

Motivation Is Not a Poster on the Wall

by Denis Waitley

Motivation is a contraction of motive and action. An inner force that compels behavior, it comes from within, not from any external circumstance. Studies of achievers show that inner drives for excellence and independence are far more powerful than desire for wealth, status or recognition. You know where you're going because you have a compelling image inside, not a poster on the wall, a financial statement with a big bonus, or a slogan in the hall.

The Inner Drive

Behavioral scientists have found that independent desire for excellence is the most telling predictor of significant achievement. In other words, the success of our efforts depends less on the efforts themselves than on our motives. The most successful companies, like the most successful men and women in almost all fields, have achieved their greatness out of a desire to express what they felt had to be expressed. Often it was a desire to use their skills to their utmost in order to solve a problem. This is not to say that many of them did not also earn a great deal of money and prestige. People like Estee Lauder, Walt Disney, Oprah Winfrey, Sam Walton and Bill Gates earned a great deal of money and prestige for their innovation, but the key to their success was the inner drive to provide excellence in a product or a service. They were motivated by the desire to produce the very best that was in them.

Go for the Inner Applause

The late Ray Kroc, a former neighbor of mine who founded McDonald's Corporation when he was in his fifties, stressed the importance of people working for the inner satisfaction, not just for the money. Ray said most people find it difficult to associate applause with their work when they can't hear literal applause—but the important applause should come from within. It is the faster heartbeat, the pride and satisfaction of accomplishment.

Kroc told the University of Southern California's Business School that the first thing a business executive needs is love of an idea.

If you don't love your concept, drop it. If you prostitute yourself at an early age by taking a job where the money is, you'll be working for money all your life. Loving their work is particularly important for younger people. If they lose that love early, they may never grow to anywhere near their potential for self-actualization.

Hire People Who Have Empowered Themselves

An inner drive for excellence motivates you always to be the best you possibly can in whatever you do. Leaders and managers should take special note here. They must be careful in their use of external motivators—money, perks, prestigious offices and titles—in trying to inspire their team members and employees. Enduring motivation must always come ultimately from within the individual.

That's why empowerment and vision are so crucial to team performance and quality. Their power and their vision, not those of the leader must compel team members. Interviewing potential members, you should look for internally motivated individuals who hold their work important for its own sake, who love their field or their industry, who seek the exhilaration of testing their limits and contributing to the world. Be wary if they show more interest in your compensation package than in their contribution package.

Commit to achieving peak performance and leadership by motivating yourself from within!