

LEAD AND MOTIVATE – NOT JUST YOUR TEAM, BUT YOURSELF TOO

By Joelle K. Jay, Ph.D.

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As a business leader, you know one of your key tasks is to keep your team motivated. To do so, you need to constantly remind your people of the company's vision, hold them accountable to targets and goals, mentor them, and support them in their work. But how does the one who motivates others every day stay motivated as well?

When it comes to leaders, motivation is really about engagement. How engaged are you in your work? How committed are you to the results you're supposed to be getting? Are you pushing forward with a sense of purpose and drive, or are you simply going through motions? To be your best, you need to give serious thought to what makes you flourish and succeed.

When you are motivated, you are a wholehearted participant in your own life. You know what's important to you, and you use it as a guide. You feel confident, energized, and engaged. However, when you are de-motivated, you "lose your edge." Your energy goes down. Your stress goes up. You may even feel guilty and resentful. You might be bored, either in an "I-can't-take-this-anymore" way or in a dull, channel-surfing kind of way. Whatever way a lack of motivation hits you, one thing is for sure – it's not a fun place to be.

Whether you feel your motivation waning or you want to keep your current high level of motivation on a roll, the following suggestions will help you stay at your best.

STAY CONNECTED TO WHAT YOU'RE DOING

It's one thing to do the work you're paid to do; it's another thing to be fulfilled by the work you do. If you're strictly doing your job for the money, or the title, or the company car, you could find that over time it's harder and harder to actually do the job. However, if you're connected to what you do – if you're connected to what excites you – you'll feel motivated to keep going because you'll be achieving a bigger purpose for yourself.

The key is to know your values – the principles, standards, and qualities that guide you. To uncover your values, recall a time in your life when everything was "just right." You could choose something from your personal life or your work. You might revisit a moment, a particular event, or a whole phase of your life. Once you've allowed yourself some time to explore the memory, ask yourself what it was about that memory that made it so memorable, so significant, so right. What made it a peak experience? Write down any ideas that come to mind – words, phrases, images, and symbols. When you've finished with your notes, circle the words that meet the definition of values as principles,

standards, and qualities. There's no right or wrong during this process. Simply use your own words and your gut to tell you what your values are.

KNOW WHAT IT TAKES TO GET BETTER

Motivation comes from constant learning on how to be better. Therefore, you should always be asking yourself, "What am I trying to achieve?" and "What do I need to learn to reach my goal?" Realize that this isn't about taking a workshop or reading a book. It's about challenging yourself to take on something new and to stretch yourself into a new level of results. The fact is that when you practice learning as an element of personal leadership, you stay motivated and you get better results for yourself and for your work. By learning, you empower yourself to have, do, and be whatever you choose. And with empowerment comes confidence. You don't second-guess yourself or worry you'll fail, because you know if you get it wrong, you'll be able to figure out how to get it right. How motivating is that!

FIND THE RIGHT SUPPORT SYSTEM

When you're a leader, all the people below you lean on you. You guide them, support them, and tell them what to do. However, when you're on top, you don't have anyone above you to lean on. That's when you need to look outside of your organization, your role, or even your industry for the people who can cheer you on, mentor you, and help you be your best.

To do so, look for people whose style you like – people who inspire you by the way they lead and the results they get. Seek out people who resonate with you and who seem to mirror parts of yourself. Connect with them to see what's possible for you as a leader. Learn how you can become more with the help of others who have already done what you want to do.

The more carefully you build your support team, the more powerful it will be. You don't just ask people to mentor you because you like them; you make them a part of your team because they enhance you. The people on your support team help you stay motivated because they expand you by giving you access to what you don't know. Remember, it doesn't have to be lonely at the top.

MAINTAIN A SENSE OF BALANCE

While maintaining a work/life balance is not a way to stay motivated, it is a way to keep from becoming de-motivated. When you're serving everyone else you have to remember to fill your own tank. Remember that being an effective and motivated leader should not come at the expense of quality of life, and quality of life should not come at the expense of business results. Work and life should be able to co-exist, happily and successfully. They can and they have. The key is to define what that balance looks like for you.

If you're a senior leader, balance may not look very traditional. It might not be 9-5, Monday through

Friday, with holidays and weekends off. You need to understand what works for you and what fulfills you in your personal life. What helps you restore your energy and find that sense of peace, rest, and renewal? Depending on your lifestyle and personal preferences, that could be taking a morning job, sleeping in on days off, reading a fiction book, or spending time with family. Even if you can't carve out chunks of time, at least create some mental space where you can relax, turn off distractions, and let yourself go.

MOTIVATE THE MOTIVATOR

Staying motivated in today's economy and work reality can be difficult for anyone. But when you take responsibility for motivating yourself and others, you become a true inspiration and can better reach your goals. As a result, your vision, your potential, and your efforts all leave a mark. Yes, as you progress there will be times you'll lose heart. You'll get busy, you'll get tired, you'll forget, you'll have setbacks, you'll drift away. But you won't get lost. When you follow these four guidelines, you'll have a solid foundation for your continued success, now and in the future.

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Joelle K. Jay, Ph.D., is an executive coach and the senior managing partner of the leadership development firm, Pillar Consulting. She strategizes with business leaders to enhance their performance and maximize business results. Her clients include presidents, vice presidents and C-level executives in Fortune 500 companies. Joelle Jay is the author of *The Inner Edge: The 10 Practices of Personal Leadership*. For a free sample chapter, visit: www.TheInnerEdge.com or e-mail Info@TheInnerEdge.com.