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**Motivational Challenges for Command Staff:
Motivating the Unmotivated Supervisor**

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MOTIVATIONAL CHALLENGES FOR COMMAND STAFF:
MOTIVATING THE UNMOTIVATED SUPERVISOR

ABSTRACT

Successful management, leadership, and supervision of employees is contingent upon effective motivational techniques and practices. Although the motivation of employees is an important aspect for leaders, supervisors, and managers in all areas of business and government, it is much more crucial for public safety organizations (especially law enforcement agencies and corrections agencies). Given the nature of the duties of a public servant (police officer or corrections officer), being unmotivated can have significant ramifications. Problems arise when supervisors, leaders, and managers become unmotivated, disgruntled, or discontented. This publication reviews historical and recent motivational theories and practices and focuses on the question - "How do you motivate the unmotivated supervisor?" A true case study was initiated by the author and the results of that study are outlined.

MOTIVATIONAL CHALLENGES FOR COMMAND STAFF: **MOTIVATING THE UNMOTIVATED SUPERVISOR**

INTRODUCTION

Supervisory and managerial courses, manuals, and literature are replete with information geared toward motivation. In describing motivation two aspects arise:

- The challenge that every supervisor, manager, or leader has to stay motivated.
- The challenge that every supervisor, manager, or leader has to keep subordinates motivated.

Decidedly, public safety organizations (law enforcement agencies and corrections agencies) have an ever greater challenge in regards to motivation. Given the nature of the work and duties associated with law enforcement and corrections, an unmotivated subordinate can cause much more harm than good. A lack of motivation often results in low productivity, abuse of sick leave, mediocre performance of duties, and contamination of the morale of other co-workers. In severe cases, a lack of motivation may result in a compromise in safety and security of not only staff but also those who are under arrest or incarcerated. Command staff are faced with even greater challenges when the unmotivated employee is a supervisor or manager. This study examines traditional and conventional “motivational methods” along with more innovative practices. To examine the topic more specifically, an actual case study was conducted within a Central Texas Sheriff’s Office. The case study consisted of several elements:

- The formulation of a survey which sought to gain data in regards to motivation among the mid-level supervisors (lieutenants) of this Sheriff’s Office.
- The distribution of the survey to several mid-level supervisors (lieutenants) within this Central Texas Sheriff’s Office.

- An analysis of the data received through the answers of those surveyed.
- The implementation of a specific motivational technique (formulated in part through the data collected).

MAIN BODY

HISTORICAL MOTIVATIONAL THEORIES, IDEAS, AND METHODS

The concept of human motivation has long been a topic of research, and workplace motivation (motivating workers) has not been a recent trend. All one has to do is consider the management skills required, by the ancient Egyptians to build their pyramids, by the ancient Chinese to build the Great Wall of China, the management skills of the Mesopotamians to irrigate their land and wall their cities, of the Romans when building their roads, aqueducts and Hadrian's wall ("Employee motivation: historical," 2007). Without a doubt, a certain degree of worker motivation had to occur in order for these marvels to be constructed. In fact, long before the Industrial Revolution, many ancient societies, philosophers, and leaders developed ideas consistent with administration and motivation in the workplace. For example, the Babylonians (~1800 B.C.) established Hammurabi's Code which made supervisors responsible for the actions of their workers; the Hebrews (~1500 B.C.) established the Exception Principle, via Moses and his father-in-law Jethro, which stipulated that a person should only bring big matters to an administrator; and the Chinese (~1100 B.C.) established (through the philosophies of Chow, Mencius, and SunTzu) merit exams for workers (O'Connor, 2004). Alexander The Great (~330 B.C.), as a result of his military conquests, established himself as one of the greatest commanders in history. According to Welman (2007), there is no one else in history who could inspire and motivate his men like Alexander did. Welman goes on to explain that Alexander

accomplished this by suffering the same wounds as his soldiers, by leading the attack in person, and by paying attention to every single man in his army.

