



LIBBY WAGNER
Professional Leadership Results, Inc.

Helping you align your people with your vision



The Good News & the Bad News: You Can't Motivate Anybody

By Libby Wagner, Founder of Professional Leadership Results

Now that the energy of New Year's resolutions has dimmed, many of us are feeling the winter blahs and a longing for spring. What about those in your workplace? Is work performance sluggish? What if it has nothing to do with seasonal elements? What helps us get motivated and how can we motivate others?

Here's the good news and the bad news: you can't motivate anybody. Motivation is intrinsic—it generates from within and is primarily based on emotions and modified by learning. Leaders are often tasked with trying to puzzle out how to motivate or inspire people with whom they work. Numerous articles, books and online zines are devoted to the topic of motivation and some even build careers around motivational speaking and leading. If you can't motivate somebody, what can you do to help people get jump-started, move to the next level or meet existing standards? You can remove obstacles to motivation, and then the behaviors are up to them.

A PERSONAL EXAMPLE

Let's examine a non-work related situation where motivation would come in handy. My personal trainer, Holly, has been trying to talk me into running a half marathon with her this year. She's been dropping

hints for months, and my customary reply was always, "yeah, I'd like to do that ...I've always wanted to do that. I'm not sure I can run that far all at once..." This woman is very inspiring—fit, friendly, funny, encouraging—but she cannot motivate me to spend the next four months training to prepare to run 13 miles in one fell swoop—only I can do that for myself. What she can do, however, is help me to remove obstacles to my motivation by first finding out what those obstacles might be and offering to come up with some strategies for overcoming them.

ABLE-NESS & WILLINGNESS

There are two main categories of obstacles—ableness and willingness—so we'll address those first. Am I able to run 13 miles without stopping and without injury or harm? Am I willing to do the mental and physical work of training for this kind of race? I must answer those questions first, and from that, I can determine what I might need in order to remove the obstacles to my motivation. For example, where is my skill and ability level right now? Is it realistic for me to work toward this goal in the time I have to prepare? Do I have enough information about the race, the challenges and benefits of training? Do I have time in my schedule to devote to the training itself? What questions do I need answered in order for me to be able to make an informed decision about this task ahead? That almost seems like a contradiction or paradox, doesn't it—

to gather. Now that the energy of New Year's resolutions has dimmed, many of us are feeling the winter blahs and a longing for spring. What about those in your workplace? Is work performance sluggish? What if it has nothing to do with seasonal elements? What helps us get motivated and how can we motivate others? The Good News & the Bad News: You Can't Motivate Anybody information in order to get motivated? Motivation is not magic. This is something Victor Vroom writes about in his work around the 'expectancy theory of motivation' where people make rational decisions about whether or not to be motivated to pursue a particular course of action. I love that idea! It's the perfect example of balance—using reason to determine whether or not to engage my emotions— my passion—in something I may choose to do or not to do!

HOW CAN THIS PLAY OUT IN THE WORKPLACE?

If you are managing or supervising people or leading an organization, you can ask these important questions:

- 1) What is standing in the way of having high levels of productivity, trust and morale? What obstacles are preventing this group, team or individuals from being the best they can be?
- 2) Once you've identified the potential obstacles, then you need to decide whether or not you can influence this situation by gathering more information, changing a system or a process, or confronting an important issue.
- 3) Then, you'll need to decide whether or not it's worth it to you, your team or organization.

When I finally agreed to join Holly in the half marathon, I had to do some homework—I read several books and articles, I talked to other runners, and I came up with a plan for how I could remove most of the obstacles to my ability and willingness to train for this event. Now, even though Holly says all the right things as we're creeping up the last hill of our long Saturday runs, and she helped me find the information I needed to eliminate most of my obstacles to motivation, she knows I'm the one who made the decision to be excited about this and to create behaviors around making it happen. She helped me find ways to say 'yes', but I'm the one who has to move my feet. ❖

Which of the following goals are important to you and your organization?

- **INCREASE** employer-employee trust and morale
- **CREATE** a team commitment to shared vision and goals
- **EMPOWER** leaders and managers to influence with ethics
- **REMOVE** obstacles to productivity
- **ENCOURAGE** employee decision-making
- **ENABLE** managers to effectively address performance issues

Are you a manager or leader who is seriously interested in spending more time getting results and less time and energy resolving Team issues?

Find out how Libby Wagner and Professional Leadership Results can help you reach your goals. Call or email for more information today!

Libby Wagner

4) Finally, create a plan that will move you toward the results desired.
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