



Winning at Hiring, Training and Retaining
Landscape Employees

Contractor's Guide to Employee Motivation

ADSS

Introduction

Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm – Ralph Waldo Emerson

Your company's most valuable asset is its people. Selecting, training and motivating the right people can dramatically increase your success.

Business owners often search for the "secret" to employee motivation. They ask: "What's that one magic thing that I can do that will encourage greater performance?"

There's no single action or strategy that drives worker performance. Motivation is personal to each employee, and varies based on the situation, the role and even the time of the year.

In this booklet, we'll share ideas, tips and tactics you can use as motivational solutions. This special resource provides practical and proven ideas that you can use right away.



Fundamental Truths of Motivation

- **Motivated team members have a strong connection to their work** – emotionally and intellectually. They enjoy the opportunity to do the job right and to make a difference. They like to learn and master new things. They feel connected to the job, their co-workers and workplace. They are willing to put in extra effort because if this “fit”.
- **We shouldn't assume others are motivated by the same things that motivate us.** Studies show managers believe money and advancement are the best motivators. But employees report they seek interesting and meaningful work, new learning and professional growth. The best leaders are adept at observing and listening to what motivates each person.
- **Manipulation demotivates.** Promising, cajoling and coercing often backfires because team members feel they aren't being told the whole truth. Avoid hidden agendas. Be clear on why you're offering incentives and how the worker can benefit.

Characteristics of Motivating Leader

A motivating leader brings out the best in others, creating a work environment that matches the employees' standards. Good leaders:

- State what they expect and communicate how well the team is doing in achieving it.
- Foster cooperation among team members, being clear on how everyone's work contributes.
- Provide the tools and training that team members need to do well in their roles.
- Help team members solve problems without being a problem themselves.
- Pull their team forward instead of pushing from behind.



Satisfaction and Accomplishment: The Biggest Motivators

When work is a naturally good fit to the employees, they'll be naturally motivated to do it well. The intrinsic rewards of a job create passion, engagement and meaning. Put simply, these are the things that keep workers coming back for more.

Work is its own reward when:

- Team members find what they're doing to be a good fit.
- They feel they can do the job well, both from their own perspective and the perspective of those they work with.
- They see the outcome or importance of what they're doing; how it will contribute to a specific result.
- It's energizing to be around co-workers in the work environment.

Here are some tips for driving natural, intrinsic motivation:

- Help workers feel successful in what they're doing. Learn each worker's strengths and try to match their assignments to their strengths
- Look for what the worker is doing well and praise it. Repeatedly. Good work (and extra effort) that gets noticed will get repeated.
- Relate small tasks and incremental steps to the bigger picture – and then the bigger picture beyond that. How will digging this trench relate to the overall project? And how will the overall project make the lawn look when it's done? And how will the customer be pleased by a better looking lawn? It takes only a few minutes to share the vision.
- Celebrate the success. When the goal has been achieved, thank each participant for his/her individual efforts in helping to achieve it.



What Things Cause a Decline in Motivation?

1. No reinforcement or recognition of good effort. When workers put forth extra effort that isn't recognized or acknowledged, they naturally reduce that effort. It's human nature.
2. Impersonal, condescending or rude leadership. Failing to recognize each worker's strengths, ability to contribute, opinions and experience level. When workers don't feel valued or respected, motivation declines fast.
3. Criticism. Negative feedback stings, particularly for employees who naturally seek reinforcement and affirmation. Be sure to address critical comments to the situation/task and not personally at the individual.
4. Leaders who set a poor example. Workers observe bad behavior in their leaders and assume those behaviors are acceptable. Leaders who are late, who show poor follow-through, waste time, chronically complain, avoid dealing with tough issues, etc. quickly find they have crew members who exhibit the same behaviors. Negative attitudes and behaviors are highly contagious.
5. Feeling disconnected or "in the dark". Like a lost driver, employees who feel out of touch with good directions naturally slow down. They're confused, afraid to make a mistake or unclear about "what to do next". Lack of direction, changing managers, and even changing work routines can contribute to feeling a bit "lost".
6. Lack of balance. Even when work is self-motivating and successful, too much of it takes its toll. Champion athletes and other high-performers of all types know the importance of a natural rhythm of work and rest. Sure, it's okay for companies to ask employees to go "all-in" for a week or two, but time to rest and recalibrate after that is essential. Overwork quickly leads to burnout, from which recovery can take significant time.
7. Unresolved work conflicts. Disagreements and personality conflicts with supervisors and co-workers can rapidly sap motivation. Communication breaks down.



