

BYU Manager's Toolbox



*I don't motivate my players.
You cannot motivate someone,
all you can do is provide a
motivating environment and the
players will motivate themselves.*

–Phil Jackson, Coach of the
Los Angeles Lakers

Motivation



For every hundred men
hacking away at the
leaves of a diseased tree,
only one man stoops to
inspect the roots.

–Chinese Proverb

Diagnose the Employee's Need

Traditional managers assume that the harder you work, the better you perform. This is why when managers encounter employees who are poor performers they often attribute their poor performance to a lack of motivation or commitment to the task. This over-simplistic diagnosis leads to solutions that may do more harm than good.

How do you identify the specific causes of an employee's poor performance?

Good performance is the result of two primary factors:

- ◆ Ability (aptitude, training, and resources)
- ◆ Motivation (desire and commitment)

Managers pressure people more if they feel poor performance is a result of low motivation. If managers misdiagnose the problem, their efforts to increase motivation, such as closer supervision, will often create a motivation problem where one did not exist.

As a manager, you need to first diagnose the performance problem as an ability or motivation issue before implementing corrective action.

Enhance Abilities

When there is a performance problem that stems from an inability, people tend to behave in one of three ways.

Retreat into a specialty – They will focus only on what they can do.

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Focus on past performance – They think that because they have done well in the past that they are doing well now. This is particularly the case with individuals who have not kept up with technology and are then surrounded in an environment where you need technology to perform.

Exaggerating aspects of leadership – Over managing, over delegating, etc.

Managers should use the following tools to overcome poor performance problems that result from a lack of ability. For greatest efficacy, apply these in the order they are presented.

Developing Management Skills, Whetton & Cameron

1. Resupply	Provide the resources the person needs
2. Retrain	Help them develop the skills they need
3. Refit	Align the person's responsibilities with their capabilities
4. Reassign	Find a position that does suit their capabilities
5. Release	If there is no place for them, let them find another opportunity where they can succeed

Create a Motivating Work Environment

Once you become aware that poor performance is not the result of inability, but stems from low motivation, you should look to yourself and your work environment. What are your guiding philosophies? Are you emphasizing both performance and employee satisfaction? Are your expectations clear? Is your feedback timely and constructive? Do you have an effective recognition program?

There are two management philosophies set forth by Douglas McGregor in the 1960's: Theory X and Theory Y. Theory X states that people don't want to work and they don't want increased responsibility. As a result, managers must be very involved in supervising their employees. On the other hand, Theory Y suggests that most people do want to perform well and do seek additional responsibilities in their work. A manager's role is to guide employees toward reaching their potential. McGregor asserted that a majority of managers subscribe to the Theory X approach and managed in a way that demotivated many of their employees.

Many managers believe that strong performance is the result of motivated and satisfied employees. In other words, if you can't keep them happy and excited, then you can't expect good results. Perhaps a more accurate belief is that satisfaction comes from being motivated and performing well. Increased satisfaction in turn further increases motivation and improves performance.

Motivation → Performance → Satisfaction

Here are the key elements of a motivating work environment:

I. Clear Expectations and Goals

High performance depends on establishing clear expectations with employees and measuring performance against those expectations. The more you partner with your employees to set and

Clear Goals



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support their goals, the higher their motivation and performance will be.

Good goals are all of the following:

- ◆ Specific
- ◆ Measurable
- ◆ Challenging
- ◆ Realistic

The biggest misconception in motivation is that if people understand, they will do. For example, have you ever tried to change the behavior of an adult that didn't want to change? Adults will change only if:

1. They see a clear reason to change
2. They see that it is in their best interest to change
3. They see that by not changing they lose something important to them

—Marshall Goldsmith

2. Feedback

Accurate and constructive feedback is also necessary for employees to improve and maintain good performance. One of the manager's primary responsibilities is to offer constructive feedback to both performing and non-performing employees. Keep in mind the following when giving feedback:

Concern for the Individual – feedback should be motivated by a desire to support an individual's development

Environment – present constructive feedback in private

Actual Performance – describe behaviors using specific examples and avoiding generalities

Desired Performance – reiterate clearly defined expectations

Plan for Change – ask your employee to devise a development plan

Support – offer and provide necessary support for change

Trust is the highest form of human motivation.
—Maslow

For more information on providing feedback, see the BYU Manager's Toolbox article on Coaching.

3. Reward Good Performance

Finally, use rewards to motivate your employees. Make sure the reward means something to the person you're trying to motivate, give and receive positive feedback, and maintain equity in your reward system.