In the culture of the Medieval Period (c400 A.D. until c1400 A.D.), work had no intrinsic value. Christian thought dominated the culture and work was perceived as punishment by God for man's original sin (Hill, 1996). According to O'Connor (2004), the Medieval Period was indwelt with the following ideas pertinent to work administration:

- Feudalism (600 -1500 A.D.) - concern for traits of good ruler and establishment of the delegation principle.
- Mercantilism - economic self-protectionism and concern for esprit-de-corps of workers,
- Physiocracy - the idea that land is the greatest wealth and the laissez-faire attitude (hands off) held by management.

During that same period (~1400 A.D.) Venetian shipbuilders developed an interesting technique to motivate employees - the serving of wine to those working on the assembly lines (also known as the Arsenal). According to Davis (1997), outlays for wine constituted one of the principle expenditure lines in the Arsenal's annual materials budget; and every year, the Venetian government would allocate anywhere from twenty to forty thousand ducats just to keep the Arsenal supplied with over half a million liters of wine.

The Industrial Period (also referred to as the Industrial Revolution) is the period spanning from 1760 A..D. to 1850 A.D. This period was a time of dramatic change whereby mass production and the factory system took the place of hand tools and handmade items. Factories during this period were poorly ventilated, noisy, dirty, damp, and poorly lit. Workers were considered as merely "hands" by their employers and employee motivation was nonexistent. Workers continued to work surrounded by unhealthy and dangerous conditions. As a result,

workers began to realize the strength they could possess if they were a unified force. This was a challenge for these early work unions since they had no political influence in a land where the government continued to follow a laissez-faire policy (Montagna, 2007). Montagna also comments that this hands off policy changed as the pressures from growing trade unions increased and this movement began to free workers from the injustices of the factory system. In essence, the workers during this period of time were motivating themselves.

The twentieth century saw an emergence of relevant research in the area of human motivation. Most notable are the works of Abraham Maslow, David I. McClelland, Frederick Herzberg, Douglas McGregor and Victor Vroom.

Abraham Maslow is renowned for his theory - the Hierarchy of Needs. This theory was proposed in his 1943 paper entitled - A Theory of Human Motivation. Maslow's theory ("Maslow's hierarchy" 2007) contended that as human's meet 'basic needs', they seek to satisfy successively 'higher needs':

- Physiological (breathing, food, water, sex, sleep, homeostasis, excretion)
- Safety (security of body, of employment, of resources, of morality, of the family, of health, of property)
- Love/Belonging/Social (friendship, sexual intimacy, having a supportive family)
- Esteem needs (self-esteem, confidence, achievement, respect of others, respect by others)
- Self-actualization (morality, creativity, spontaneity, problem solving, lack of prejudice, acceptance of facts).

Young (2000) explains that if a manager embraces Maslow's hierarchy of needs, that manager will in turn motivate employees, keeping the order of needs in mind. Young also explains that in using Maslow's theory, managers can use the hierarchy to motivate people by satisfying the

most important needs.

David I. McClelland is best known for his “Content Theory of Motivation.” McClelland outlined this theory in his 1961 book entitled - The Achieving Society. McClelland’s theory (“David McClelland,” 2007) asserts that human motivation comprises three dominant needs:

- Need for achievement.
- Need for power.
- Need for affiliation.

Peterson (2001) summarizes that the “content theories of motivation” focus on what motivates people at work. Peterson also explains that these theories are concerned with what needs and drives people have and how they will prioritize them. This in turn assists management in helping staff achieve their goals in order to achieve satisfaction and perform well.

Frederick Herzberg, the noted psychologist, was one of the most influential names in business management. His most famous work was the development of the Motivator-Hygiene Theory. This theory, proposed by Herzberg in 1959, stated that people are influenced by the following factors:

- Satisfaction and psychological growth are the result of ‘motivation factors’.
- Dissatisfaction is a result of a lack of “hygiene factors’ (“Leadership: Motivation,” 2006).

Gawel (1997) explains that Herzberg’s Motivator-Hygiene Theory constructed a two-dimensional paradigm of factors affecting people’s attitudes about work and that factors such as company policy, supervision, working conditions, and salary are hygiene factors rather than motivators. Gawel also states that, according to the theory, the absence of hygiene factors can create job dissatisfaction, but their presence does not motivate or create satisfaction.

