lot of training out there in the market talks about skills training – leadership skills, management skills, communication skills, and so on – and, to be perfectly honest about it, we use that language as well. However, a lot of the time when we talk about skills, dig deeper, and we're actually talking about **attitude** instead.

A little exercise I sometimes run with groups is to ask people to identify the type of person they would choose to replace them if they suddenly had to leave work for, say, six months. The answers nearly always include some skills, and some knowledge, but they are dominated by attitude characteristics – keenness to learn, approachable, enthusiastic, inspiring, and so on.

One of the attributes that comes up more consistently than just about any other is **motivation**, or variations on that word. People, when recruiting, when looking for others to work with, or when delegating work, seem to highly value someone who is motivated – and why not? The challenge comes, as leaders or managers in organisations, when we have to motivate someone else.

A classic demonstration I'll never forget, from a speaker I heard many years ago, was where he performed an impression of a type of delegate on a training course – the one who folds their arms, puts the barriers up, and offers the challenge: “come on then, motivate me if you think you can...”. The response of the speaker in this case was a very relaxed one – hey, if you are so determined to be demotivated, I'm fine with that. You obviously have a **lot of** motivation to manage to be that demotivated, regardless of what happens. I'm impressed...

This speaker's point was essentially that trying to motivate someone else is largely pointless – it's up to them. In the grand scheme of things, I agree with this – if someone is determined not to be motivated, then it's not my job to “fix” them; that is their choice.

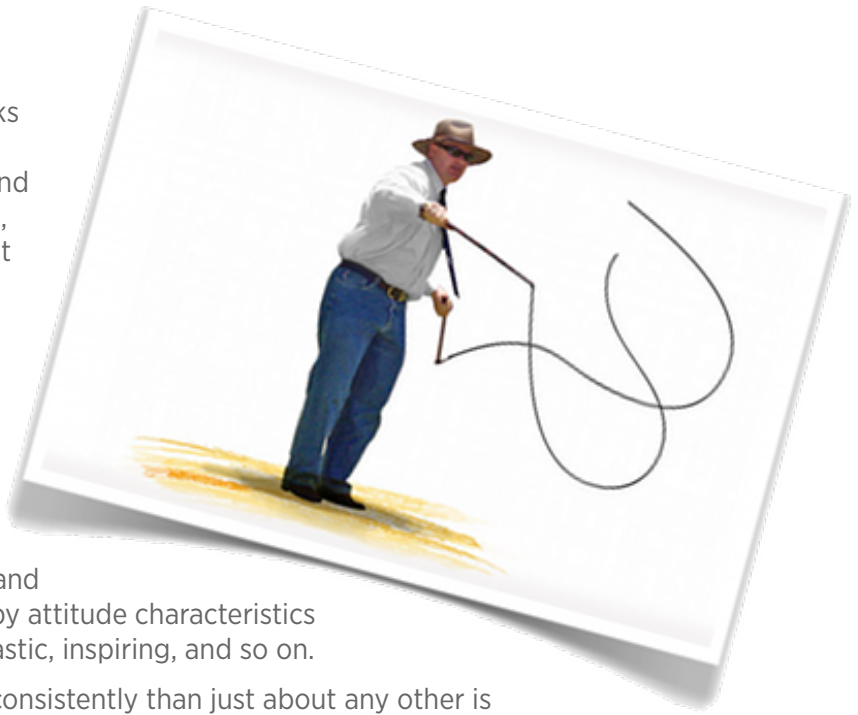
However, in less extreme examples, we do have the opportunity to motivate others – not in a simplistic, direct, sense, but as an indirect consequence of the way we do what we do. If, as managers and leaders, we want a motivated team, aspects of our behaviour can have a very significant influence on them, and below are a five little thoughts to ponder on – and please add your own experiences in the comment box below.

Be motivated yourself

Walking the talk, being authentic, leading by example. Whatever you want to call it, you need to simply crack on and do it. Don't expect others to be highly motivated if your body, your language, and your actions give away the fact that you are not.

Believe in them

I'm yet to meet the person who loves to be micro-managed. Very little has a greater negative effect on people's motivation than having everything checked, every detail of a plan prescribed, and having frequent demands for checks, status updates, and progress reports. Trust them.



Be clear and simple about what you want

There are two aspects here. Being clear is the first: clarity in your expectations is essential, so that people know the direction, know the objective, and know how they will know when they get there.

The second is being simple. Again, don't "prescribe" everything. Don't be too detailed. Give your team the freedom to find the best way to the destination, and they will take much greater responsibility for getting there.

Be open-minded

Yes, you're the boss. Yes you're in charge. But you don't know everything. Be accepting of challenge from your team, and they'll reward you for it. Of course, because you're the boss, because you're in charge, you're tough enough to take that constructive criticism, aren't you?!

Say "Thank You"

Very simple. Just two words. Two hugely powerful. Say it, and mean it.