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**LEADERSHIP:
MOTIVATING A TEAM**



MOTIVATING A TEAM

Motivation should always be a primary focus of leadership in any industry, but this is especially true in healthcare where high stress levels and burn out can result in high staff turnover. Good performance is supported by clear job expectations, ongoing education, appropriate supplies and equipment, and constructive criticism. However, while stress levels and burnout are issues all facilities face, highly motivated individuals can overcome a variety of obstacles, including inadequate equipment, personal safety concerns, and less-than-ideal working conditions.

What is Motivation?

Motivation is defined as the processes that account for an individual's intensity, direction and persistence of effort toward attaining a goal.¹ Generally, motivation comes from a need that must be fulfilled. The fulfillment will result in some form of reward, which will either be intrinsic or extrinsic.

Intrinsic rewards come from within the individual and include taking pride and feeling good about a job well-done. Extrinsic rewards are given by an outside person and include such things as bonuses or prizes. The downfall of extrinsic rewards is that they are temporary; no bonus check or acknowledgement will serve to continually inspire staff to perform to their highest potential.² Encouraging internal motivation in staff will result in a stronger long-term sense of satisfaction, happiness and associated productivity on the job.²

Multiple studies have shown that intrinsic motivators usually top the list of what motivates health professionals.¹ The intrinsic motivators create satisfaction by fulfilling an individual's higher needs. However, financial and non-financial incentives influence motivation, and offering both extrinsic and intrinsic forms of incentive may be crucial to success among staff.

Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation involves engaging in a behavior because it is personally rewarding, performing an activity for its own sake rather than the desire for external reward.³ Intrinsic motivators include achievements, work meaningfulness, strong interpersonal relationships, and respect.

The cornerstone of job satisfaction rests on meeting the needs and achieving the goals of both staff and facility, which in turn correlates to the upgrading of quality in service provided.¹ Therefore, encouraging staff to develop intrinsic motivation can improve not only their job performance and satisfaction, but patient or resident experience and the outcomes of the facility as well.

Tips for Encouraging Intrinsic Motivation

- To develop the drive to achieve, nurses need to believe that achievement is possible, which means they need early opportunities for success. The focus should be praising for effort, not just result.
- Ensure opportunities for nurses' success by assigning tasks that are neither too easy nor too difficult. Performance appraisal is ideally about recognizing the direction an individual wishes to pursue so that work assignment reflects those interests.
- Help nurses find personal meaning and value in their work.
- Create an environment that is open and positive, and assist staff in feeling like they are valued members of a learning environment.
- Use good everyday practices to do more to counter apathy in staff, rather than special efforts that directly attack motivation.
- Help nurses evaluate their progress by encouraging them to critique their own work, analyze their strengths, and work on their weaknesses.²

Extrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic motivation occurs when an individual is motivated to perform a task or activity in order to earn a reward or avoid a negative outcome.³

Whether or not extrinsic rewards increase intrinsic motivation is up for debate. Offering rewards can increase motivation, especially in situations where staff have little interest in performing a specific activity, or where basic skills are lacking. Results from rewards will be best if the rewards are kept small and are used to motivate people to acquire new skills or knowledge. Rewards may also be used as a source of feedback so that staff knows when their performance has achieved the desired standard.

Offering excessive rewards, however, can actually decrease intrinsic motivation. Often, once the



reinforcement of the reward is discontinued, the intrinsic motivation to continue the behavior decreases.³ When contemplating the use of extrinsic rewards to influence intrinsic motivation, keep the following tips in mind:

1. Unexpected external rewards typically do not decrease intrinsic motivation.
2. Praise can help increase internal motivation.
3. Intrinsic motivation will decrease when external rewards are given for completing a specific task or only doing minimal work.³

Ideas for Motivating the Nursing Staff

Consider that while job satisfaction and motivation are not the same, both are needed for success. Job satisfaction is the emotional response to a job condition, whereas motivation is the driving force to pursue and satisfy needs.¹ These concepts work hand-in-hand to increase job performance. Organizations can then increase job satisfaction by focusing on the motivating interest of existing and future staff.¹ Aside from creating an extrinsic motivator in the form of a bonus payment program, consider some of the following ideas that will help foster an environment of intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction, and ultimately job performance with staff. Remember that a mix of both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation will drive behavior when used appropriately.

Recognition/Attention

It is easy to point out or complain when something goes wrong; make it a point to celebrate when something goes right! Recognize employees when they accomplish something and make sure they understand that they are appreciated.

One-on-One Coaching

Use this employee development tool to show care for employees, their work, and their well-being. Positive feedback should happen in a public forum to stimulate others into action. Ensure praise is delivered the moment it is earned. The more prompt the feedback, the more effective it is.

Career Path

Consider internal personnel first every time there is a new job opportunity at the facility. This sends the message that there are opportunities for growth within the organization, and motivates employees to work hard to achieve their career path goals.

Good Work Environment

How nice is the work environment? Is it clean, comfortable, and well-lit? A good working environment does not have to be costly to help employees feel good about it.

Team Spirit

Take and post a team photo, or create contests and activities that are team driven. Use visuals such as the photo or a team progress chart to encourage team pride. Scheduled off-site events can also encourage bonding and team spirit. These can be centered around a holiday or a theme, or can be “just because.” If outside events are difficult to schedule, consider on-site snack days or pizza lunches.

Executive Recognition

When an employee or group performs exceptionally well, a personal call or memo from a high-ranking executive provides an extra boost.

Time Off

As the one thing most people never have enough of, time is often a better reward than money. Set goals for teams or individuals to reach, and reward them with early dismissals, late arrivals, or an extended lunch period.

Stress Management

Stress and burnout are legitimate concerns for healthcare workers. Offer seminars or resources to staff that will help them manage stress levels. This lets them know that leadership is aware of and concerned about this issue and wants to assist them as much as possible.

Ask for Feedback

Encouraging staff to speak up about what they see, what they like, and what their biggest challenges are not only helps identify areas of potential improvement, but encourages staff by letting them know that their voice is heard and acknowledged. This can open up the door to more positive communication and less unproductive complaining.

Let Them Lead

Give staff members the opportunity to share their knowledge and expertise with the team by letting them lead staff meetings, research projects, or share experiences for discussion. Staff members from different disciplines may offer short talks about what they do within the organization to help staff from other

departments better understand their roles and encourage inter-professional learning and cooperation.

Keep Personnel Informed

It is difficult to work toward an undefined goal.

Communicate facility and team goals to staff so they see where they fit within the big picture and can assist in working for the goal.⁴

References

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