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Understanding Motivation

■ PICTURE THIS

This morning, like so many mornings, I (Rosie) found myself, once again, running late for work. In a panic, I remembered that I had to let our five-year-old golden retriever, Hercules, outside one last time or he wouldn't make it until Bob or I got home from work. Without thinking, I opened the door to let him out. As soon as I did, Hercules whizzed right by me.

Hercules was gone in a flash! He had found freedom! I had forgotten to put the leash on him. Since the battery on his collar was dead, our electric fence would not keep him in our yard. Bummer!

As I ran out the door, calling him back, I realized it was no use. Hercules was already halfway to the end of our yard. I yelled to him, "Hercules! Come home, Hercules!" He stopped, turned around, gave me that look that says, "That's what you think," and then quickly turned his attention past the edge of our yard. With a burst of speed, he raced toward the street.

My heart sank. "There is no way I am going to get to school on time now," I thought, as my mind instantly began to race. I tried to think about how I was going to catch Hercules and get him back inside the house. A task easier said than done.

First, I grabbed his favorite treats. By the time I tried to show them to him, he was too far away. I ran back inside to grab his favorite ball. I raced back outside, squeezing it and yelling to get his attention. Hercules was, by now, on the sidewalk, racing down the street. He heard the squeak of the ball, a sound that will usually bring him running right back to play—but not today. He just looked back, giving the ball a quick flash, and without missing a beat, kept right on running down the street to the end of the cul-de-sac.

The only other thing I could think of that might entice him to come home was the car. Hercules loves riding in the car. I raced back inside, got my car keys and his leash. I unlocked and opened the car door, yelling his name, once again. "Hercules, let's go for a ride."

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Hercules, who by now was clear down at the end of our street sniffing the grass, just looked up and flashed me a look that said, "No, thank you. Not today." He wasn't interested in the car. He found freedom.

To make a long story short, I had to get into my car, drive down to the end of the street, open the car door, pat the seat and call his name. Hercules could see that he was going to get a real ride and enthusiastically jumped into the front seat. Little did he know how short the ride home was going to be!

■ WE ALL HAVE OUR PRICE

All of us are a bit like Hercules. We love our freedom, but ultimately other people can find ways to motivate and entice us to do what they want or need us to do. By probing, they soon discover what it takes. All of us have our price.

For some of us, we will do something for someone else because we like that person and want to "make their day" or show them how much we care. Other times, we hold out for money, chocolate, dinner and a movie, or something else that we want or need. We bargain. We barter. We find ways to bribe.

Sometimes we can find the right motivator to get someone to do what we want them to do. Other times, we can't. A motivator that works once or twice may not work a third time.

Ever since Eve searched for ways to get Adam to take a bite of the apple, people have searched for ways to get others to do what they want them to do. I can open a car door, as I discovered with Hercules, but I can't make him run and get inside. People, like Hercules, can't be forced to do what someone else wants them to do, unless they choose to do it.

Madeline Hunter (1982), an educational professor at UCLA who was most known for her work on mastery teaching, once said, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink. But, you can salt his oats!" She was talking about finding ways that would get students and/or teachers motivated enough to want to do something. Opening the door of an idling car in front of the neighbor's yard for Hercules was enough to "salt his oats."

We all look for ways to "salt the oats" and get people to do what we want them to do. As a wife, I look for ways to get Bob to take out the trash and take me out to dinner so I don't have to cook. As a husband, Bob tries to get me to cook at home so we have time to watch a movie after dinner before we go to bed. Often we compromise, and order in a pizza and watch a movie!

As administrators and staff developers, we want teachers to use what they have learned during inservice training in their classroom with their students. Or we want them to administer the required student assessments, complete the forms, and submit them to the central office before the due date. So, how do we *make them* do it? Better yet, how do we *make them* enjoy it and want to do it? What are the motivators, "the oats," and how do we "salt" them to get people to do what we want them to do?

Oh, if only it were that simple.

■ WHAT IS MOTIVATION?

As we said in the introduction, when people talk about motivation, most often they are talking about “how to get someone to do what they want them to do.” Or, “How can I make myself do ____?” For me, it is often finding a way to *make myself* get out of bed and run three miles before going to work. Trust me, I would much rather lie in bed and sleep that extra forty-five minutes!

Motivation is often defined as giving yourself or someone else a reason or an incentive to do something. To get myself out of bed to run in the morning, for example, I promise myself all kinds of things, such as, I will look thinner, I will feel better, or I can eat chips for lunch and drink wine with dinner.

Motivation can also be a feeling, an interest in, or an enthusiasm for behaving in a particular way. It has to do with how committed a person is to completing a task and how good he or she feels about doing it. I always feel good after I have finished my run. It is probably the “runner’s high” after those endorphins kick in or the songs I listen to with my iPod that help me lose track of time and get into the groove of running. I have often wondered how I can capture that same feeling and enthusiasm when I have to go outside and pull weeds. Since I grew up on a nursery and spent most of my Saturdays and summers hoeing and weeding, I have to really “psych” myself up and promise myself all kinds of rewards to be able to put on my gloves and grab my hoe. Yet other people find this type of work relaxing and fulfilling.

So why is it that some people find some activities rewarding, and some people loathe the same activity? Why is it that sometimes people can successfully complete a task or achieve their goals, and other times they don’t?

There are many individual characteristics that influence motivation. For example, years of experience, age, level of knowledge and skill, efficacy, and locus of control all have an affect on a teacher’s motivation. Likewise, characteristics related to the context and current situation, such as alignment, values, beliefs, trust, interest, enjoyment, curiosity, fun, challenge, etc., also help to determine how much effort a teacher is willing to put forth on a particular project, goal, or activity.

