



PRACTICAL TOOLS TO MOTIVATE “LAGGARDS AND FOOLS”

By Dr. Dolly Berthelot

Unproductive, unmotivated, frustrated employees — problems experienced at one time or another by all those who manage people. Guest Columnist Dr. Dolly Berthelot, Communications Consultant for Berthelot Consulting, offers some practical advice on how to motivate those you supervise.

Good bosses, in whatever field, are able to motivate employees to perform well. To produce quality products and services. This ability profits Mom and Pop proprietors no less than Fortune 500 CEOs. How do they do it? What are their tools?

When frustrated by employees who seem to be lazy, do-nothing, know-nothing fools, it's natural to feel like giving them a good bashing, whether physical or verbal. We want to “hammer some sense into them,” “drive the point home,” “hit the nail on head.” We may communicate that they are “laggards and fools” rather than valued employees and co-workers. Such disdain is unprotective.

Discard the hammer as a motivation tool. It rarely works well on people. Other human relations tools are more effective for building and maintaining motivation, for influencing excellence.

***ENTHUSIASM.** Enthusiasm is both energizing and contagious. Consider your own level of enthusiasm. Like every feeling, enthusiasm is conveyed verbally and nonverbally. When there is a discrepancy between what you say and how you say it, actions do speak louder than words. What do you really convey? Those who would motivate others must first do so by example. Remember Tom Sawyer's fence? Fun is what you **want** to do, even if it is work.

***INTEREST.** While interest in your **work** is essential, tasks are not the whole picture. You must be genuinely interested in those you would motivate.

People are not objects, not blank slates upon which any boss or leader or teacher or physician or whatever can write. To motivate someone, you must first really care about him or her, and show it. Demonstrate your awareness of their accomplishments and appreciation of their efforts. You must also understand their hopes, dreams, strengths, weaknesses, concerns, needs. And that requires the next tool.

***INVOLVEMENT.** Theirs and yours. Interest is essential but not sufficient. You can build on individual wants and needs only if you know what they are. Presumptions can be dangerous. Find out. Explore wants and needs through suggestion boxes, interviews, focus groups, quality circles, surveys. Anyone involved in decision-making processes feels greater ownership. Improved eliciting and listening skills could be your best motivation skills. And most people can improve them. Involve everyone.

***ENCOURAGEMENT.** It's frustrating and debilitating to feel we can't do anything right. Many folks go out from under the critical eye of a stern father only to cringe under the critical eye of bosses who also seem “unpleasable.” Those who rise to the top are often tough acts to follow. Most people need praise, approval, pats on the back for jobs well done. “Catch people doing something right.” Ataboys and Atagirls are motivating. When you must criticize, focus on the specific problems, the precise behavior to be changed. Don't indict the person. Encourage the person, even while dealing with a particular problem to be solved.

***EMPOWERMENT.** It's not enough to delegate, but to step aside and let them do it — their way as much as possible. Even when we're especially wary, our subordinates and co-workers can surprise us. They may know something we don't. When all persons in

an organization are empowered to use their full skills, intelligence, creativity, energy and personality, they thrive. And the company thrives with them. Risky? Perhaps. But usually rewarding. A worker empowered to reach full potential is an enthusiastic worker.

And enthusiasm, you'll recall, is both energizing and contagious. Workers surrounded by enthusiasm, interest, involvement, encouragement, and empowerment tend to become more enthusiastic, interested, involved, encouraged and empowered. And that's good for business. Such workers rarely act like laggards or fools. They are fully engaged in the exciting, invigorating process of enjoyable work. Work they feel part of. Work that motivates them to do their very best.