

Motivation: How to Increase Project Team Performance

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ABSTRACT

Stimulating team member performance requires a project manager to harness many different interpersonal skills. The level of enthusiasm applied toward project efforts has a direct impact on the project results. Because motivation can inspire, encourage, and stimulate individuals to achieve common goals through teamwork, it is in the project manager's best interest to drive toward project success through the creation and maintenance of a motivating environment for all members of the team.

KEYWORDS: team performance, project success, motivation

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INTRODUCTION

Motivation can inspire, encourage, and stimulate individuals and project teams to achieve great accomplishments. Motivation can also create an environment that fosters teamwork and collective initiatives to reach common goals or objectives. The level of motivation an individual and/or team applies to project efforts can affect all aspects of project results, including a direct impact to the triple constraint project success factors (i.e., on time, within budget, high quality met scope/customer expectations). Knowing this, it is in the project manager's best interest to understand the reasons for demotivation in order to achieve project success through the creation and maintenance of a motivating environment for all members of the team.

The book *Essentials of Supervision* defines management as "achieving results through others" (Simpson, Gould, Hardy, & Lindahl, 1991, p. 5). Stimulating team member performance requires a project manager to harness many different interpersonal skills, including good communication and the ability to train others, make decisions, lead by example, and create a positive, motivational environment by understanding and associating with the key components of motivation. Unlike most tangible project management functions, motivation is not designated by the project manager to a team member; instead, motivation is internal to each team member and derived from a team member's desire to achieve a goal, accomplish a task, or work toward expectations. Motivation can be considered the corollary of ambition applied to the desired accomplishment.

Just as some teams are stimulated to achieve great success throughout all project efforts and assignments, other project teams may remain uninspired and shuffle meekly, quietly, and unpretentiously toward project completion. With this in mind, there are two opposing questions that have often been raised when reviewing drivers and motivators of individual and team performance. These resonating questions are "Can a project manager motivate others to perform?" or is it more accurate to ask "How does the project manager create an environment conducive to outstanding team synergy and peak individual performance?" (Scholtes, 1999). The subsequent research provides the answer to these questions as well as a further exploration of motivational approaches a project manager can apply to the project team environment.

Motivational Theories

McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y

McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y motivational approach identifies polar differences in subordinates. Theory X team members are classified as individuals who require constant attention, do not want to work, need punishment to achieve desired effort, and avoid added responsibilities. In contrast, Theory Y individuals are classified as team members who want to work, find the job satisfying, are willing to participate, do not require a controlling

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