

Motivation Basics

While successful motivation programs DO require quite a bit of thought and common sense, they are NOT rocket science. Thinking through the following four elements will greatly increase your results!

#1. Program Structure/Rules:

Simple, simple, simple.... keep it simple.

Try to come up with a fun and relevant theme that captures your audiences' interest and ties all the elements together.

Don't be redundant with the variable compensation program. It probably does NOT make sense to reinforce the same results that your variable compensation program rewards. A motivation program is a great opportunity to reinforce those activities that are important for success, but that AREN'T directly reinforced with compensation.

Make the goals challenging, but achievable. (Participant "buy-in" to their goal is one of the highest correlating factors to success!)

If the goal is extremely ambitious, or if the program is long, consider breaking the goal/program down into manageable chunks.

Make sure that a significant number of people have an opportunity to be successful.

Take seasonality, competitive programs, budget, and sales cycle into consideration when determining the appropriate program length.

Consider introducing a team element if teamwork is necessary for success.

Take some time planning your program. Involve some members of your audience in the planning process. Do some research to find out where performance levels are and why they are there.

#2. Communications:

Use whatever method or combination of methods that is most appropriate (print, audio tape, video tape, phone, e-mail, internet, etc).

You must design communications that are strong enough to cut through the clutter and confusion that are out there these days. There is an incredible amount of competition for the "mindshare" of your audience (and much of it comes from you or your company)!

It has always amazed me at how many times I have run into situations where the "troops" don't know exactly what behaviors the leaders want.

Be clear about what you are doing and why you are doing it!

Spend some money on the communications of your program.

#3. Administration:

It is a well established fact that we get the behavior that we measure. So make sure that you are measuring the behavior that you want and that you are communicating the results accurately, clearly, and in a timely manner. People want to know how they are doing --- versus their goals, versus their peers, versus past performance, etc.

Kenneth Blanchard has said that “feedback is the breakfast of champions!” Some people believe that one of the reasons that golf is so popular today is the incredible amount of feedback that you can get when playing golf (scoring each hole against par, your handicap, your opponents, the last time you played, etc).

Spend some money on the measurement of your program.

#4. Reinforcement:

While this is usually the most discussed part of any motivation program it CANNOT carry the success or failure of your program alone. You must also spend time on the three elements above in order to maximize your success. The basics here are simple---use non-cash awards to maximize the emotional involvement level (assuming basic compensation needs are met); select a wide variety of highly desirable awards (“wish” items, not “need” items); make sure that the earnings potential is appropriate for the effort expended; display the potential awards attractively; and make the fulfillment as clear and simple as possible.

Remember that the winners are your top performers—treat them that way!

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Helping you to achieve your objectives.

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