

# Motivation: How to Get Your People to "Turn On" to Work

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There can be little doubt that among the many tasks confronting the golf course superintendent is that of improving performance of the worker. Improved technology, modern equipment, budgets, good scheduling, improved communication systems, and dedication all contribute to improvement. An efficient shop and well organized training programs also contribute greatly to improving overall performance. The one ingredient that must be presented is motivation. If a worker is not properly motivated, all the sophisticated equipment and systems will not pay back the large returns in golf course improvement that advocates promise. What is the nature of this broad concept of motivation?

In his recent book, *Psychology of Personnel in Business and Industry*, Roger Bellows describes motivation as a condition of constructive tension. It can be more simply expressed as the *reason* a person does something.

The reasons people do things can be grouped into three basic categories:

- (1) The rules: If the organization has a rule that states employees must be at their work place by 8:00 a.m., the workers have a reason for being there.
- (2) The group: If one worker is not conforming in some way, such as producing as much work as others in the group, pressure may be exerted on the poor performer in direct or subtle ways.
- (3) The individual: Internal forces of pride, ambition, survival, ego, status, etc., give a person reasons for doing things.

This list in no way exhausts the subject, but perhaps puts a framework around the concept of motivation.

History provides some insights if one examines certain incidents in the light of the

motivational forces involved, particularly the workers and what motivates them. Consider, for example, the building of the pyramids in ancient Egypt. Slave labor was used, and the reason people worked was fear. Because the bosses had absolute power of life and death over the workers, the situation was very simple.

Another similar and more modern situation was the Okies of the 1930s here in the United States. Marginal farmers were driven from their homes by the great dust storms and large agricultural combines. They sought to scratch out a living as migratory workers picking fruits and vegetables in California. The migrants' plight was similar to that of the pyramid builders. When migrants were in a farmer's camp, in many cases local police kept them in line lest they insist on fresh water or decent sanitary facilities. A significant difference from the pyramid builders was that the workers came from another environment in which they had freedom and independence. The migrants often rebelled because they had known a better life.

Many other labor-management examples come to mind to illustrate the point, such as sweat shops in the garment industry, child labor abuses, the coal miners and their problems with intolerable working conditions and the company store. Even today the so-called hard core or culturally disadvantaged frequently are forced to work in substandard conditions in order to survive. The picture is currently clouded by the enormous welfare culture which in many cases turns any attempt at analyzing motivation into a nightmare. But what of running of an efficient labor crew?

There are many theoretical models with which to examine human motivation. Two of the most popular are those of Dr. Abraham Maslow and Dr. Frederick Herzberg. Dr. Maslow's Theory is a basic one and can be applied

to people in general, while Dr. Herzberg narrowed his examination of the problem to the work environment.

In the simplest terms, Maslow said that people operate at five levels of motivation, and that there is a definite priority of needs or a "hierarchy of needs." At the base of his hierarchy is the need to survive. At this level people are only concerned about food, clothing, shelter, to satisfy basic physiological needs. When these needs are satisfied, the individual moves to the next level of safety and security. At this level he is concerned about being protected, being able to plan ahead, and having a reserve or source of replenishment of the basics. Once these needs are satisfied he moves on to the third level which is social in nature. At this level he needs to "belong," to have affection, love, affiliation, or to put it another way, be part of a friendly group. After attaining the needs of the third level he moves either consciously or subconsciously to the fourth level of esteem or status. At the fourth level he is looking for recognition, acceptance, praise, or more generally, a feeling that other people consider him a worthy person. Finally, according to Maslow, having achieved the first four, man moves to the highest plateau of self-actualization — "being as much as I can be." At this level the individual is no longer concerned about the acceptance of others, but rather the acceptance of himself.

There are, of course, many instances when people do not behave according to Maslow's model, such as the martyr who forgets self-preservation, security, affection, and esteem to be what *he* has to *be*; or the man who is so status conscious that he joins an exclusive country club but can't keep the household bills paid on time. But the exceptions are not the point. The model stands up rather well in a vast majority of cases.