Although many administrators and school leaders describe their colleagues and subordinates as being “lazy,” “unsupportive,” “unwilling,” “uncooperative,” or “unmotivated,” there is really no such thing as an “unmotivated” person. What those leaders really mean is that their colleagues will not do what they want, need, or expect them to do. Even if a person does not get out of bed in the morning, he or she is still acting on his or her own personal goal (not getting out of bed), whether or not others approve of their behavior. We may not always agree with what the other person is doing, but individuals are the keepers of their own motivation. Try as we might, *we can’t change people if they don’t want to be changed, and we can’t make people do what we want them to do if they don’t want to do it!*

Thus, the question is not how can we make people do what we want them to do? We can’t. The real question is, how can we create the conditions that will inspire and intrinsically motivate others to accomplish the school’s vision and mission and achieve optimal performance and results?

■ THEORIES ABOUT MOTIVATION

There are many different theories about how to motivate people. One need only visit a library or bookstore to see the numerous volumes that have been written on the topic of motivation. Like diet books, the different theories about how to motivate others are ubiquitous, diverse, and often incompatible with one another. Psychologists have never reached agreement about how best to motivate others. Likewise, educators find themselves debating this very same topic.

Most teachers hope that their students find the unit of study and assignments so enthralling that they naturally and intrinsically gravitate toward learning and doing the work. The reality is that there are many topics that students find boring, uninteresting, unstimulating, unchallenging, and simply “not worth putting forth the effort.” So teachers find themselves looking for those “positive reinforcers” they can use to entice, coerce, and reward students (the carrot) and when that fails, they fall back on sanctions such as keeping students in at recess or threatening a failing grade (the stick).

Administrators use the same tactics with staff members. They pay teachers to serve on committees, attend workshops, or attend training sessions outside of school hours. Those teachers who work hard to achieve school or district goals may find that the principal is willing to send them to a conference, approve additional items for their classrooms, write personal thank you notes, praise them in their newsletters, or write positive evaluations and put them in the employee’s personnel files. For those teachers who appear to be “unresponsive” and “unmotivated” toward accomplishing the school’s goals and mission, the administrator applies sanctions, such as withholding resources or placing a negative evaluation in his or her personnel file.

All too often, educators, looking for that “quick fix,” find themselves in the age-old battle of which to use, the carrot or the stick. In reality, however, neither works well for long, nor are extrinsic rewards and sanctions going to help create the conditions that encourage and inspire others to motivate themselves and achieve optimal performance.

■ THE CARROTS

As soon as behavioral psychology is mentioned, most educators can immediately visualize a clear picture of the experiments Pavlov conducted with his dog to better understand natural responses, reflexes, and classical conditioning. Likewise, B. F. Skinner’s initial operant conditioning experiments with rats and his later work with behaviorism provided the foundation for reinforcement theory. Even today, with all of the current research being conducted in the area of cognitive psychology, educators as well as those in corporate America still use positive and negative consequences and rewards. Behavior modification and reinforcement theory are still the basis for many classroom management and discipline programs being used by educators and parents. In spite of the fact experience has taught us that rewards and sanctions are not effective motivators over time, we still search for that “quick fix” and the one carrot that we can dangle that might make the difference.

Stickers for students, raffle tickets for participants, pay for teachers, and other extrinsic rewards will work for a while. But they soon lose their power to motivate and control behavior. What once was interesting and fun is no longer intrinsically rewarding. Like Hercules, people soon want more, and their price goes up. When the resources are gone, or the reward is withheld, people find something else to do with their time and energy.

Alfie Kohn (1993) presents his case against what he calls “pop behaviorism,” a prevalent culture in our society of “Do this, and you will get that.” He provides research-based arguments and evidence to demonstrate that rewards are not effective in changing behavior over time or for improving and enhancing performance. Kohn explains that in a token economy program “when the goodies stop, people go right back to acting the way they did before the program began” (p. 38). In fact, Kohn goes further by stating that:

The troubling truth is that rewards and punishments are not opposites at all; they are two sides of the same coin. And it is a coin that does not buy very much. . . . Moreover, the long-term use of either tactic describes the very same pattern; eventually we will need to raise the stakes and offer more and more treats or threaten more and more sanctions to get people to continue acting the way we want. (p. 50)

Kohn describes, in detail, five reasons why rewards (or carrots) do not work, and why we should use intrinsic interest and motivation for a task or activity rather than using behaviorism. His five reasons for not using rewards are: (1) rewards punish, (2) rewards rupture relationships, (3) rewards ignore reasons, (4) rewards discourage risk taking, and (5) rewards undermine interest.

There is no direct relationship between extrinsic motivation and the desired behavior except the sought-after reward. Most people are eager to volunteer and complete a task when the work is challenging, meaningful, and purposeful. When, however, these same people perceive the work to be boring, routine, difficult, or distasteful, they are less likely to jump right in and work unless there is some form of compensation or reward.

We have become a token economy and a culture of people who tune into station WIFM—“What’s In It For Me.” If we do not see a personal benefit, purpose, challenge, or desire for an activity, most of us will not engage in the activity unless the reward (or sanction) becomes greater and more meaningful to us than the task itself. Once we have entered into this phase, forget it. We are no longer doing it for joy and pleasure. We are doing it “for the money” and/or because we “feel we must”!

