

MOTIVATION

“Even if you’re on the right track, you’ll get run over if you just sit there.”

– American Railroad Saying

Are you one of those people who buy exercise videos then sits on the couch to watch them? Or you lug all of your books home to work on those papers and assignments that are piling up but never quite get around to opening up your bag? Motivation can be the key to success for any project, individual or group. And a lack thereof can be your biggest downfall. If you feel you – or your group – are not accomplishing as much as you could be, take a step back to look at the situation. Are you personally unmotivated? That can be changed:

- Make a conscious effort. Motivating yourself means more than thinking, “From now on I will be more motivated.” Take it one step further and make a conscious effort to stay focused on tasks through their completion, control the number of activities in which you are involved, and so forth.
- Keep sailing through stormy weather. It is easy to lose interest in a task when obstacles appear. Do not quit! The strongest test of your motivation is your ability to see your goals through adverse conditions.
- Rely on yourself. Do not depend on the encouragement of others to keep you motivated. Learn to encourage yourself by thinking positively, rewarding yourself on your successes and believing your goal is achievable.
- Start your day off right. Begin each day by focusing on what you need to accomplish and prioritize these items. Memorize the top 4-5 items and set out to complete them by the end of the day. Regardless of interruptions, distractions and unplanned occurrences, those 4-5 items are going to get done!
- Challenge yourself. Do not get caught up in a rut at school, work or home. Challenge your abilities and set goals that will allow you to expand and improve your skills.
- What is your utopia? Take a moment to list those things in your personal, professional and educational life that would make your life ideal. Do not limit yourself to what you think you can do this week – dream big! After making your list, write smaller, more specific steps on how to get there.

Maybe your motivation is fine, but you have some group members who could use a bit of a push. There are several ways to get them up and running:

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Set a good example. If members see you are dedicated to the organization and truly want to accomplish great things, this will help them follow suit.

- Develop your members. Help build their self-confidence. Praise them when they achieve goals. Encourage them to take on new responsibilities. Demonstrate your confidence in them.
- Getting to know you. Learn about your members and let them know you are interested in and concerned about them. Do team building activities to get them comfortable with each other. It is harder to let a friend down than a stranger.
- Delegate. Get members actively involved while taking some pressure off of yourself or your executive board.
- Focus. A focused leader results in a focused group. Do not be sidetracked by minor problems; focus on your group's goals and encourage them to do the same.
- Don't abuse them. Do not use threats or unfair treatment to motivate people or you will soon find yourself without a group. Instead, encourage and lead by example.
- Don't focus on personal weaknesses. In fact, pay no attention to them at all. Delegate jobs where strengths really matter, then weaknesses will not even be an issue. Build on their strengths and the weaknesses will either improve or become invisible.

As Dale Carnegie has told us, there is only one way to get anyone to do anything: by making them want to do it. If people believe in, support and are actively involved in the group's mission and goals, they will likely be more motivated to help achieve these goals.

Reference:

Gellerman, S.W. (1994). *Motivating Superior Performance*. Portland, OR: Productivity Press.

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