

Episode 015

How to Motivate Others

Introduction

A crucial role of leadership is the ability to motivate others. A highly motivated team provides a strong foundation upon which to accomplish great things. In my previous podcast on Understanding Motivations, I gave a conceptual framework to help us understand how motivations arise. In this podcast, I will focus on practical aspects to provide insights for the leader on how to motivate and sustain motivation in others.

What Can Motivate Others?

1 Caring for the person

John 13:1 (NIV)

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

We must genuinely care about our people. We should watch over our people and care for them as good shepherds like Jesus. They must know we care, no matter how busy we are. As part of this, it is important for us to create a loving, supportive community. Whether it be the team or church culture. It is biblical and also meets an important need at the Love and Belonging level, as defined by Maslow. Further, when people know we care for them, they will trust our leadership more deeply as they know every decision we make considers their situation. They need the assurance that we will stick with them through thick and thin.



Proverbs 17:17 (NIV)

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

Part of caring for them is to be aware whether their basic and important needs are being met. For it is hard for many to remain motivated if they are suffering hardship, failing to have basic life necessities or lack safety and security. If we are able to help or support them through these challenges, it will be easier for them to regain motivation.

Some may be impeded by past hurts, low self-esteem, insecurity etc. If we can provide suitable help for them to deal with those issues, it will be easier eventually to motivate them to greater things. For that reason in our church, we try to provide an internal counselling system to deal with common emotional and psychological issues. While with complex issues we advise seeking professional counselling. It is important not to be ignorant of how significantly these issues can demotivate a person.

2 Nurturing hope

Often people lose motivation or give up prematurely because they lost hope in themselves or the situation. It is crucial for leaders to see the true worth and capacity of a person. This enables us not to give up on the person because we genuinely see the possibilities. Especially in Christ.

Philippians 1:6 (NIV)

being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Jesus did not give up on Peter despite his denial. Even Judas, He still called friend. Thus, we should genuinely express confidence in the person and demonstrate it. Perhaps we may not be able to have confidence in every area of their lives, but we can encourage them on areas that we can see possibilities. I have discovered that when people gain hope, gain confidence in even one significant area in their lives, it can spread to other areas of their lives. Thus, timely encouragement and appreciation make a difference.



Proverbs 12:25 (NIV)

An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up.

When one of my mentees went through a really difficult phase of several years in his life, I stood with him. Spending time listening and giving advice. Praying and supporting him. Seeking to lift him up. Until finally, the situation shifted. He came out stronger and more motivated as he experienced how God sustained him through that period.

Some old-style approaches overly emphasise rebuke and correction, thinking it will motivate through shame. While there is a place for rebuke and corrections, it needs to be couched within an overall focus on encouragement to foster hope. It works better in today's culture. On the other hand, we must understand the difference between encouragement and fostering a false sense of ego or false reality of a person's abilities. Nurturing hope meets a need defined by Maslow at the level of Esteem.

3 Nurture their mindset

In our previous podcast on Understanding Motivations, I shared about the importance of our mindset of values, perspectives and convictions. I elaborated on some important aspects of each element that needs to be cultivated in order to be motivated by a more biblical, godly mindset. On the practical front, how can we nurture it?

Firstly, it is helpful to understand where our people's mindsets are at so that we know where we have to start from. This will involve listening to understand what they are expressing, as it reveals their mindset and why. Take note of their goals and aspirations. Asking probing questions can further unearth what their mindset is. Astute observation and discernment of their actions and lifestyles will further inform our understanding. Obviously, praying for discernment of their mindset is important as well.

Secondly, we can help influence their mindset through teaching and impartations. Seek to build their convictions and shape their perspectives according to God's Word. We can intentionally and strategically share relevant aspects of God's Word. Encourage them to read appropriate portions of God's Word for themselves.



Thirdly, we can inspire them towards a more godly, biblical mindset through inspirational communication that births vision and aspirations. Painting for them a picture of what could be if they would determine to aspire towards it. That is part of a leader's role, as explained in my podcast on [The Inspirational Leaders Vision](#). Part of making tangible an aspiration is to help them set SMART goals. Goals that can serve as motivational reminders for themselves.

Lastly, we should also be role models by being consistent examples, genuinely living out our mindset. The pattern we set can be of significant impact. For what we do speaks louder than what we say.