We agree with Kohn when he writes:

Behaviorism has made a substantial impact on the way we think about our work and the way we do it. But the specific programs it has wrought, such as incentive plans, do not and cannot bring about the results we want. . . . [W]e ought to face the troubling fact that manipulating behavior by offering reinforcements may be a sound approach for training the family pet but not for bringing quality to the workplace. (p. 141)

Even with Hercules, we have found that even his favorite rewards don't always work!

■ THE STICKS

It hasn't been that long since teachers and principals hung paddles on their walls. In fact, many adults who attended school in the 50s, 60s, and 70s still tell stories of either being whacked with a 3-inch wide paddle with holes in it or watching others being swatted in front of their classmates. Some people remember being slapped with a ruler across their hands when they held a pencil in the wrong position or used their left hand instead of their right hand. Most of us, at one time or another, can remember having to stay in at recess because our work wasn't finished on time, or we had to redo a paper because it was "sloppy" and not our best work.

Even though we swore as children, "We would never be like them," when we can't get others to do what we want them to do, we catch ourselves behaving just like our parents and teachers did. We revert back to those models we saw others using, even when most of us know in our hearts that those punishment strategies were not effective. We remember hiding school papers so our parents wouldn't find out about a bad grade, sneaking cookies and candy even though we would ruin our dinner, or lying about whom we were seeing or where we had been. It made us feel guilty, and we swore that when we were grown up and in charge, things would be different.

Yet, when seduction with rewards no longer works, we resort to coercion and sanctions. For example, a father grounds his son because he did not come home before his curfew, or a teacher keeps a student in from recess to complete her work. An administrator may write negative comments on a teacher's evaluation when she still, after attending several trainings, has not posted the essential questions on her classroom walls.

We know sanctions and coercion will work, but only for short periods of time, and only as long as we know that "big brother is watching." For example, what driver hasn't had pangs of fear when she is cruising down the highway at breakneck speeds and spies a police officer on his motorcycle pointing his radar gun at all the cars whizzing past? The tense driver slams on her brakes as she speeds by. Once past the motorcycle cop, euphoria replaces her fear and her tense body relaxes as she realizes that the police officer was pointing his radar gun at the cars traveling in the opposite direction. She may continue to drive slowly for the next few minutes, but soon she is back to her breakneck speeds, having forgotten all about the speed trap.

If the driver sees a police officer tracking speed with radar in this same spot several times, she may begin to slow down upon her approach "just in case." Of course, if by chance, this same driver had been ticketed in this area, she will be especially cautious upon her approach to this same spot. When she gets to the spot and sees an officer, she may smile to herself and say, "Thank goodness I was paying attention and slowed down today." But, seeing no one, the same driver is likely to speed up and continue on her merry way, thankful that no one was there. Whether or not the driver gets caught and ticketed, along with how many consecutive days the driver sees an officer in the same spot with his radar gun pointed at cars,

will ultimately determine how soon the driver will forget all about this radar spot and simply cruise right past without regard to the speed limit.

Staff developers, like teachers, understand that proximity works. If participants or students are not paying attention, they have only to continue the conversation while moving close to that student to get his attention or walk over to a group of off-task participants to stop the conversation about where they are going to have lunch. Often proximity is all it takes to get people back on task and to coerce them into doing what you want them to do.

Like highway speeders vigilant of radar traps, teachers have learned to close their doors to hide the use of strategies they feel comfortable with or teach topics that they enjoy or feel will benefit their students, even when it is not part of the curriculum. Administrators, who have been frustrated for years by teachers who close their doors and “do their own thing,” use proximity to control teacher behavior and counter the “closed-door syndrome.” Administrators caught in this vicious cycle find themselves trusting teachers less. They show this by frequent walk-throughs and observations, as well as closer supervision strategies such as collecting teachers’ lesson plans, reading every notice a teacher sends home, and interviewing students about what happens in the classroom. They tighten “the ropes” by providing pacing guides, scripted programs, and other forms of control.

Ultimately the school administrator is “the boss.” Administrators can—through reprimands, coercion, threats, and sanctions—make staff members “do what they want them to do.” But, like the highway speeder, this only suppresses the staff members’ behavior and may, in fact, initiate other behaviors such as withholding, concealing, sabotaging, hostile aggression, and/or passive-aggressive actions. Coercion and sanctions only work for so long. In the end, someone wins and someone loses. Someone stays and someone leaves. Either the teacher chooses to change, or the teacher chooses or is forced to find another teaching position.

The critical point we want to make about the use of carrots and sticks is that extrinsic motivators, both sanctions and rewards, do not work! They may suppress or encourage behavior temporarily. But once the fear from the threat of punishment or the promise of the reward is withheld, people revert back to their original behavior. No matter what you try to do, in the end *you can’t make a person do what they are not willing to do!*

As Kohn (1993) explains:

Reinforcements do not generally alter the attitudes and emotional commitments that underlie our behaviors. They do not make deep, lasting changes because they are aimed at affecting only what we do. . . . What rewards and punishments do is induce compliance, and this they do very well indeed. If your objective is to get people to obey an order, to show up on time, and do what they’re told, then bribing or threatening them may be sensible strategies. But if your objective is to get long-term quality in the workplace, to help students become careful thinkers and self-directed learners, or to support children in developing good values, then rewards, like punishments, are absolutely useless. (p. 41–42)

So, if not the carrot or the stick, how do you create the conditions that inspire and intrinsically motivate others to accomplish our morally compelling mission and achieve optimal performance and results?

■ COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Cognitive psychologists look at how people perceive the world and believe that this has an influence on how they behave. For example, Peter Senge (1990) uses this concept to explain how our mental models and our perceptions shape the world we live in and affect our assumptions and the choices we make. The differences between mental models explain how two people can observe the same event and yet describe it in very different ways. One need only ask a Yankee fan and a Red Sox fan to describe the final game in the 2004 American League Championship to hear the difference in the details and perceptions. Senge, McCabe, Lucas, and Kleiner (2000) state that, "In any new experience, most people are drawn to take in and remember only the information that reinforces their existing mental models" (p. 67). Mental models, they continue, "limit people's ability to change" (p. 67).

In her book, *The Winner's Way* (2004), Dr. Pam Brill, the founder and president of In The Zone, Inc., explains how the chemical reactions in our brain affect the "3 A's": *activation* (the physiological and physical part of your experience); *attention* (choices you make from your internal and external world that become part of your personal reality); and *attitude* (your guiding beliefs, values, and assumptions). Brill writes:

Existing between the things that happen to you and how you respond, these three elements are the result of the unique way your brain is formed and the distinctive chemical balance resulting from the "things that happen" to you. The 3 A's are what you feel when your brain and body collaborate to produce thousands of natural chemical reactions in response to the multitude of things you encounter, including the thoughts you generate. The 3 A's collaborate to determine what you perceive and how you view it—good, bad, neutral, or marvelous. (p. ix)

Brill goes on to explain that even though people may be coping with situations that are sad, frightening, and even dangerous, when the 3 A's are aligned and in good personal fit with the situation, people can achieve their desired goals and feel at their best. Likewise, when there is a mismatch between the 3 A's and the situation, people are likely to become depressed, show apathy, irritability, and are less likely to achieve their desired goals and outcomes.

Brill writes:

The brain is the control center for receiving and interpreting information from the external and internal world. It starts with attention. From the vast array of information swirling outside and in, you select, either consciously or as a passive passenger, items that become the objects of your attention. . . . Because each of us is hard-wired differently and operating with a different set of software

(attitudes), each individual will be attracted to particular types of information, find others distracting or trivial, and be overwhelmed or underwhelmed at a different personal set point. (p. 91)

In order to live in the area that top athletes call *the zone*, (or Csikszentmihalyi (1997) calls *flow*, Maslow (1998) calls *self-actualization*, and we call *optimal performance*), Brill claims that each person must use their “power of will” to adjust and align their 3 A’s with each new situation. In other words, people must learn to reframe and adjust their thinking, mental models, and assumptions. They must also take responsibility and be accountable for their own actions and choices. Instead of blaming others for doing things to them (external locus of control), people living *in the zone* realize that they have the *free will* to make the choices that will put them in control of their 3 A’s.

Often, when cognitive psychologists describe motivation, they usually refer to what is called “cognitive attribution theory” or “expectancy theory.” Expectancy theory says that for an incentive to be meaningful and motivational, people must make a connection between what they do and what they get. The performance must be connected to the payoff. If teachers do not believe that a particular program or educational strategy will improve their students’ learning, they are going to be reluctant to use that program or strategy. Most teachers are going to want to see proof that the extra work required to learn to use the program is going to make a difference. When they see the results and buy into the program, watch out! Most educators will take it and run. But, all too often, teachers become saboteurs when the innovation is perceived to be either more of the same or extra work with no benefit. Teachers need to see the connection between what they do and the benefits and/or reward gained from their efforts.

In addition, educators must feel competent about their work. Often they are reluctant to try something if they are afraid that they will not be able to perform at the required or expected level. Teachers, who are usually willing to attend conferences and learning activities, may be unwilling to participate when they find out that they are expected to bring back what they have learned and train the rest of the teachers in their school. This is especially true if these teachers who love to learn are uncomfortable getting up and speaking in front of their peers. Or it could be that these teachers are afraid that if they go off and learn something, they may not be able to be an expert in the short amount of time before they need to teach the skill to others. This happens more than we would like to think, when schools and districts send teachers or administrators to conferences and workshops with the expectation that they will teach others. Literacy teachers, for example, are often sent to a training on how to retell stories, how to help students with written responses to text questions, or how to measure student progress using a particular assessment tool. The expectation after the training is that they provide instruction or model the strategy or tool for teachers with follow-up coaching, even if, as is often the case, the literacy teacher has not had ample opportunity to practice the strategy or use the assessment tool herself.

Expectancy theory is also based on an educator’s self-esteem or the degree to which the educator takes pride in his job and achievement. It is also dependent upon the educator’s self-efficacy or the ability in which he perceives the work he is doing is making a difference. Teachers with a high

sense of self-efficacy believe that they can help all students, including the difficult and challenging students. Teachers with a low sense of self-efficacy believe that there are any number of external factors that get in the way of helping all students learn. These external factors include but are not limited to poverty, parents who are uncooperative or unsupportive, and students who are unmotivated. Teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to hold high expectations for all students and also hold students accountable for accomplishing their work. Teachers with low self-efficacy are more likely to criticize their students, make excuses for their students, expect less, and even give up on them.

To find an effective incentive to motivate educators, leaders who apply expectancy theory must identify the degree to which the teacher values the incentive, the degree to which they perceive their performance will lead to the desired outcome, and the degree to which they can successfully perform and achieve the required outcome. The incentive is therefore equal to the educator’s self-efficacy, self-esteem, ability, and belief that his/her performance is worth the effort and that he/she can successfully achieve the intended outcome.

