



## Ten Steps to Motivate Staff and Improve Performance By Valerie M. Plomin, Ph. D.

### **Step One: Orientation**

This is where it all begins. An employee that receives an informative and thorough orientation has been given the first step for success. Knowing what is expected and what to expect puts the employee on a level playing field and allows her to live up to those expectations. What constitutes an informative and thorough orientation is the responsibility of the supervisor and the basis for her preparation to bring on a new employee. If your organization does not currently have an orientation program, consider putting one together immediately – before you need to hire.

### **Step Two: Setting the Tone**

After the new hire has been orientated, the supervisor should set a time to get together with the employee. At this meeting, the supervisor should share and explain the goals and objectives of the employee's department, as well as those of other departments. This is also a good time to explain specific expectations of the employee and how she fits within the organization.

### **Step Three: Checking In**


The supervisor should check back with the new hire at specific pre-arranged intervals. Giving time to the employee to settle in will make it easier for the employee to know what questions to ask. Having a set time at regular intervals assures that the meetings will already be on the calendar in case business becomes overwhelming and will help both the supervisor and the employee keep them on schedule.

### **Step Four: 90-Day Review**

For new employees, a 60 or 90-day review is recommended. If the new hire is a fit, the review will serve to reinforce and support good performance and motivate the individual to keep up the good work. If the new hire is not working out, this is an opportunity for both the employee and the supervisor to reevaluate. Either way, this is a good time for the supervisor to bring in suggestions for improvement and praise for work well done.

### **Step Five: Motivation**

This is the most overlooked step by supervisors. It is important for everyone to feel good about the work she does and feel proud of the organization she works with. It is equally important for a supervisor to take the time to get to know her staff well enough to know what motivates each person. As Barb Stankus, former CEO, put it, "it's important to know what makes their eyes light up, and that may not be something related to their jobs." But knowing



what is important to that person can give the supervisor the key to how to reward that person. For some, it might be verbal recognition; others might prefer peer recognition; while still others, might prefer a gift certificate for a night out at a local restaurant or theater.

### **Step Six: Mid-year Review**

Knowing what motivates an employee is only half the equation – knowing when and where is the other. Using mid year as a time of reflection is good business. Each employee should update her yearly goals and discuss her progress with her supervisor. Doing this is not only reinforcement for a hard-working employee, it is a way to keep the entire organization on track and aligned with its strategic goals. But mid year is also a good time to reward staff.

Although you may not be able to use compensation as a reward, knowing what motivates your staff should help you come up with creative ideas to reward employees. Don't forget to go to the source – ask your staff what kind of recognition they might enjoy. A Staff Recognition Committee is one way to get staff involved and get their buy in at the same time.

### **Step Seven: Year-end evaluation**

An employee whose had a great orientation, knows her goals and objectives, and has participated in a mid-year review won't look with dread upon her year-end evaluation.

Rather, she may see it as an opportunity – to get important feedback from her supervisor, to share her feedback with her supervisor, and to make important decisions about her role and how she can help the organization reach its goals. It is a good idea to have the employee fill out a self-evaluation and give it to her supervisor. This is a helpful tool for the supervisor to use in determining the employee's final compensation. If the organization is large, having every employee fill out a similar evaluation tool will help to make staff feel that the process is objective and equitable.


### **Step Eight: Career Planning**

Another key to keeping staff motivated to perform that is too often overlooked is career planning. Supervisors should discuss with staff what their personal goals are and what they think they need to achieve them. Basically, this step goes hand-in-hand with knowing the employee and knowing what motivates them. For instance, if an employee has a strong desire to eventually transfer into an area in which she currently has no training and this desire is ignored, she will become dissatisfied, disillusioned and that could affect her performance.

On the other hand, if the same employee is given a chance to work with individuals in another department from time to time, perhaps on a cross-functional team, she may appreciate the opportunity so much that her routine work is improved because she is more satisfied overall.

### **Step Nine: Jump Starting a Tired Employee**

When a supervisor is face with an employee who just seems to be dragging herself in and out of work every day, the supervisor needs to address the situation and the employee. The supervisor should set up a time to meet with the employee and determine the cause. One solution may be to suggest additional education or training that might give the employee more latitude within the organization and an opportunity to transfer into a different area.



Another possibility would be to put the employee on a different team where she would have an opportunity to work with staff she hadn't a chance to get to know and possibly glean new skills. Finally, the supervisor may have to suggest it may be time for the employee to move on.

### **Step Ten: Examining Your Supervisory Style**

A supervisor is called upon to have many qualities – highest among them the ability to listen. Examine your style as a manager and ask yourself if you are a good listener. If you are, then you will know what puts the lights in your employee's eyes, you will know when to give them a pat on the back, and when to give them constructive criticism. Ask yourself who you spend the most time with. Do the difficult employees take up all your time? Do you spend equal time with the employees who never really need you? Again, a great suggestion from Barb Stankus, former CEO, is to “Rotate your attention to each of your employees. Don't spend all your time with the bad performers. You will find that even those employees who don't require or ever demand your time, will start looking forward to their special time with you. And you will enjoy it as well.”

#### **\* In summary:**

- *Step One: Orientation*
- *Step Two: Setting the Tone*
- *Step Three: Checking In*
- *Step Four: 90-Day Review*
- *Step Five: Motivation*
- *Step Six: Mid-year Review*
- *Step Seven: Year-end evaluation*
- *Step Eight: Career Planning*
- *Step Nine: Jump Starting a Tired Employee*
- *Step Ten: Examining Your Supervisory Style*