How to Use Rewards in Motivation (and How Not to)

Automatic Rewards Don't Motivate

Rewards that are automatic seldom motivate. For example, annual pay increases don't drive increased production. They're expected. Money is certainly important – particularly when recruiting and retaining employees. It has to be fair, competitive and fit for the job. But it doesn't motivate.

Similarly, automatic holiday bonuses create goodwill for a day-or-two and quickly fade. (or worse, they lead to complaints when friends or family members from other industries get better bonuses) Embrace your generous side with holiday gifts and bonuses, but don't expect them to drive motivation.

Sporadic, Periodic and Specific Rewards Do Motivate

To set up rewards that drive motivation, be sure you do three things:

1. Tie the reward to specific, measurable performance. (example: "if I do this, I get this")
2. Make sure the reward is certain and timely. (example: "do this on Tuesday, get this on Friday")
3. Repeat frequently. (repetition of reinforcement fosters habits)

Note: Sometimes specific results are difficult to measure, or are out of the control of the individual. Think about ways to reward a good EFFORT. This signals your interest in seeing the team work well together and seeking to do the job well. Often newer employees are evaluated on effort versus performance targets.



Designing Effective Rewards

"Nothing is more unequal than the equal treatment of unequals." – Vince Lombardi

The more familiar you are with your team members, the more you'll know how to choose rewards that motivate them. Plus employees with differing roles or responsibilities might require different types or levels of rewards.

Good Rewards Programs:

- 1) Give everyone a chance to succeed. There are no "winners / losers".
- 2) Are unique and memorable. This is often why gifts are given instead of cash. Each time the gift is seen or experienced, the giver is remembered. But the challenge is to match the gift to the recipient and for it to be truly valued. Example: the employee who likes to cook might love a set of deluxe kitchen knives. Each time they are used, a good feeling is repeated.
- 3) Have a "trophy value". This is where the reward is made visible to others as a badge of honor. It doesn't have to be a plaque or trophy. It can be a box of cookies.

Things to Avoid:

- 1) Programs that Create One Winner, Many Losers. For example, "Employee of the Month" or "Best Salesperson". Everyone who doesn't win feels demotivated. Plus these programs are ripe for workers feeling "cheated" by the scorekeeping or by feelings that management is playing favorites. Better to create a program with "targets" and everyone who reaches the target gets the reward.
- 2) Rewards that Appear Cheap, Tacky or Self-Serving. For example: "We met our quota and the boss gave us an ugly t-shirt with a giant company logo on it." Thrift stores are full of brand-new "swag" that employees quickly discard. Company gear or uniforms are not rewards. (They do build team spirit.)
- 3) Vague Promises and Payouts. For example, "meet the production goals and I will take care of you". It's not specific. There's no certainty.
- 4) Moving the Goalposts. Changing the requirements to receive an award midstream is certain to demotivate – and anger – participants.
- 5) Excuses / Non-Payment at Reward Time. Failing to pay earned rewards not only destroys trust, but also it encourages the good employees to start looking elsewhere for a better work opportunity.



Hire the Best. Train the Best. Motivate the Best.

Watch for additional resources to help you grow
your employee success in the months ahead.

*Have feedback on this booklet? Need copies of the others in the series?
Connect with your ADS distributor for details.*