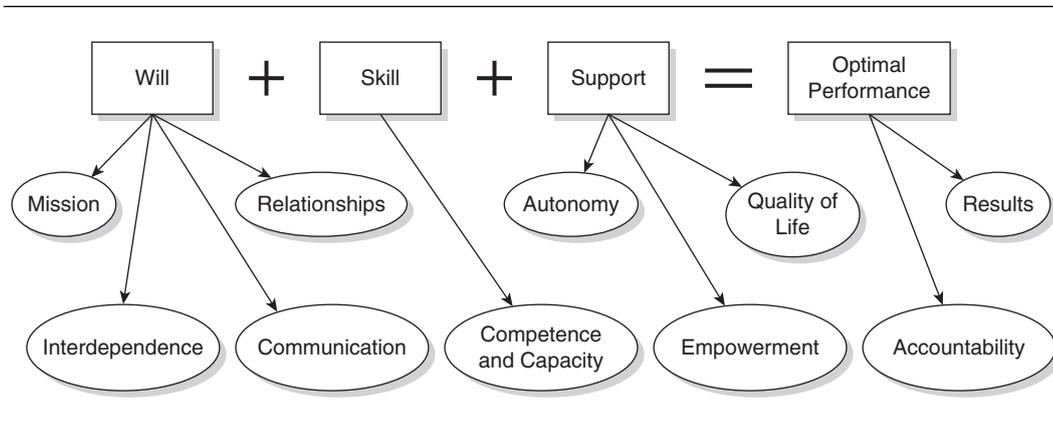
Cognitive attribution theory states that for people to achieve success they must: (1) be willing to put forth effort (motivation), (2) have the knowledge and skills to do the job (competence), and (3) have a supportive environment that provides the resources necessary to do the work (quality of life within the organization). In other words:

$$\text{WILL} + \text{SKILL} + \text{SUPPORT} = \text{SUCCESS}$$

If teachers, for example: (1) are willing to implement and use an intervention strategy or program because they believe that it will help their students learn, (2) have been adequately trained in “how to” implement the innovation, and (3) are given sufficient resources and ample time to practice in a risk-free environment to support the program—then there is a strong probability that they will be able to make the program work and help their students achieve.

Figure 1.1 shows how the ten motivational strategies to create high-performing collegial learning communities and lead to optimal performance are aligned with the cognitive attribution theory.

Figure 1.1 Will Plus Skill



■ WHAT IS OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE?

Suppose, for a moment, that you are picnicking at your favorite lake with several of your best friends. The lake is smooth as glass, and there is not a cloud in the sky. The sun is already hot, even though it is only 9:00 A.M. in the morning. Anticipation swells inside you as you struggle to put on your water skis and untangle the ski rope as the boat pulls away. You are oblivious to the chilling temperature of the water as you grip the rope and feel the gentle pull of tension.

“Hit it!” you scream. Your best friend gives the boat the full throttle, and in a flash, you are up on your feet, kicking off one ski and jumping the wake on either side of the boat. You laugh with pleasure as you glide from side to side, pulling back and racing forward, completely engaged in the activity. Your concentration is at its peak. Somewhere in your unconscious mind, you are aware of the boat, your skis, and the changing scenery. But all of your focus, your total being, is on your performance and achieving your goal of a perfect ride.

As the boat pulls you around the corner, the shore looms into view. As you ski close to the edge, immersed in the joy of the activity, you let out one last thunderous scream, wishing that you could hold on to this moment forever. Instead, you let go of the rope, gliding to shore, knowing that you nailed it!

If water skiing is not your thing, select your favorite activity and replace it with the water skiing scenario. It can be reading a good book, a game of chess, sharing a cup of coffee with a good friend, gardening, jogging, walking your dog, playing the guitar, or anything that you love to do.

At times like these, when you are totally immersed within an activity, when all of the elements of the experience are in harmony with each other, and when the activity or task you are engaged in becomes its own reward, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1997) says you are in a state of *flow*. Csikszentmihalyi writes:

These exceptional moments are what I have called *flow experiences*. The metaphor of *flow* is one that many people have used to describe the sense of effortless action they feel in moments that stand out as the best in their lives. Athletes refer to it as being *in the zone*, religious mystics as being in *ecstasy*, artists and musicians as *aesthetic rapture*. (p. 29)

We call it optimal performance.

Csikszentmihalyi goes on to define the flow experience in the following way:

When goals are clear, feedback relevant, and challenges and skills are in balance, attention becomes ordered and fully invested. Because of the total demand on psychic energy, a person in flow is completely focused. There is no space in consciousness for distracting thoughts, irrelevant feelings. Self-consciousness disappears, yet one feels stronger than usual. The sense of time is distorted; hours seem to pass by in minutes. When a person’s entire being is stretched in the full functioning of body and mind, whatever one does becomes worth doing for its own sake; living becomes its own justification. In the harmonious focusing of physical and psychic energy, life finally comes into its own.

It is the full involvement of flow, rather than happiness that makes for excellence in life. When we are in flow, we are not happy, because to experience happiness we must focus on our inner states, and that would take away attention from the task at hand. . . . Only after the task is completed do we have the leisure to look back on what has happened, and then we are flooded with gratitude for the excellence of that experience—then, in retrospect, we are happy. . . . The happiness that follows flow is of our own making, and it leads to increasing complexity and growth in consciousness. (p. 31–32).

If a person is to continue to achieve the state of *flow*, he or she must continue to learn and develop his knowledge and skills and to face ever-increasing complexity and demanding challenges. It takes a great deal of energy to continue to build capacity. When we are bored and apathetic, we are unable or unwilling to put forth the effort to complete the challenge. Likewise, if we are too worried or anxious to face the task, we find ways to cope and avoid the challenge. For teachers, this may mean closing their doors and doing what they have always done, the same way they have always done it.