In 1960, MIT Sloan School of Management Professor Douglas McGregor presented the X

Theory and Y Theory of employee management (“Douglas McGregor,” 2007). According to Clark (1999) McGregor’s work was based upon Maslow’s Theory of the Hierarchy of Needs, in that he grouped the hierarchy into lower order (Theory X) needs and higher order (Theory Y) needs. Clark also explains that McGregor’s X Theory and Y Theory are two opposing perceptions about how people view human behavior at work and organizational life and that management could use either set of needs to motivate employees, but better results could be gained by the use of Theory Y, rather than Theory X. Utilizing Theory X, management assumes employees are inherently lazy and will avoid work if they can. Because of this, workers need to be closely supervised and comprehensive systems of control developed. According to this theory, employees show little ambition without an enticing incentive program and will avoid responsibility whenever they can. The Theory X manager tends to believe that everything must end in blaming someone and these managers can be said to be impediments to employee morale and productivity (“Theory x”, 2007). In comparison, managers who utilize Theory Y assume that employees may be ambitious, self-motivated, anxious to accept greater responsibility, and exercise self-control, self-direction, autonomy and empowerment. A Theory Y manager subscribes to the belief that, given the right conditions, most employees will want to do well at work and that there is a pool of unused creativity in the workforce. A Theory Y manager will try to remove the barriers that prevent workers from fully actualizing themselves (“Theory x”, 2007).

Victor Vroom is credited with the development of the Expectancy Theory. This theory, developed in 1964, deals with motivation and management. Vroom realized that an employee’s performance is based on individual factors such as personality, skills, knowledge, experience and abilities (“Expectancy theory,” 2007) and his theory is based on the following beliefs:

- Valence (refers to the emotional orientations people hold with respect to outcomes or rewards)
- Expectancy (refers to the different expectations that employees have and levels of confidence that they possess in regard to what they are capable of doing)
- Instrumentality (refers to the perception that employees have regarding whether they will actually get what they desire even it has been promised by a manager).

Vroom's Expectancy Theory states that an individual will act in certain way based on the expectation that the act will be followed by a given outcome and on the attractiveness of that outcome to the individual ("Leadership and human," 1997). Vroom's Expectancy Theory is written as a formula: $\text{Valence} \times \text{Expectancy} \times \text{Instrumentality} = \text{Motivation}$. This formula can be used to indicate and predict such things as job as job satisfaction, one's occupational choice, the likelihood of staying in a job, and the effort one might expend at work ("Expectancy theory, 2007). Ali (2006) describes Vroom's Expectancy Theory as a theory which states that workers' motivation is a result of how much a person wants a reward (valence), the estimate that the probability that the effort of the worker will result in the expected performance (expectancy) and the belief that the performance will result in the reward (instrumentality). In other words, people want to believe they will be rewarded for their effort(s) and the level effort they are willing to exert is based on this belief of reward. Ali also explains that by applying the Expectancy Theory, managers can adjust how much motivation and energy employees put forth in the work place by determining what workers are looking to achieve in terms of goals and objectives.

CONTEMPORARY MOTIVATIONAL THEORIES, METHODS AND IDEAS

Managerial and leadership strategies (since the latter part of the 20th century and into the onset of the 21st century) have focused heavily on supervisor responsibility as it pertains to team development and staff motivation. In describing this concept, Blanchard (2003) states that saying thank you is one simple way that a supervisor can make a huge difference in the way others feel about themselves because it lets them know that what they do is important. And praise is the easiest way to let people know they are appreciated.

Levine (1993) expounds on this by explaining that , teamwork is the key, not hierarchy. To achieve this, the leader must include employees in all parts of the process, every step of the way. Levine also states that people must be treated as individuals and that leaders should always acknowledge their importance and show them respect. Additionally, superior work must be encouraged, recognized, and rewarded.

In describing the motivational duties of a supervisor, Welch (2005) states that people need to get differentiated rewards and recognition in order to be motivated. Welch also explains that another key to motivation is through training and retraining.

