

8 Ways Entrepreneurs Often Destroy Team Motivation

Assuming no one would de-motivate their team intentionally, then why do we see it happen so often? I believe it's because too many entrepreneurs and leaders are so self-centered that they really don't see what impact their actions have on others. What these leaders need to do is spend more time eliminating their own de-motivating habits, rather than delivering more motivation.

Maybe it because there are plenty of tips, seminars, and books on the motivation side of the equation, starting with the basic [Motivating Employees for Dummies](#), and so few resources on elements of de-motivation. To learn about ways that your team is de-motivated, most leaders would need to look no further than feedback from their own team, indicating you do the following:

1. **Be sure your team doesn't know what is important to you.** You do this by changing your mind on an issue several times a day. Or by making sure your answers to employee direction requests run counter to ones given previously. Keeping your team guessing may keep them alert, but it is highly de-motivating.
2. **Never explain your actions.** Just because you are the boss, that doesn't mean you don't have to explain your actions. They are watching you carefully, but they can't see what's going on in your mind. Non-specific directions like "make it better" or "get it right next time" are not helpful or motivational.
3. **Hire team members who will follow your instructions.** Then you have to make sure they are punished for taking any initiative that you personally did not authorize. These people may appreciate having a job in these tough economic times, but they won't be motivated to take any risk, or lead your company through the competitive minefield.
4. **Keep people on their toes with a threat of consequences.** This may be as simple as withholding opportunities and rewards, but people need to understand that you are serious about punishment for mistakes. Even implied threats are de-motivating, yet most employees say their supervisors do hold threats over them on a routine basis.
5. **Team meetings are for delivering the latest decisions.** Bring your team members along to all the meetings, but make sure they listen carefully rather than speak or provide input. You may ask them to bring you up to date on what they've been emailing you, but you've been too busy to read.
6. **Agree to milestones and then accelerate them.** After you hear the latest sales projections, you can't resist adding a "stretch" objective, just to keep people challenged. For development projects, you prefer milestones just after major holidays, so people have the option of working through the holiday for extra credit.
7. **Thank your employees for the little extras.** You recognize the need for positive feedback, but it's less risky to apply it to potential problem items, like "Thank you for doing the job manually, rather than waiting for your computer to show up," or "Thanks for coming to my house to fix my kid's home computer."
8. **Be careful not to get too involved in your employees own goals.** If you help them too much, they will just leave you for a bigger opportunity. They need to understand the commitment of meeting your goals first, so you send reminder emails to them at midnight on Saturday, marked urgent.

If you recognize yourself in any of the points above, or find this article on your desk chair one morning, it's never too late to change. Rethink your own behavior in order to ferret out any unintentional or intentional de-motivational acts.

It's time to move to the positive side of the motivation curve, from the team's perspective. Motivation is one of the most powerful driving forces toward entrepreneurial success. In these tough competitive times, you need all the help you can get. Don't try it with a de-motivated team.

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