Csikszentmihalyi says that the more work takes on flow-like characteristics, the more people will get involved and enjoy what they are doing. When workers understand the goals and expectations, possess the knowledge and skills to complete the task, receive specific and explicit feedback, and are met with few distractions and a sense of autonomy, the “feelings it provides are not that different from what one experiences in a sport or an artistic performance” (p. 38). The more people tend to be in the state of flow, the happier, more motivated, and productive they become.

Educators are likely to experience a sense of flow when they are immersed in complex activities that serve a greater purpose, such as helping students learn, and when they can see the results of their work (their students’ achievement). At times like these, they experience some of their happiest and most productive moments. If you ask teachers why they teach, most of them will tell you it is from the joy of watching their students learn. Teachers often talk excitedly about the “ah ha” experience, when the light bulb suddenly goes on inside a student’s head, after days of struggling to help a student achieve the learning goals. Or they may find themselves engaged in flow-like activities while being so immersed in their lab experiment or art lesson that they are suddenly and unexpectedly jolted back into reality by the sound of the bell marking the end of the period.

The amount of time a person experiences flow depends on what counts as a flow experience. If we count only those moments of the “most intense and exalted flow experiences, then their frequency would be rare” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 33). If we are willing to count “even mild approximations of the ideal condition as instances of flow” (p. 33), it will occur much more frequently.

Like Csikszentmihalyi has done with *flow*, numerous experts and writers have given definition to a euphoric state or condition in which an individual is engaged in an action, work, or activity in which he or she is able to

complete the task and achieve the goal to his or her highest level and potential. The activity or task itself, based on an innate sense and/or morally compelling purpose, is its own reward.

For example, in the psychological realm, one of the most familiar terms, *self-actualization*, was coined by Abraham Maslow. According to Maslow (1998), a person achieves self-actualization when he or she finds that the activity or work they are engaged in provides its own satisfaction. It brings self-fulfillment and its own sense of self-achievement. The work is its own reward. People at this state recognize their individual strengths and potential and do all they can to become everything that they are capable of being. For example, a musician plays the piano for his own enjoyment or to share his passion of music with others.

Stephen Covey's *The 8th Habit* (2004), "Find your voice and inspire others to find theirs" describes how leaders can help others to achieve this state by *first finding your own voice* and then inspiring others *to find their voices*. To do this, he asks readers to think about life in this simple way:

A whole person (body, mind, heart, and spirit) with four basic needs (to live, to learn, to love, to leave a legacy), and four intelligences or capacities (physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual) and their highest manifestations (discipline, vision, passion, conscience), all of which represent the four dimensions of voice (need, talent, passion, and conscience). . . . As we respect, develop, integrate, and balance these intelligences and their highest manifestations, the synergy between them lights *the fire within* us and we find our voice. (p. 84)

Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) metaphor for flow, that "sense of effortless action" a person feels "in moments that stand out as the best in their lives" (p. 29) is the concept behind the terms *self-actualization*, *peak performance*, *flow experiences*, *getting your groove*, *living in the zone*, *aesthetic rapture*, and *finding your voice*. In other words, these terms represent *individuals* enthralled in an activity in which they effortlessly actualize and perform to their highest potential to achieve desired results.

■ OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE DEFINED

The way in which we define optimal performance uses that same metaphor, but pushes the concept into yet another dimension. We define *optimal performance* as *the state in which individuals within the school community are enthralled in complex, job-embedded educational work and learning experiences that serve a greater purpose, have a clear and specific focus, provide knowledge and feedback about the results of educator effort, intrinsically captivate educator attention, are balanced between the challenge of the activity and the knowledge and skill of the individual, and clearly make a difference in helping all students achieve personalized and collective learning goals*. Optimal performance consists of a stream of flow-like experiences within a school setting that empower interdependent, high-performing collegial learning communities to collaboratively and successfully accomplish their shared, morally compelling mission (work).

It just isn't enough for educators to engage themselves in teaching and learning activities that are interesting, fun, exciting, and at the correct level of difficulty. It isn't just about water skiing, playing chess, or reading a good book. There are several critical attributes within our definition of optimal performance, which push it into the next dimension.

First, educators are *enthralled* (completely focused and captivated) in *complex, job-embedded educational work and learning experiences*. The flow-like experiences arise from the day-to-day work and the learning from the work that teachers are doing in much the same way as a surgeon might find in an emergency operating room when he is able to use his knowledge, skills, previous experiences, and learning in-the-moment to save a patient's life.

Secondly, these work experiences or activities must be helping to *serve a greater purpose* and *clearly make a difference* in the lives of student(s) and help to forward the *shared, morally compelling mission* (important work) of the school. For example, it isn't about teaching what a single teacher feels is important, but making sure that students learn and achieve the benchmarks, standards, and outcomes that have been defined by either the school, the district, the state, or the country. It is about "the big picture" and working toward a common good.

Last, and most important, it is about empowering an interdependent school community to collaborate and work together collegially on successfully accomplishing the shared, morally compelling mission. That is not to say that teachers do not still plan their own individual lessons, although they can collaborate on units, lessons, and common assessments. It doesn't mean that everyone has to team teach or teach the same lesson on the same day or in the same way. It does, however, mean that if educators are to achieve optimal performance, that they are empowered to do the work that will help the school community achieve its mission, given the latitude to make precise choices about how they go about the work to best meet the personalized needs of the students in their classrooms (Fullan, Hill, & Crévola, 2006), and are held accountable and responsible for successfully achieving the desired results. The critical attribute that makes this different is positive interdependence—not one of us, or a few of us but all of us have the shared responsibility for achieving our compelling school's mission.