Gebellein (2001) sets forth a supervisory action plan which serves to help in motivating staff members. The plan entails:

- Creating a vision for employees which is in alignment with the organization's mission, strategy and direction.
- Communicating a clear vision and direction to employees.
- Clarifying other people's roles and responsibilities in attaining the vision of the organization.

- Encouraging high standards of performance.
- Imparting to others a sense of energy, ownership, and personnel commitment to work.
- Inspiring actions without relying solely on authority.
- Inspiring others to define new opportunities and continuously improving the organization.
- Trusting other people's judgment and recognizing that the best decisions are not always made at the top.
- Celebrating and rewarding significant achievements of others.
- Creating an environment that encourages others to do their best.
- Positively addressing work environment and balance issues.

CASE STUDY

In an effort to bring relevance to this research paper, a case study was conducted on a major Central Texas Sheriff's Office - the Travis County Sheriff's Office. The Travis County Sheriff's Office is headquartered in Austin, Texas which is the state capitol. The agency (Travis county, 2007) is comprised of approximately 1320 employees (1000 sworn corrections officers and law enforcement officers; 320 civilian staff members.) Operationally, the agency is divided into three bureaus:

- Corrections Bureau
- Law Enforcement Bureau
- Administration Support Bureau.

The Corrections Bureau is the largest of the agency's three bureaus with more than 800 staff members assigned to three different correctional facilities. The supervisory chain of command

structure of this bureau consists of:

- Sheriff
- Chief Deputy Sheriff
- Major
- Captains (3)
- Lieutenants (11)
- Sergeants (50)

The case study consisted of the following components:

- Development of a confidential survey to be distributed among mid-level managers (lieutenants) of the Travis County Sheriff's Office Corrections Bureau. The survey contained questions based on Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (question number 1 and number 2) coupled with questions which were formulated based on management lectures which were presented during the 2007 National Institute of Corrections Executive Excellence Program (question number 3 and number 4).
- Analysis of the data compiled through the survey. The data was used to implement motivational strategies geared specifically toward those supervisors who may be experiencing motivational challenges.
- Implementation of the motivational strategies.

The survey, which was developed as part of this study, consisted of the following questions:

1. What do you really like about your job?
2. What do you really dislike about your job?
3. What is alive in you? Or in other words, what excites you about your job?
4. What can the administration do in order to help you achieve your career goals?

As was noted above, question number 1 and number 2 were based on Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. Question number 3 was formulated based on information gathered during a personal coaching session via the National Institute of Corrections Executive Excellence Program / Phase One (Lopez, 2007, May). Question number 4 was formulated based on information gathered during a leadership lecture via the National Institute of Corrections Executive Excellence Program / Phase Two (Stamper, 2007, May). The survey was distributed in September 2007 to eight mid-level managers (lieutenants) assigned to the Travis County Correctional Complex which is the largest of the three correctional facilities of the Travis County Sheriff's Office. Six completed surveys were returned.

RESPONSES TO SURVEY QUESTIONS

In response to question number 1 (What do you really like about your job?), the following answers were provided:

- I enjoy working with various agencies.
- I enjoy mentoring fellow employees.
- I enjoy taking on new challenges.
- I enjoy the ability to influence the course of how the agency's goals are met.
- I like the fact that I have been able to form many relationships over the years.
- I like the challenge that the job provides for me.
- I like my co-workers and the professionalism they exhibit.
- I am appreciative of the outstanding leadership within the agency.
- I enjoy sharing my experience and knowledge with subordinates.
- Although the job could be perceived by some as the "same old, same old," everyday provides new opportunities.

In response to question number 2 (What do you really dislike about your job?), the following answers were provided:

- It is difficult to have ownership over some of my assigned duties.
- I dislike the fact that it is difficult to attend specialized training out of town or out of state. This type of training is usually reserved for a select few.
- I dislike the impression that the administration seems to have that the only way to achieve productivity is to assign “busy work.”
- I dislike that there is a lack of positive input from the administration.
- The workload that is assigned is overwhelming.
- I dislike the fact that there are some people here who choose to complain about anything and everything.
- There are some supervisors who work here that if all they had to do was pick up their paycheck they would ask why the paycheck could not just be mailed to them.
- The span of control and extra duties do not allow us to enjoy the job.
- I dislike the fact that, as in most bureaucracies, things such as red tape, lack of adequate staffing levels and funding affect progress. It takes forever to get anything done.

