

4 Must-Haves for a Highly Motivated Culture

Commonly, leaders spend a great deal of time, effort, and money trying to motivate their employees and create an optimally productive environment. After all, employee motivation is a fundamental aspect of being a leader. In many cases, they go to great lengths to create new and different “carrots and sticks” to elevate the performance and production of their staff.

Unfortunately, many leaders are often left frustrated and disappointed by the inconsistent and underwhelming results and, as a result, those expensive carrots and sticks are wasted. Despite good intentions, too many organizations end up with an environment that is far less productive than it should be. And, equally important, employees are frustrated and stressed – according to Gallup, 44% of employees described their work environment today in those terms.

The answer in today’s challenging business environment is to redirect your cultural efforts. Your focus as a leader shouldn’t be on motivating employees to do great work; your focus should be on employees feeling great about the work they do. And, thanks to their “people helping people” mantra, credit unions are naturally positioned to deliver on this ideal working environment.

There are many ways you can try to create this optimally effective culture but following these four proven steps will position your culture as a real differentiator for attracting, motivating, and retaining employees:

1. **Staff is inspired by your mission and core values.** This one should be pretty easy since credit unions have a great mission. But too often they stop there and don’t put it forefront in their cultural focus. There are really two components to this piece: 1. Each individual should be inspired by your mission, and 2. Your organization as a team should be supporting the mission. With both components,

communication is key: communicate regularly to employees how what they do day-in and day-out substantiates your mission and how without their contribution your mission would be unfulfilled. Ask yourself: When's the last time you talked to employees (collectively and one-on-one) about their role in living the credit union's mission?

2. **They're confident in their ability to succeed.** Confidence is too often overlooked and ignored when it comes to employee motivation. We're not talking about fleeting confidence that comes from a cheerleading, rah-rah coach; rather, we're talking about the solid self-confidence that comes from intrinsically feeling like someone can, and will, do their job. To build that internal self-confidence, an employee needs to have high levels of knowledge, skills, and practice – all three are critical! Too often we see credit unions invest in knowledge training but short-change training on how it applies to their job and coaching on practicing the use of it. Ask yourself: How often do you do a skills assessment for each role in the credit union to make sure employees maximize the self-confidence they need to succeed consistently and at the highest level?
3. **They feel valued.** It's a natural human emotion to want to be acknowledged and feel appreciated. In order for an organization to create an environment where all employees experience those feelings, concentrated effort needs to be made and that effort must originate at the top. Words are a good place to start – execs need to verbalize how much they value the team's efforts and managers must express similarly positive sentiments in one-on-one coaching sessions. But success in this regard is only achieved when consistent action matches those words. That means, at an individual level, leaders being able to effectively demonstrate high levels of empathy and, at a team level, leaders promoting a safe environment where peer coaching and collaboration is provided on a regular basis. Ask yourself: In what ways do you tell employees that you value them and their contributions?
4. **There are few, if any, roadblocks to success.** Even the most motivated and loyal employee will eventually get frustrated if there are too many roadblocks and hurdles to their success. Nobody likes to jump through hoops or do double work or regularly have to create workarounds to get their job done. For employees to be successful, their tasks should be straight forward and streamlined; easy and painless to complete. Focusing as little as possible on the operational part of their job will free up most employees to focus as much as possible on the productive parts of their job and positions them to be most successful. Clear those roadblocks and an employee is cleared to be highly motivated and productive. Ask yourself: When's the last time you looked at each role in the credit union and assessed how it can be done better, faster, easier?

If your credit union wants to make sure you're creating and solidifying this ideal working environment for your employees, our consultants are poised to help. We can be reached today at www.fi-strategies.com/contact-us.

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