As leaders, if we want the educators within our schools to achieve *optimal performance*, it makes sense that we discover ways to create the conditions that afford our teachers the ability to perform at their highest levels as frequently as possible. To do this, we, as leaders, must be explicit and direct about creating and implementing the conditions to energize, motivate, inspire, and lead others in this age of the knowledge worker.

The time has come to recognize, respect, and utilize the knowledge and skills of all educators. We must retire the carrot-and-stick management strategies used to control the work of our teachers and students. As school leaders, we must inspire and empower educators as we tap into their creativity, talent, and expertise. Most important, we must create the conditions that allow us to recognize and release the potential of all educators and create high-performing collegial learning communities. The optimal performance model that we describe throughout the remainder of this book will help administrators and school leaders do just that.

■ OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE MODEL

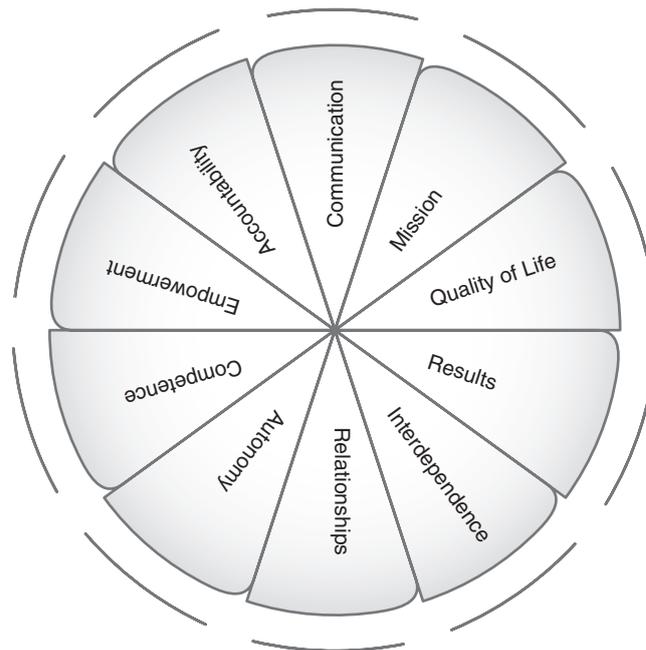
The ten motivational strategies that we describe later in this book, in detail, are based upon our extensive knowledge, experiences, and research on motivation. These motivational strategies provide the framework for our *optimal performance model*. They are the critical components that will help school administrators and leaders create the conditions to meet the individual and collective needs of all individuals within their school community, release the human potential, and attain a level of *optimal performance* to successfully achieve the school community's morally compelling mission.

Unlike many models, the optimal performance model is not hierarchical. That being said, however, we do suggest that school leaders begin by creating a quality of life, as we describe in Chapter 3. Just as Maslow (1998), Glasser (1998a, 1998b), and others recognize that the basic survival needs must be in place before people can move to other levels of motivation, we believe that the quality of life must be in place before staff members will be able to move to other levels of our optimal performance model. You will see as you read each chapter, the motivational strategies are interdependent and often become an essential condition for other motivational strategies. Because of this, school leaders must weave together the various motivational strategies. The more the essential conditions are embedded within the school culture, the more likely staff members will be motivated to perform at optimal levels interdependently, as a collegial learning community.

We observe the first view of the optimal performance model from a typical perspective in Figure 1.2.

From this perspective, we see one possible order of introduction from quality of life beginning at three o'clock and progressing counterclockwise.

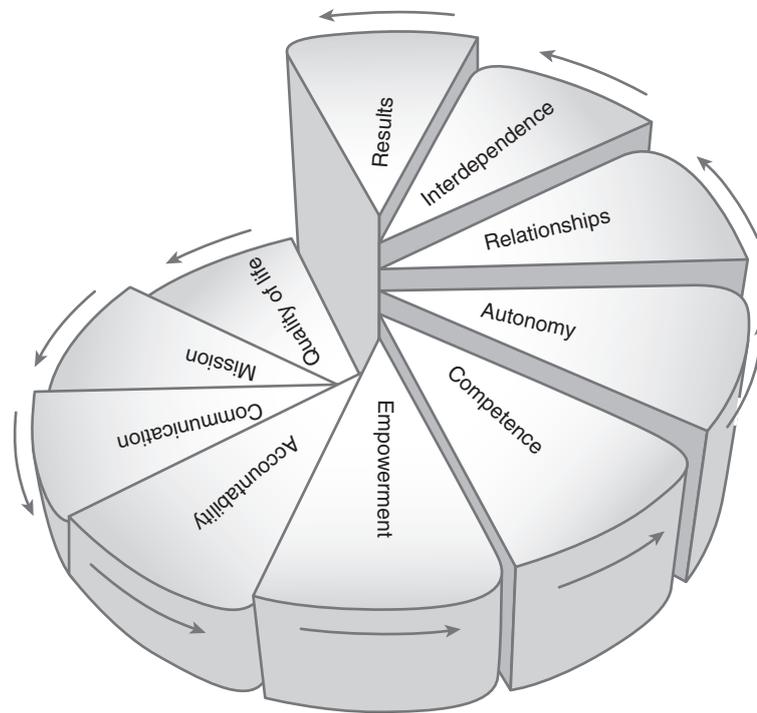
Figure 1.2 Optimal Performance Model



In your context and culture the order you choose to progress through the strategies may differ from the model above.