In response to question number 3 (What is alive in you and what excites you about your job?), the following answers were provided:

- I am excited about motivating others to a higher level of professionalism.
- I am excited about the opportunity to accomplish things that truly benefit the inner workings of the agency.
- I have the hope that I can change things for the better and help others to become motivated.

- I have the feeling that I am able to make positive contributions toward the accomplishment of departmental goals.
- Finishing a task and then moving toward another task excites me.
- I want to be able to leave the agency with the feeling that the agency is just a little bit better off because I was here.
- Leading by example excites me.
- There is enormous gratification in being able to help keep the agency in balance and flowing well.

In response to question number 4 (What can the administration do in order to help you achieve your career goals/), the following answers were provided:

- Provide opportunities to learn from knowledgeable and experienced people.
- Continue to provide new challenges.
- Be available to answer questions and provide guidance.
- Offer every employee equal training assignments.
- Spend more time with all employees at all levels.
- Recognize the sacrifice that is imposed by the needs of the job.
- Continue to allow me latitude to grow as an employee by constructively correcting my shortcomings.
- Allow me the opportunity to try and excel at the next level of supervision.
- Treat everyone equal.
- Realize that not every decision made at the administrative level is the best one and be humble enough to listen to those who do the job everyday.
- Show me the same respect that I feel I show the administration.

· Acknowledge that we are team players.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

A review of the answers provided by those who did complete the survey, reveals that overall these mid-level managers enjoy their work. Satisfaction is still obtained through mentoring and staff development. Accomplishing assigned tasks and achieving goals are also gratifying. In contrast, those who responded to the survey expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of work that is assigned (termed as “busy work” by one respondent), the large span of control, and lack of training opportunities. Nonetheless, those who did respond to the survey also indicated that they are highly motivated when it comes to developing their subordinates, finishing assigned tasks, and leaving a legacy.

In reviewing the responses to question number 4, it is relevant to note that those who did respond to this survey feel that the agency’s administration could do a better job in providing more training opportunities for mid-level managers, spending more time interacting with all staff members, and allowing mid-level managers greater leverage in providing input in the administrative decision making process.

CONCLUSION

As a result of this study, a motivational strategic plan was developed and is being implemented among the mid-level managers assigned to the author. These mid-level managers (lieutenants) are assigned to specialized functions within the corrections bureau (New Jail Building Construction Project, Classifications and Records Section, and Complex Security Unit) and perform consistently well in all aspects of their duty assignments. The motivational

strategic plan entails the following:

- A conscientious effort on the part of the author to spend more time (on a weekly basis) with not only these mid-level managers but also the sergeants assigned to these sections. The time is used to a greater extent to discuss issues pertaining to personal career goals, methods by which they can in turn develop their subordinates on a greater level, and methods through which they can prevent career derailment.
- A conscientious effort on the part of the author to continuously praise and thank these mid-level managers (and their subordinates), and to celebrate their successes (both professionally and personally).
- A conscientious effort on the part of the author to research and locate relevant training for these mid-level managers. This effort may be hampered due to funding restrictions, but nonetheless will continue.
- A conscientious effort on the part of the author to allow (on a greater level) these mid-level managers to provide input in regard to administrative decisions. This particular initiative comes with the stipulation that while the input is being solicited, the final decision lies ultimately with command staff.

While this motivational strategic plan is still in its infancy stage, it does appear to be beneficial even though the mid-level managers who are affected by the plan are consistently motivated.

Work productivity continues to excel in regard to these mid-level managers. The subordinates assigned to these supervisors also remain consistently motivated and work productivity remains high. These mid-level managers have also been encouraged to utilize this motivational plan as part of their supervisory duties (albeit that they already do so to a great extent). It is the author's intent that other supervisors (at all levels), may be able to utilize this study as a means

by which to enhance their motivational skills. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of all supervisors to not only stay motivated, but also to be a catalyst for motivation within their agency and/or organization.

