

## Get the feelgood factor

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By ANGELA McCARTHY

Ask people what motivates them to do well at work and the answer is not more money but incentives such as career advancement, challenging work and training, says Maria Thomson, consultant for occupational psychologist consultancy Career Analysts.

"Individuals seem to value the chance to be motivated intrinsically. It is non-financial rewards that are often mentioned, such as recognition and the feeling of being valued in an organisation."

She finds some organisations worry they will lose staff if they invest in training and development.

"Ironically, training and development tend to have the opposite effect of motivating employees and increasing the likelihood that they will stay with the organisation," says Thomson.

Stratum Consulting Group general manager Dave Stewart says flexibility and benefits are the keys to motivating staff. This requires listening and learning about people's needs. This can be simple, he says, giving the example of one of his staff who leaves 10 minutes early to catch a train to be home by 6.30pm.

"She once asked to leave earlier and when I asked why I heard that getting the earlier train meant she got home an hour and a quarter earlier. It makes a huge difference to her, and wins her commitment."

For wage workers in environments such as production lines, the big deal is often access to a phone so family can contact them if they need.

At senior level, benefits and rewards can be harder to provide in the current culture of flat management, says Stewart. But mentoring roles, expert status or training roles are strong motivators.

"Many people get immense satisfaction out of being perceived as helpful or an expert. It is all about finding creative ways to evoke a feeling of self esteem and pride."

Peter Sammons, partner at TeamCraft New Zealand, an organisational learning and development consultancy, says if employees believe they're heading in a good direction, their efforts are being recognised and rewarded, and their pay is fairly pitched, then the employer has created a good motivational place of work.

It is very important that managers celebrate small as well as big wins, says Sammons. A morning-tea shout for a team's good work often motivates more than the big, formal, annual company do. In group situations, Sammons recommends shared rewards, such as profit sharing, to keep a group on track and encourage cooperation. Fairness is also essential.

"What managers often do is set up first-past-the-post rewards. Usually 10 per cent of the work force wins every time. Where is the motivation for the other 90 per cent? What is more motivating is if individuals get a bonus if they reach a percentage target."

Leadership holds the key, says Sammons.

"You won't get buy-in if you, as the leader, don't have a clear vision of where you're going."

Hansells New Zealand managing director Stuart Walker, whose leadership approach is strongly influenced by eight years in the Army Territorials, says you must walk the talk.

"You have to sell your vision of where you want to take the business to take people along with you."

Valuing people is important to Walker: "We have to listen, get to know the ages of their kids, know their issues."

Recently Hansells paid to get a nanny for a manager with four children doing a trip to the United States. The idea was to relieve stress for the family, but the company also gains a highly motivated and loyal employee in return, says Walker.

He has introduced initiatives such as life insurance cover and wellness programmes which include site visits by a health nurse. He also encourages and sponsors staff involvement in sports such as dragon boating and triathlons. The focus on health and fitness is good for the individual, makes them feel valued, and reduces absenteeism and sick leave, he says.

Walker believes employees need to feel proud of the company to be motivated at work. A product recall within his first four months at the helm of Hansells, which cost \$350,000, was non-negotiable in his mind because he wanted to send a message to staff, as well as customers, that there was integrity around the product.

"People then defend the company and feel good about working for it."

When an employee raises money as an issue, he will always ask whether it is the real reason for wanting to move.

"If you don't research the underlying dissatisfaction, they will leave anyway."

Proof this approach works? "Low turnover. We're below 5 per cent with salaried staff. In Masterton we're below 2 per cent. The Auckland manufacturing side is a bit harder because it attracts a more transient population, but it is around 10 per cent typically. I'd be worried if it was 20 per cent."

Another chief executive with low turnover and motivated staff is Port of Tauranga's John Mayson. Last year staff turnover was 3 per cent. He credits this to Port of Tauranga being a values-based organisation.

"If you can get a whole group of people sharing a common philosophy and direction, it can make an amazing difference."

Mayson acknowledges it can be difficult motivating individuals at every level.

"Some people will never be motivated by vision and values. They'll think it is a load of crap. They aren't motivated by the idea of making a difference and you have to accept that. That is okay as long as they're not undermining the direction of the company and are not bad apples."

He feels motivation and ambition go hand in hand. Therefore the company encourages people to apply for positions of responsibility within the organisation and make training and upskilling readily available.

"Asking 'why not?' is okay, challenging the status quo is okay and thinking outside the box is okay. I'm looking for the tall poppies. Sheep don't excite me."

He also believes that any motivation has to start within. "It sounds trite but it is true that if I don't change anything within me, nothing will change."

Indeed motivation is a two-way street, says Thomson. You gain from working out how to best motivate yourself. Setting goals and timelines is a good way to start.

"Where do you want to be this time next year? What do you need to do to get there? When will you have it done by? What stands in the way of achieving those goals? How can you overcome this?"

She recommends creating a plan divided into mini goals with mini rewards to make the larger goal more achievable.

"By doing this you are essentially training yourself to succeed. The more often behaviour is reinforced, the more likely it is to occur."

Another important aspect of motivation is identifying skills central to your job satisfaction and success - skills you enjoy using - then being proactive with this self knowledge. Look for ways to be motivated in your job, because that will enrich your work experiences, suggests Sammons.

"Set a work goal, then talk to your manager. Ask if you can learn a bit more about something, suggest rotating roles or tasks to learn more. See if there is a work project you can become involved in."

The result? An interesting job and motivated, bushy-tailed workforce.