1 Corinthians 11:1 (NIV)

Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

Hudson Taylor was an all-out missionary to China. He demonstrated by personal example how he relied upon God, rather than a supporting missionary organisation. His utter dedication to creatively adapting the missionary approach and contextualising the Gospel message was an inspiration to thousands of missionaries who came after him. He lived out his mindset and motivated many others to follow a similar mindset.

4 Support for greater motivation

Most are not adequately self-motivated or require support to reach a higher motivation. The further we go beyond our comfort zone, the greater support we are likely to need.

An important way to do this is to equip the person to do the job. When Moses was afraid to accept the job of leading the Israelites out of Egypt, God gave him the sign of the rod which turned into a serpent. That helped motivate Moses to approach Pharaoh. People feel more motivated to do the job if they feel more adequate to carry it out. This does not mean we train them in all the theories before sending them out. It is better to give them reasonable basic training, then toss them out to have a go. When they are stretched then they begin to realise that they need more training. It will motivate them to learn and grow.

In our church, we encourage many young people to participate in short-mission trips. During these trips, they are encouraged to rely upon God and reach out in ways they had never done before.



These challenges stretched them in many ways. Yet it opens their eyes to what God can do, if they would step out in faith. Many become more motivated to learn and grow in their service unto God.

Often, most require accountability because it is challenging to maintain a high consistent level of motivation. This is why high performing athletes always require a coach. The coach will guide, inspect and hold accountable the athlete. In the same way, many require someone to hold them accountable. To inspect their progress even, and that can help with motivation if done in the appropriate manner. People do not do what we expect, but usually what we inspect. Inspection can motivate people.

Proverbs 27:23-24 (NIV)

Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds...

What Can De-motivate Us?

While it is crucial to know how to motivate others, it is also important to understand what can deflate their enthusiasm and motivation. Here is briefly listed some key areas leaders should be aware of.

1 Lack or problems

Using the Maslow Hierarchy of Needs, it has been identified that a lack in Physiological, Safety, Love and Belonging as well as Esteem can shift the motivational focus. Problems or crises in any of those areas can also cause a similar sense of lack. Hence, de-motivating from higher aspirations.

2 Exhaustion

Exhaustion can occur when a person is stretched beyond their capacity or endurance. It is common for motivated individuals to take on too many projects and unwisely running themselves down physically until exhaustion. The prophet Elijah experienced this after his high of combating against the prophets of Baal, leading to



depression. Mental and emotional exhaustion can also occur due to increased stresses, anxieties, uncertainties, conflicts etc. Spiritual exhaustion can also occur due to inadequate refreshing from God.

3 Lack of success or failure

When people make significant investment of their time, energy and resources into projects but fail to see any significant progress, or should failure occur, discouragement can creep in. Enthusiastic leaders may move from one unsuccessful project to another with high motivation but the same are unlikely for the followers. People need to experience reasonable success, otherwise they may become demotivated.

4 Personal weaknesses

Often, personal weaknesses place a significant constrain on how motivated a person can be. Those who struggle with self-doubt and insecurities will always struggle with a lack of self-confidence and motivation. If they lack personal victory in their personal lives, their personal demons will undermine their motivation to sustain victory in other aspects of their lives. Some possess a rather lethargic, laid-back personality which can limit their ability to rise to higher motivations. Those who are weighed down by doubt and disbelieve in God will struggle to trust God and His promises and hence hindered in any godly aspirations.

5 Discouraging behaviours by others

When leaders do not walk the talk and let people down. It will eventually discourage the followers. When leaders lack conviction in what they tell others to aspire towards, it will undermine their message.





Conclusion

A motivational leader understands the variety of ingredients necessary to motivate their followers. As well as elements that can de-motivate their team. A wise leader takes into consideration all these factors to lead their team to a higher level of motivation. May you rise up to be an effective motivational leader.



Discussion Questions

These questions could be done personally or as part of a group discussion.

1. Why do you think that having a genuine concern for your people a critical factor motivating them?
2. How much have you been able to see the worth and potential of a person? But not just for your projects. Rather for their own good?
3. How much have you been able to take into account de-motivating factors that have affected your people?

Actionable Steps

Following questions are to prompt us on suitable actions. Importantly, come up with steps you will take to make progress. Give them datelines and priority.

1. What steps can you take to better understand your team/people? Their personal/family/work situation? For we can only practically have concern for them if we know their situation adequately.
2. What specific steps can you take to nurture a more biblical and resilient mindset amongst your team/people?
3. What specific steps can you take to become more aware of the degree of support that your team/people need?





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