MOTIVATIONAL CHALLENGES FOR COMMAND STAFF: MOTIVATING THE UNMOTIVATED SUPERVISOR

LITERATURE REVIEW

A common topic in many managerial and supervisory publications is that pertaining to motivation and specifically, the motivation of employees. Assuredly, one of the most important responsibilities of any supervisor, manager, or leader is to motivate employees. To not do so may result in serious consequences such as a decrease in productivity, low morale, and low employee retention. A recent survey conducted on 1.2 million employees, of 52 predominantly Fortune 1000 Companies, revealed that in about 85% of companies employee morale declines sharply after just the first six months - and continues to deteriorate for years afterwards (Sivota, Mischkind, & Meltzer, 2006). The same study concluded that the fault lies squarely with management, which unwittingly de-motivates employees and diminishes their enthusiasm. . This is true not only in the realm of business and commerce but also in the realm of government work. The problem is exacerbated even more so when pertaining to public safety organizations (law enforcement and corrections agencies). The duties associated with law enforcement and corrections demand that all employees (supervisors and subordinates) maintain a high level of motivation. Police and corrections agencies have the difficult task of not only dealing with the worst of the worst in society but also in retaining and motivating quality officers. This task is unique to public safety agencies due to the jobs that officers are required to perform on a daily basis (Rivera, 2006). And again, one of the basic tenants of supervision, management, and leadership is the motivation of employees. Barber (2004) asks the poignant question - "If you are attempting to get more out of your subordinates, doesn't it make sense that you should know how to motivate them to do more?" For those who are in public safety agency command staff

roles, a more exigent dilemma arises when it is a supervisor , manager, or leader who is unmotivated. This can be very detrimental to the overall mission and operations of the agency. Suffice it to say that an unmotivated supervisor can have a negative effect on subordinates. According to Maxwell (1995), some of the toughest decisions a leader faces concern poor performers. Maxwell also states that in order to discover the proper course concerning a poor performer a leader needs to ask himself -“Should the person be trained, transformed, or terminated?” Maxwell’s comments are certainly relevant due to the fact that poor performance or lack of motivation on the part of a supervisor, manager, or leader can sometimes be attributed to several factors. These factors may include boredom from doing work that never changes, working under rules that seem unreasonably coercive or punitive, or feeling trapped to remain at the job for economic reasons (Smith, Jaffe-Gill, Segal, & Segal, 2007). Friel(2002) identifies yet another factor as being “Retired on Active Duty” and explains that these tenured, seasoned, and yet unmotivated supervisors are content with merely coasting into retirement and doing just enough work not to get in trouble. Command staff are then faced with the task of finding innovative ways in which to motivate the unmotivated supervisor. Termination may not be the most feasible answer. Javitch (2005) comments that it is the responsibility of every boss to identify unmotivated employees and “turn them around” by creating an atmosphere that encourages these non-performing employees to refresh and motivate themselves. Javitch also comments that ultimately an employer cannot really “make” anyone be motivated. The challenge remains, as a leader, to keep the motivation alive, despite the drudgery of the daily job (Marine Corps Leadership, 1990). Coker (2007) on the other hand states that -“If you spend too much time motivating only one person, you will de-motivate everyone else.” This document examines traditional motivational practices and theories along with more recent innovative

motivational methods. In addition, this document outlines the results of a recent case study involving several mid-level supervisors employed by a Central Texas Sheriff's Office. The case study entailed the formulation and distribution of a motivational survey to these supervisors, the compilation of data (based on the answers to the survey questions), and the implementation of conventional and more innovative motivational techniques. The data compiled was used in the formulation of these techniques and geared towards those supervisors who were demonstrating mediocre or poor work performance. The more specific goal of the study was to observe the impact that these implemented motivational techniques had in regard to increased productivity and work performance. The author of this document is a command staff role (within the Sheriff's Office in which this study is being conducted) and the mid-level supervisors were at the time of this study, under his command.

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