Things To Do

- ✓ Diagnose all performance problems first as an ability or motivation issue. Use the Performance Diagnosis Model below to help you make the diagnosis.
- ✓ Be frank and open. It will create a positive and trusting environment.
- ✓ Always reward and recognize good performance.

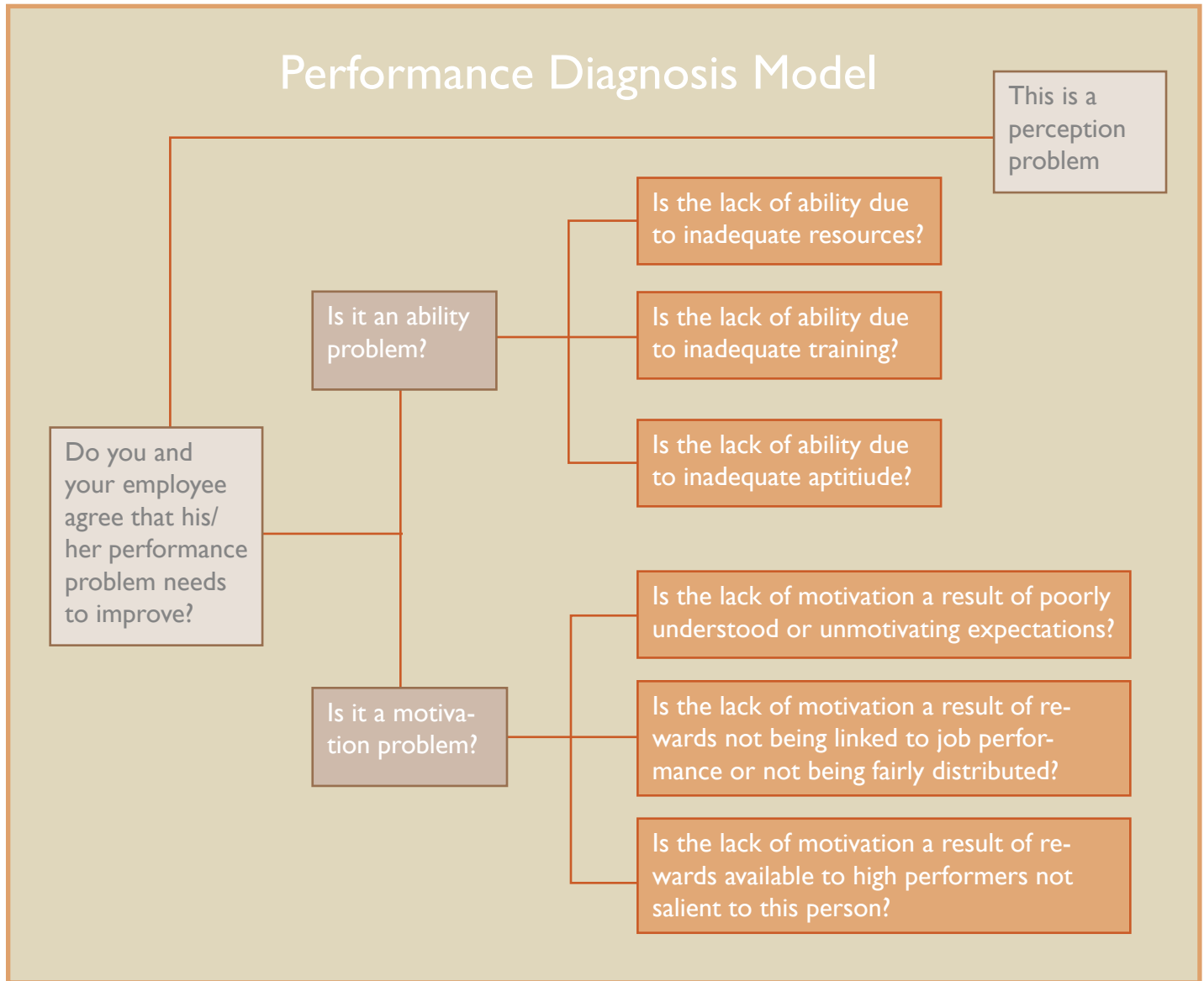
The Bottom Line

Motivation is easy; you don't need to do anything to deliberately motivate your employees. You can help your employees become high performers by providing necessary resources and creating a motivating environment. Then they will motivate themselves.

Give Feedback

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