The other very popular and controversial motivational theory is that of Frederick Herzberg. He has been widely published in popular periodicals such as the *Harvard Business Review* and *Fortune Magazine*. Herzberg conducted some basic attitude surveys in motivation and work situation. The essence of Herzberg's findings are these: There are two general classifications of job needs which are identified as satisfiers and dissatisfiers. In the satisfier category are: (1) achievement, (2) recognition, (3) advancement, (4) responsibility, and (5) work itself. In the dissatisfier category are: (1) policies and procedures, (2) technical competence of supervisors, (3) salary, (4) interpersonal relations, and (5) working conditions. Each of the satisfiers (motivators) and dissatisfiers (demotivators) have at least two dimensions which are intensity and duration. For



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example, an important achievement has a very strong effect on motivation but does not last very long; whereas a new responsibility which may not have such a strong motivation, but will stay in effect over a longer period of time.

This model is most interesting in the aspect of the dissatisfiers having to be satisfied before the satisfiers (motivators) will have any real effect. For example, if a worker is unhappy about working conditions or policies he considers unjust or unclear, he is not likely to be motivated by recognition for a job well done. Can you imagine a worker saying, "The boss told me I did an exceptionally good job on the aerification project today, but it doesn't change the fact that I don't have a decent place to shower and dress before going home. I wish they would knock off the pats on the back and do something about our locker room." Or, "Big deal, I got the foreman's job but with all the heat we're gettin' from the committee all I've got is more headaches."

To look at another situation, can you imagine a man doing an obviously superior job edging a sand trap and finding out at the end of the day that his raise was turned down by the committee. Frequently we wonder why work doesn't turn on the men in the crew. Usually one of the dissatisfiers is at work undermining morale, so that pride, recognition, and achievement cannot function as they should.

Our job then as superintendents and Green Committee Chairmen is to use these theoretical models of Maslow and Herzberg as tools of analysis to determine just how we can improve performance on the job. It is necessary to examine the individual and determine what unfulfilled needs he has, and, as nearly as possible, provide the opportunity for the individual to move to the next level of satisfying his needs in the work environment. For example, if a particular worker seems secure and confident, but is constantly complaining about the boredom of riding a tractor alone for eight hours a day, it may be that his performance can be improved by moving him to a job where several men work together and can socialize while working. Another worker may be bored with the small talk and welcome a couple of weeks in the splendid isolation of the tractor job. Here we have used Maslow's model to solve a problem.

Another case in point could be the worker who is assigned a job of spraying fungicide. After several times he becomes curious about what this liquid is doing to the grass. In many cases, the super shrugs off a request for such information by saying, "It's a little too complex to explain. You just spray it and I'll worry about the chemistry." So our man gets his ego

deflated because he probably feels the boss regards him as too stupid to understand, or he might feel that the boss doesn't really know what happens and is technically incompetent. In either case he has been turned off by a dissatisfier and even when the fungicide treatment is successful in curbing the fungus, he won't enjoy his accomplishment because he is upset at the boss.

If the worker is told to take charge of a project (responsibility) like a bridge repair, and the equipment is in poor condition, or proper materials are not available, he probably will see the added responsibility as a threat rather than a chance to show the boss the kind of a good job he can do. On the other hand, if he has good equipment and the right materials, he gets a chance for achievement, recognition, and meaningful responsibility which could eventually lead to a promotion or a raise. He will be motivated.

Now what about our examples of the pyramid builders and the migrant farm workers? They provide us with a picture of how some bosses see their workers. If you read the book or saw the movie "Grapes of Wrath" you can imagine the hostility and distrust present in workers minds when they are treated as chattel. Oh yes, you can get work done under these circumstances. Run a tight ship, don't listen to advice from subordinates, keep them in their place and you will get performance to some minimum standard. If you don't get desired performance it is quite simple — fire the worker and replace him with another guy who knows his place.

This does not mean that you should abandon control. Of course there must be rules, procedures, schedules, discipline, safety, specific ways of doing things, and adherence to budgets; however, these things can only provide the environment in which real motivation can take place. The important point to remember is that these controls must be administered fairly and consistently and not be used as the ultimate weapon to get desired or improved performance.

But if you want improved performance, one of the approaches open to you is the examination of the basics of human motivation which can be applied to help each man achieve not only his goals, but yours. Give the worker an opportunity to contribute his time and talent while satisfying his psychological needs on the job. Such an attitude toward workers cannot be generated overnight, but if some effort is expended in each work assignment to match men's needs with their work you will be a far superior boss *and* your people will have a true opportunity to be motivated.