

MOTIVATE YOUR RETAIL TEAM

Many managers mistakenly think that money is the prime motivator for their employees. However, according to surveys by several different companies, money is consistently ranked five or less by most employees. So if money is not the best way to motivate your team, what is?

The three most important issues according to employees are; respect, a sense of accomplishment, and recognition. Yes, money is important but it is not as critical as these other components. Taking these into consideration, let's explore seven ways to keep your team motivated:

1. **Involve them.** Many employees want to be involved in the ongoing development and progress of their company. Plus, they often have insightful ideas that can make a significant difference in the company. And when they are involved, they buy-in faster and resist less. This means you can implement the change(s) more quickly and easily.
2. **Communicate.** Very few businesses can be accused of over-communicating. A frequent axiom in business is, "No news is good news." However, employees want regular updates on the progress of the business and their personal performance. Use memos, email, telephone, and one-on-one and group meetings to keep your team apprised. Talk to your team members regularly, have lunch or coffee with them, Let them know if the business is on track. Tell them what challenges are currently being faced (they may have suggestions). It is also important that you give them feedback on their performance. If you have a concern with a specific component, tell them and give them the opportunity to correct their behavior.
3. **Celebrate individual and team performance.** Catch people doing something right and focus on recognizing excellent performance. On an individual basis you can provide positive reinforcement, issue awards, use a corporate newsletter to highlight specific achievements. Send thank-you, birthday, and anniversary cards as well as congratulatory notes. Make personal phone calls, and send emails. Better yet, if you work in a large organization, have a senior executive send the email or make the call.

To recognize team efforts, post performance charts on the wall or throw an impromptu get-together., Treat them to lunch or a pizza party, post team pictures on your Intranet and in their work environment or give them plaques, certificates, coffee mugs, etc.

Ultimately, the more of these approaches you incorporate into your motivation strategy, the more energized your team will become. Make it a point to recognize someone everyday.

4. **Set challenging goals.** My experience has taught me that people strive to achieve what is expected of them. If you set challenging goals your team will work hard to accomplish them, providing of course, they are realistically

attainable. It is amazing what people can accomplish when they are given the opportunity to perform. Communicate these goals and keep your team informed on the company's progress.

5. **Give them the tools to succeed.** No team will stay motivated if they do not have the necessary tools required to do their job. This includes; equipment, internal support, inventory, marketing materials, training, etc. Simple things annoy people. Many years ago I worked in a restaurant where the owner refused to give the servers trays to carry drinks because he thought it was an unnecessary expense. Frustration ran high when servers had to make more trips to and from the bar.
6. **Manage poor performance.** Your team expects you to manage individuals who do not perform to standard or contribute fully to the efforts of the team. However, many managers ignore poor performance because they are afraid of the potential conflict. Instead, they hope that the situation will resolve itself. It never does and this "blind" approach affects profitability, causes higher turnover, and contributes to low morale in the workplace. While poor performance and conflict are seldom enjoyable to deal with, you have a responsibility to your team and the company to manage it. Here is the B.E.S.T. method of dealing with these situations:

Begin with the situation. "Pat, when we receive a shipment and you expect the others to put it away..."

Express the result. "...it causes friction because everyone is expected to pitch in."

State the desired change. "In the future I need you to cooperate with the rest of the group to ensure that the shipment is stored quickly. This means I want you to stop whatever you are working on and help put away the stock."

Tell them the consequence. "If you don't help with this task I may be forced to take additional action."

7. **Lead by example.** If you want your team to treat each other with and dignity, you need to set the tone. If you expect them to be motivated and enthusiastic it is critical that you behave in this manner. As an owner, manager or business leader, your team looks to you for direction and guidance.

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