

New Supervisory Skills

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The quality of a team's performance generally depends on the level of motivation from each team member. More motivated employees will produce better work, and this will also create a favorable work culture where motivation and quality performance occur naturally. Therefore, motivation and identifying the causes for a lack of motivation should be our primary concern moving forward, as this will help boost morale for the team.

There are four specific concerns that we should first address, as they relate to specific team members. First, there is John, who is always late and is frequently calling in sick. His absences are affecting other team members because when he is not there, they have to pick up the slack. Second, there is Henry, one of our longest team members who recently voiced concerns about being passed over for promotion. Third, there is Missy, who shows great promise but also has frequent transportation issues, and commitments for childcare that sometimes interfere with her ability to commit fully to work.

The one thing to consider is that not all employees are motivated by the same techniques, so there cannot be a unilateral approach in how we address each of these issues. For instance, Theory X is a motivation theory that identifies some workers perform best under direct supervision, with clear rewards and penalties; Theory Y is a motivation theory where employees are encouraged to work without direct supervision, with the increased level of autonomy also coinciding with increased motivation (Tahir and Iraqi, 2018).

Because the issues affecting John, Henry, and Missy are all affecting the overall team performance, these issues should be handled first before we can implement a wider set of motivation techniques for the entire team. This should be approached with counseling, as this can help us uncover the source of the problem. Counseling should be done with the SMART method,

which refers to Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound approaches to resolving each of these issues (Woodbury, 2001).

For John, the specific issue is that his lack of attendance, including when he is late, is creating additional responsibilities for other team members. A counseling session with John should therefore involve identifying the causes for his lack of attendance and tardiness. This should be a positive meeting; the intent should not be to discipline John, but there also needs to be a clear identification that his current work performance is negatively affecting others within the team, and that this problem needs to be resolved because it is affecting more than just John. John may have health issues, or there may be some other cause. The first step in counseling John should therefore involve asking him the reason for his absences and tardiness. If John is not forthcoming, we should not pressure him to provide an answer, but what should be clear is that John needs to resolve this problem if he wants to continue his position on the team. If there is an underlying factor, such as chronic health issues, then some leeway might be given; however, we should seek to determine why he is absent, and then identify a plan from there.

For Henry, the main problem may be generational differences. Younger workers have complained that Henry is not able to use modern technologies, and that he is old-fashioned in his approach to current work methods. Henry has expressed disappointment that he has never been promoted; we therefore should reassess Henry's work potential. The main limiting factor may be that a lack of unfamiliarity with current technologies makes Henry not an ideal candidate for a supervisor position, because supervisors are expected to be familiar with all responsibilities required of any worker under his or her supervision. Henry may be unfamiliar with current technologies that we use, such as in-house software, but this does not mean he lacks the potential to learn them. In this case, a counseling session with Henry should seek to explain that

technological knowledge is necessary for advancement, and then Henry should be given the opportunity to learn these technologies, either by receiving more training from one of us, or through HR. We can then reassess whether Henry would be able to handle supervisory roles; he is one of our longest and most loyal team members, so it would be fair for this position to at least be considered.

Finally, there is Missy. Missy is a newer employee, and she is highly capable, but she currently has issues with childcare and transportation that make her current reliability less than ideal. To this end, a counseling session should seek to identify with Missy whether these issues are temporary or long-term. Because she is a new employee, Missy may be experiencing a transition period where she is trying to balance her family obligations with work, and this should be a consideration. We should inform her that reliability is required for team cohesion, but we also need to be supportive and understanding, rather than punitive or disciplinary. Once we understand her primary issues, we can help work toward finding a solution, but this situation may be one that is temporary during her transition period, and may resolve itself naturally over time.

Once these specific issues have been resolved, we can begin working toward identifying other issues that are causing lackluster motivation. This would best be done with a SWOT analysis. A SWOT analysis involves identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (Phadermrod et al., 2019). The SWOT should be conducted by myself as well as with both of you as team leaders, and the best way to conduct it would be to seek meetings with each and every one of our 30 team members. These would be informal, but they should seek to ask the following questions: 1) How satisfied are you with current work conditions/policies; and 2) What would you like to see improved? From here, we can coordinate our lists and identify common

themes that might be marked for improvement, as well as understanding more our current strengths and weaknesses. These meetings should be conducted in a way that all team members understand that we are simply looking for ways to increase performance; they should not be considered performance reviews, and individual performance should not be the focus of these meetings as this can cause unnecessary anxiety. Instead, we should inform all team members that we are simply identifying ways that we can improve team performance and the overall environment in a manner that is favorable to employees.

Ideally, this will make team members feel included, rather than ignored; including their thoughts and opinions in the decision-making process can help them realize that we do care about their work conditions, and this can help them feel more included as part of the team itself, which in turn can be a motivating factor unto itself.

Once we have identified specific issues, we can then conduct a SMART plan for the entire team, beginning with specific goals that are measurable, attainable, and relevant, along with a proposed schedule for when these goals will be achieved. Ideally, we will begin to see improvements, but there will also need to be a review period to see if newly introduced policies are having their intended effect or whether they should be modified.

While these suggestions are part of the overall effort to improve performance, we also should be consistently monitoring performance as part of a continuing effort. Employees should feel encouraged to approach us with potential issues or problems, and we should always be looking for policies that will help improve the overall team.

References

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