The key to the model is perspective. Observing the model from a different vantage point may reveal new and powerful insights, as illustrated in Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3 Optimal Performance Model Shifts in Perspective



Like a spiral staircase, motivation does gain momentum and synergy as you continue to integrate and embed the use of each of the motivational strategies within the culture, structures, processes, and procedures of the school community. The stronger and more developed each of the essential conditions becomes within the school culture, the more likely educators will be to perform at optimal levels. Although it appears that the model climbs in an ordered progression, the reality is that it doesn't matter in what order the motivational strategies are used.

For example, instead of using an accountability activity, then an empowerment activity, followed by a competence activity, the school leader could just as effectively use a relationship-building activity, followed by an autonomy activity, and then a quality of life activity. In fact, to be effective, school administrators need to assess the current situation, determine what seems to be weak or missing and what seems to be strong and embedded within the current culture. Then, they use this information to determine the best course of action. In addition, once school leaders have established relationships with their staff members and know what motivates each individual, they can personalize their use of motivational strategies. For example, if a person is motivated because he is allowed the freedom to make decisions, school leaders would select a strategy that utilizes freedom of choice (such as autonomy and empowerment) to inspire and motivate him. Just as teachers differentiate instruction for students,

school leaders must individualize motivational strategies to inspire the members of their school community to perform at optimal levels.

As we have demonstrated earlier in this chapter, the behaviorist approach to motivation is only a temporary fix. You can use it to “salt the oats” for a limited amount of time before the carrots or the sticks lose their potency and effectiveness. Instead, the ten motivational strategies of our optimal performance model are grounded in cognitive psychology and the basic need fulfillment theories of a number of psychologists and experts such as Maslow, Glasser, Herzberg, Covey, and others. (See Appendix A, “Satisfying Basic Needs,” for a brief summary of each theory, a list of specific needs, and how the needs align with our ten motivational strategies.)

■ TEN MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES

After an extensive review of the literature on motivation, we have identified ten motivational factors that will help educational leaders create the conditions that lead to high-performing collegial learning communities. These ten strategies provide the conceptual framework for our optimal performance model.

The optimal performance model provides a comprehensive guide to help school leaders motivate all of the adults working within a school community to collectively achieve, to their greatest potential, and make a difference in the lives of their students and their families. The more these strategies are utilized by leaders and embedded within the school culture, the more likely a school community will be to work collaboratively to achieve optimal performance.

The remainder of this book will help you, the reader, gain an in-depth understanding of each of the ten motivational strategies, the essential conditions that help administrators and school leaders motivate, inspire, create, lead, and sustain high-performing collegial learning communities and achieve optimal performance. Throughout the following chapters, we will explore a number of techniques and ideas to help you motivate, inspire, create, lead, and achieve optimal performance levels from your school community. We will use case studies to help you better understand and recognize the essential conditions that need to be in place for each of the ten motivational strategies. We hope that after you read each chapter, you will take time to reflect upon your current situation, your desired situation, and what you can do to create the conditions within your school setting and your leadership style to build a high-performing collegial learning community that achieves optimal levels of performance.

The next chapter of this book will focus on you, the school leader, and the ability to deal with the pressures of the job. To make any lasting or deep changes in how people feel when they work, we believe that motivation begins within—within ourselves and within our school setting. As we have said before, we have to help ourselves before we can effectively help others.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Numerous volumes have been written on the topic of motivation. Different theories about how to motivate others are ubiquitous, diverse, and often incompatible with one another. Far too many schools and districts still base their use of motivation on the work of behavioral psychologists. As we

have demonstrated in this chapter, the behaviorist approach to motivation is only a temporary fix. You can use it to “salt the oats” for a limited time before the carrots or the sticks lose their potency and effectiveness.

The time has come to retire the carrot-and-stick management strategies used to control the work of our teachers and students. As school leaders, we must recognize and respect educators as the professionals they are by utilizing their knowledge and skills. In this age of the knowledge worker, to build the human infrastructure we must inspire and empower educators by capitalizing upon their creativity, talent, and expertise. Most important, we must create the conditions that allow us to recognize and release the potential of all educators and create high-performing collegial learning communities.

The optimal performance model, with its ten motivational strategies, is grounded in cognitive psychology and the basic need fulfillment theories of a number of psychologists and experts that we describe throughout the remainder of this book to help administrators and school leaders do just that.

We define *optimal performance* as *the state in which individuals within the school community are enthralled in complex, job-embedded educational work and learning experiences that serve a greater purpose, have a clear and specific focus, provide knowledge and feedback about the results of educator effort, intrinsically captivate educator attention, are balanced between the challenge of the activity and the knowledge and skill of the individual, and clearly make a difference in helping all students achieve personalized and collective learning goals*. Optimal performance consists of a stream of flow-like experiences within a school setting that empower interdependent, high-performing collegial learning communities to collaboratively and successfully accomplish their shared, morally compelling mission (work).

NEXT STEPS

As a result of reading this chapter, take a few minutes to reflect upon the following questions:

1. What motivational theories are at work within your school or current situation’s context?
2. What motivates you?
3. Think about those people with whom you work. Who are they and what is it that motivates them?
4. How can you use what you know about others to personalize how you will motivate, inspire, and lead them?
5. What would your school or current situation look like, sound like, or feel like if the attributes of the optimal performance model were strongly embedded within your school or current situation’s culture?

NOTE

1. Interestingly, Covey, and coauthors Roger and Rebecca Merrill, coined the phrase “the fire within” in the book, *First Things First* (1996), that later became the theme for the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, “Light the Fire Within.” This identifying theme was actualized by athletes, volunteers, and viewers around the world.