

Carrot or the stick: Motivating employees
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Employee motivation, do you use a carrot or the stick? Sometimes the answer is not intuitive. In a study done by a famous economics, pizza, not money, motivated folks and boosted productivity.

Being in an employee supply restricted labor environment, we do not have the luxury of a constant and robust candidate pipeline to fall back on. This means that employees have options, and they know it. So, the name of the game has to be how to keep, retain and motivate them so they stay and are productive. Does motivation pay? The answer is yes. Looking at some studies, some show that motivated employees can increase profits by almost 50%.

Can't we just give employees raises? The answer is not that simple. It is understood that the effects of a raise would wear off over time. Raises are certainly an important tool. But, it does create a sense of complacency once the employee gets used to the new standard of living.

Motivation theory has its roots in organizational psychology. One important theory is Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This theory essentially stacks different employee needs on top of each other in a hierarchy, insinuating that an employee cannot climb to the next level without having satisfied that first level. The levels include physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem, and then finally self-actualization. Additional theories of motivation include Herzberg Two Factor theory understanding what drives job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction, Vroom expectancy theory, which seeks to understand how employees relate their benefits to each other, Adams equity theory that states employees rank their perceived inputs (productivity) with their outcomes and compare this to other employees inputs and outputs, and McClelland Three Needs theory that espouses that all employees have three needs- power, affiliation and achievement and can be grouped into each.

A key idea in motivation theory is that what may motivate you may not motivate someone else. You have to understand blind spots and use data techniques to search out what actually is the motivator for the employee. To do this, you have to understand who your employees are. What generation, what personality and what personal motivators drive them. 50% of the workforce is millennial now and so there is a large chance that your employees are mostly millennial. The remaining employees could be Baby Boomers, Gen X or Gen Z. So, understanding the generalized characteristics of each generation is essential. Many of these generational characteristics are driven by stereotypes. It is important to flesh out what events happened during that generation that drove the employees view of the world.

What types of things motivate employees? These can be appreciation, skills development, education, rewards, promotions, responsibilities, achievements, or empowerment. Through understanding what motivates your employee, you can develop strategies that really speak to their inner voices and will stimulate them to do good work.

How do you find this out? You can run a motivation and engagement survey. There are many versions available online. You can find many of these online and develop your own and use a survey program (such as SurveyMonkey) to send this to your team. With the results of that survey you can understand what things (in aggregate) motivate your employees, and filter

down to individual results to understand what drives individual employees. A survey conducted of veterinary employees will be presented in the lecture.

Of things that employees are motivated by, recognition had the highest correlation, followed by promotions. Employees who were satisfied with what their workplace offered for motivation received regular job satisfaction surveys, enjoyed team work, and enjoyed seeing the team succeed. Of the three generations surveyed, Baby boomers were the highest motivated (68%) and millennials were the lowest (61%).

Once you have collected this data, you can then sort the employees into a variety of buckets for what motivates them. If they are motivated by affiliation, you can assign them to committees who find ways to keep them in groups, if they are motivated by achievement you can develop recognition programs to publicly display their accolades.

Employee motivation techniques can be tools to get your teams to be engaged and motivated to work hard. Motivated teams typically have no reason to seek other employment and so practice retention rates go up. In a labor supply constrained environment, we do not have the luxury of thinking employees are on autopilot. Veterinary practices must be diligent about seeking out great talent, and then going to great lengths to motivate and engage the talent to retain them.