



turning managers into leaders

Merge's Monthly Mega Minute – January 2005

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Merge Gupta-Sunderji helps turn managers into leaders. Through engaging keynotes and facilitated workshops, she gives people specific and practical tools to achieve leadership and communication success. Contact her at www.mergespeaks.com or 403-605-4756

What does it take to motivate employees?

Here's one answer, first put forward in the mid-1960's. This premise says that an employee is motivated to exert a high level of effort when he/she believes three things. One, that the effort will lead to good performance. Two, good performance will lead to a reward. And three, the reward is of value and will satisfy his/her personal goals.

Consider this example: your boss tells you that if you double your sales in the next six months, you'll get a \$1 million bonus. Your first reaction: no matter how much effort I put in, there's no way I can double sales in the next six months. In other words, the effort cannot lead to good performance. Your second reaction: there is no way the company can afford to give me a \$1 million bonus. So, good performance cannot result in the reward. Your third reaction: I sure could do a lot of wonderful things with \$1 million! Or, I certainly value a reward of \$1 million. Even though you value the reward, you will not be motivated to try to double your sales in the next six months because the other two factors are not present. In the psychological literature, these three things are called expectancy, instrumentality, and valence, respectively.

So what does that mean to you as a leader? If you can improve the three factors, you can increase motivation. Improve expectancy: make sure that employees have the skills and training they need, and assign reasonable tasks and goals. Improve instrumentality: observe and recognize good performance, and deliver rewards as promised. Improve valence: ask employees what rewards they value, and give it to them. The bottom line: improve the three factors, and watch motivation levels soar!