

Article: Coaching and Motivating Through Values

George Bernard Shaw spoke truthfully when he said:

*"The single biggest problem in communication is
the illusion that it has taken place."*

Scenario One:

Sally loves helping her fellow employees solve problems. Her coworkers view her as the go-to person. They know they can always come to her when they are stuck. And they always do. Unfortunately this is *not* her job.

John the department head is concerned that Sally is helping others to the detriment of herself and her own work. He wonders about the most effective way to help refocus her efforts on her own work and as a result become more productive. Wisely he is also concerned about demotivating her. He decides to talk to Sally and comes away from that conversation feeling he has successfully made his point. He is convinced that he has accomplished his role as her manager. But did he communicate? Is Sally now willing and able to change her ways?

Scenario Two:

Loretta has been assigned to lead a team whose mission is to give back to the community. Mark, one member of her team believes any money/resources that would be devoted to this project would be better used internally. Mark truly believes this assignment is a waste of his valuable time and that this project is nothing more than another distraction. He is convinced that this project is not going to help him achieve his personal goal of moving up in the organization. Loretta is concerned about alienating Mark and creating resentment in her attempt to re-direct. She also realizes that emotions might run high and make life difficult for everyone on the team. How can Loretta prevent Mark from sabotaging her project? What can she do to get him aligned with the project and onboard? Telling Mark that this assignment is important will probably fall on deaf ears.

Connect With A Person's Values

The above two examples illustrate just how complex leading a group of very different human beings really is. I will suggest a better approach to coaching these two scenarios after providing some fundamental truths.

One of the keys to successful leadership is the knowledge that people interact with their environment in a number of ways. How a person approaches *PROBLEMS*, *PEOPLE*, the *PACE* of the environment and *PROCEDURES*, demonstrate a person's preferred behavioral styles. We are a combination of behavioral traits and our behaviors will change based on what the situation is calling for and our emotions.

Underlying observable behavior is a person's values or motivators. Values are formed early in life. We all have good and perhaps disturbing experiences as we grow up. Those experiences will begin to cluster and as a result we form our values. For instance, you may have had a number of very positive experiences with animals so you will tend to value them. Your co-worker had the opposite experiences in their life so they would never consider owning and taking care of pet. It follows that what a person's values will cause that individual to place greater importance on something than others might. Values will cause a person to move toward an object or away from it.

It would be good to remember that behavior is what we see. Behavior is *HOW* a person does what they do. Are they aggressive or passive? Are they introverted or extroverted? Are they task or people focused? Do they prefer to work on one project at a time or do they like to multitask? Do they insist on examining and knowing the details or they couldn't care less about the details?

On the other hand a person's values are the reason *WHY* a person does what they do.

As I described in the *first scenario* above, Sally is moved to help others. She is being motivated by a Social/Altruistic value. That value when fulfilled provides a sense of satisfaction. Since helping others is important to Sally and people are responding positively, perhaps the smart thing to do is re-design her job. Or have Sally come up with a solution that allows her to do her job and help others too.

Other motivators are: Utilitarian (\$ or ROI), Theoretical (Passion for Knowledge), Individualistic (In control of themselves and others), Traditional (Passion for principles, standards), and Aesthetic (Form and harmony, seeing the beauty in the world).

In the *second scenario* Loretta is trying to help the high Utilitarian, low Social/Altruistic person on her team to become and stay engaged in the Social/Altruistic project of giving back to the community. If a person is driven by a "Utilitarian" motivation, his/her passion is practicality in all areas of life, surpassing others in attainment of wealth, creative application of resources, etc. An over-extension may be displaying little or no concern for others.

Point to Remember:
Delegation may require aligning an employee's *values* with the task being delegated.

Knowing those things, Loretta can now help coach this person by focusing on what drives his decisions. Proving to Mark that there will be a return on investment of his time and company resources would be the way to create alignment with his values.

In a conversation with Mark, Loretta aligns his ambition and drive with the community project. She does this by helping him to appreciate how great his efforts on this project will look to the leadership team who believe in the project. In addition she helps him to see how his contribution might differentiate him when the company begins looking for people to promote. Loretta is done. She will not have to light the fire underneath Mark because he now has the fire burning in his belly. Loretta simply needs to get out of the way because Mark's values will produce the activity for success. His Utilitarian and Individualistic values drive his behavior.

A leader should do more than respond to what he/she can see. Take the time to understand the *why* of a person's behavior. What is really driving him/her? This level of understanding will only happen through conversation when you are listening for his/her values. Perhaps the easiest, effective and most efficient way is to have the person take an assessment that will reveal values or motivators. If you want someone motivated you need to align a person's values with their job.

About Jason Kleid: Jason is focused on optimizing performance and getting results. Underscoring this philosophy is a belief that it is always the individuals in any organization, where the greatest potential for improvement and possibility of change resides. "It is the mind or one's thinking where new ideas broaden understanding and cause things to happen. However, it is the heart, the inner person, where transformation occurs."