

Recession Motivation At Work

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Whilst keeping them motivated during a recession can be tough - as budgets are frozen and bonuses are slashed - there are alternatives to cold, hard cash to help keep your workforce onside in these difficult economic climates. Psychologists have been studying motivation for decades; from Spranger's identification of individual attitudes in the 1920's to Maslow's hierarchy of needs in the 1950's, through to Hogan's taxonomy of motives, values and interests in the 1990's and beyond. They have reviewed and categorised the values, interest and preferences that motivate us to behave in the ways we do. As business psychologists at Pearn Kandola we understand what motivates people in organisations, so here are our top tips for managers motivating on a budget:-

1. Know your workforce – I'm not sharing any trade secrets when I say that your workforce is made up of individuals – living, breathing people, who all have their own personalities, thoughts and motivations. Rule number one is that Managers should identify individual motivators in their team (aside from money) and target their actions accordingly.

2. Recognition – this has been identified by eminent psychologists such as Henry Murray as a key motivator. The most obvious way to do this is through positive feedback. Although it may be forgotten, particularly in times of pressure and stress, a simple pat on the back can give people a real boost. However, avoid overusing this or being too general – "you're doing a great job" has much less impact than "thank you for the additional work you put in to the report, the board were really impressed with the new ideas it contained". Otherwise, try including a mention in the company newsletter or acknowledgement in a public meeting. But remember, while some people will revel in the public praise, others will cringe and want the world to swallow them up – so refer back to Rule Number One – know your staff!

3. Power – defined by psychologists as the need for control, challenge and getting ahead, some people are motivated by power. While there may be a recruitment and promotion freeze on, are there any opportunities to motivate your staff by offering them increased responsibility or a high status project that will allow them to raise their profile?

4. Hedonism – other staff may be motivated by opportunities for excitement, pleasure and variety, even at work! The entertaining budget may have been cut to nothing but having a project catch up meeting in an art gallery café, a review in the park on a sunny day, or bringing in freshly baked croissants for a breakfast meeting won't break the bank. Alternatively, to reward hard work without increasing

outgoings are you able to offer an additional day's holiday or an enrichment day? Some people may even pick these above a salary increase if given the choice.

5. Altruism – some of your staff may be motivated by a concern for social justice and improving society. For them, if a pay freeze means that their hard work cannot be rewarded with a rise – could a 'community day' be offered instead? This reward would allow someone to take time to help others in their community – it could even build relationships with potential clients! If workloads have dropped significantly, are there opportunities to offer unpaid leave for charity or voluntary work?

6. Affiliation – company and social interaction can also be a powerful motivator for individuals, so don't forget to allow time for this. Where heads are down and people are working hard, there may be less opportunity for water cooler catch ups. However, there may be options for lunchtime 'get togethers'. For example, bring your own lunch for a picnic in the park or, alternatively, after work social activities. These don't necessarily need to be sponsored and paid for by the company. Again, these won't be for everyone (see Rule number one) and should be varied to make sure everyone who wants to be can be included – so make sure it's not always five-a-side football or trips to the pub.

7. Security – at a physical level security is one of the more basic items in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. However, many people are also motivated at a psychological level by a concern for security and minimising risk, otherwise known in the workplace as job security. Those who are strongly motivated by security are likely to find the current climate particularly difficult. Managers can help these people to identify what is within their control to help increase both the performance of the organisation and, therefore, their job security. This could be done by identifying the links between the role and the performance of the organisation. This can also be achieved through feedback - being clear on what constitutes good performance and how performance can be improved. This can help to motivate by giving a greater sense of control.

8. Business performance – some people are motivated by targets and achieving their goals. Current targets might seem unattainable or unrealistic in this financial climate, and have the potential to demotivate these individuals. As a manager, review these targets: there may be no scope to change them but can you put in place additional, more achievable targets for them to work towards? For example, in addition to sales targets, could you also set business development activities targets? Alternatively, are there ways to breakdown targets to make them seem more manageable?

Overall though, the key to motivating people is to treat them as individuals -a 'thank you' bottle of champagne for someone who doesn't drink is about as

motivating as a Liverpool scarf for an Everton fan. One of the current challenges for businesses is finding creative and imaginative ways to motivate their staff for minimal outlay. Although some of our tips above aren't necessarily 'free' – an extra day's holiday has a price attached and should be considered as part of the wider context if it is offered an ongoing benefit – they should provide a useful basis for the ways, beyond bonuses and pay rises, managers can motivate staff in these challenging times.