



FLAME: Using Motivation to Build High Performance Team Members

Within each person is the often-untapped potential for energy and enthusiasm that produces the high job performance critical to a successful project. Effective leaders are able to release individuals' potential energy and build teams that are motivated and ready to take on the task at hand.

In this article we compare two types of motivation and discuss which will produce more sustained energy within your team.

Types of Motivation

There are two types of motivation, extrinsic and intrinsic.

A person is **extrinsically motivated** when the primary source of motivation is to attain a tangible outcome such as a reward, or to avoid a negative outcome such as a punishment.

In a work setting, people are extrinsically motivated if the principal reason for their effort at work is pay, positive performance reviews, opportunities for advancement, bonuses and the like. Similarly, people are also extrinsically motivated if the principal reason for the effort at work is to avoid reprimands, poor performance reviews, poor assignments, and dismissals.

Notice that with extrinsic motivation, the source of the motivation is external to the task itself. The tangible outcome we seek, such as a pay raise, is invariably administered (controlled) by someone else.

The second type of motivation is **intrinsic motivation**. People are intrinsically motivated when the principal reason for their effort at work is that they find the work itself exciting, challenging, fulfilling, interesting, and energizing. Further, they get feelings of pride, feelings of achievement, and feelings of accomplishment when working on these tasks.

Notice that with intrinsic motivation, the source of the motivation truly "comes from within." It is not controlled or mediated by someone else.

Effective leaders should strive to create an environment that is intrinsically motivating. Here are some reasons why:

Close supervision is no longer needed

We can't be in all places at all times. In these times, many organizations are being asked to "do more with less," which has led many organizations towards a self-management style. Close supervision is critical when people are extrinsically motivated. Close supervision is not necessary when people are intrinsically motivated.

Attracting and retaining employees has become more difficult

In today's competitive workplace, salaries and benefits are no longer enough to attract employees and keep them satisfied. We must make the actual work more fulfilling and energizing so employees see an advantage of staying with your company, instead of just moving on to an organization that can offer a larger salary. Creating work environments that are intrinsically motivating (described later) helps considerably in retention of employees.

Extrinsic rewards have limitations

Although traditional extrinsic rewards do work, the effects are temporary, and people are likely to perform for the wrong reasons. A bonus or a pay raise is always satisfactory, but the motivation effects are only temporary, and it creates a mindset that “I only perform for the rewards” or “I only perform to keep from getting fired” rather than “I perform because my job is motivating.”

Create an Environment of Intrinsic Motivation with FLAME

By creating an environment of intrinsic motivation, you will have employees that are self-directed and motivated to accomplish goals for the good of the organization. There are five critical ingredients needed to create an environment of intrinsic motivation. We use **FLAME** as our acronym for these five characteristics.

- F** - Feedback
- L** - Lots of Skills
- A** - Autonomy
- M** - Mine, and
- E** - Effect

In essence, to create intrinsic motivation, add **FLAME** to the work setting. Here is how to put **FLAME** to work for you.

Feedback

Feedback in this case refers to feedback from doing the task itself, not external feedback from peers or supervisors. A job has a higher potential for intrinsic motivation when people realize how well they are doing on a task while they are doing it. *To add **FLAME** to the job, build feedback systems into the tasks so people know right away how well they are doing.*

Lots of Skills

Jobs become more interesting and exciting when they require people to exhibit a variety of different talents and abilities, such as problem-solving, decision-making, communication, customer service skills, software skills, etc. Jobs high in skill variety have more potential for intrinsic motivation. *To add **FLAME** to the job, change the work to allow employees to use a variety of different types of skills.*

Autonomy

Very little intrinsic motivation can exist if employees are told what to do, when to do it, and how to do it. Give people goals and boundaries, and then allow them the discretion to act and to make decisions that affect their jobs. By allowing them to be self-directed you will find many times they will take proactive steps on their own, such as suggesting improvements or solutions to problems. *To add **FLAME** to a job, allow people the discretion to make the decisions that affects their job and their team.*

Mine

When you can structure employees' work so they believe it is theirs (MY customer, MY workstation, MY project, MY task), the potential for intrinsic motivation goes up. When people feel a sense of personal ownership and task identity, they are more likely to be intrinsically motivated. *To add **FLAME** to a job, introduce “ownership” in the work.*

Effect on Others

When people feel that what they're doing at work has a significant impact on the lives of others, a job can become more intrinsically motivating. Employees might sometimes feel they work in a vacuum and that their work affects no one else in the organization. The best way to show employees their effect on others is to increase their understanding of their role as a part of a larger team. *To add **FLAME** to a job, help raise your employees' awareness of the impact that they have on the others by visiting customers (internal or external), talking to customers, and learning how the work impacts customers.*

Adding **FLAME** to a job creates an intrinsically motivating workplace. By creating an environment of intrinsic motivation in your organization, you will have people who are not only motivated and energized, but are also proactively working to help take your project to the next level of success.

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