



MOTIVATING & INSPIRING YOUR PEOPLE IN DIFFICULT TIMES

As a leader, you can't simply order people around and expect them to do what you want.

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More than ever before, leaders today have to win people's co-operation. And the two

main ways of doing so are through motivation and inspiration. Although the two words are often used interchangeably, they actually mean quite different things and which one you use depends on what you want to achieve.

MOTIVATION

Motivation is about moving people to act in a way that achieves a specific and immediate goal. When you're motivating people to

do something they may not necessarily want to do, you have to offer them something they want in return.

When coaches give their teams a pep talk at halftime, they are using motivation. They want their players to charge back onto the field or the court with renewed energy and focus, even though they may feel too tired or disheartened to try. Their reward? Victory.

To motivate your people:

- Tell them exactly what you want them to do. Motivation is all about getting people to take action, so don't be vague. Avoid generalities like "I want everyone to do their best." Instead say, "I need you to come in over the weekend so we can get this project done on time."
- Limit the amount of time or effort you ask for. It's easier to ask people to work late one night or even every night for a week than to expect them to work late indefinitely. Set an end date.
- Share in the sacrifice. Leaders don't ask people to do what they themselves aren't willing to do. Don't tell your people to work over the weekend if you have plans for a spa day. Roll up your sleeves and share the load.
- Appeal to their emotions. Fear focuses people's attention and can be an effective motivator: "If we don't get this done right now, we'll all lose our jobs." But if you keep resorting to fear, you'll end up de-motivating people. People are also motivated by — and prefer to be motivated by — positive emotions like excitement, pride, a sense of belonging, and the thrill of achievement.
- Give people multiple reasons for doing what you want. You can give your own reason or the organization's for requesting the action: "If we don't get this project completed on schedule, we'll lose the contract." But the best reason of all is always personal. If you can, offer your people extra days off or even a bonus. Or talk about something as intangible as the camaraderie that comes from having achieved something important together. Most likely, things

being what they are these days, the best you may be able to offer is the hope that no one will lose a job.

INSPIRATION

Inspiration, on the other hand, involves changing the way people think and feel about themselves so that they want to take positive actions. It taps into people's values and desires.

The best commencement speakers inspire their audiences. They talk about the challenges the graduates will face, either personally or collectively, and the possibilities of making a difference. Inspiration appeals to the best aspirations of people, and its underlying, often unspoken message is "You can become what you want to be." No reward is promised, other than the reward that comes from within — the sense of personal satisfaction.

As a leader, any time you talk about values, about identity (either the corporate identity or each person's identity), or about long-term goals, your intent — whether you know it or not — is to inspire.

To inspire your people:

- Be the change you want to inspire. Your reputation, your character, your behaviour will inspire people more than anything else. The only way to call the best out of others is to expect the best from yourself.
- Tell a story. Stories don't tell people what to do; they engage people's imaginations and emotions and show them what they're capable of becoming or of doing.

MOTIVATION AND INSPIRATION

Motivation and inspiration are not the sole province of professional speakers and preachers. They're tools leaders use all the

time — in one-on-one conversations, in meetings, and in formal presentations — to bring out the best in their people. It's just a matter of knowing the right time and the right situation.

When there's an immediate, short-term, specific goal that you want your people to achieve, you need to motivate them. When you want to shape people's identity and their long-term aspirations and commitments, you need to inspire them.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, the French aviator and author of *The Little Prince*, wrote: "If you want to build a ship, don't drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea." Sometimes you need to do both. You need to enlist and organize people to do a specific task — to build a ship according to specs, on time and on budget — and sometimes you need to activate people's desires and stand aside. Who knows? You may be surprised by what they do.

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Reprinted with the permission of Chris Witt, founder and president of Witt Communications. Chris works with business leaders who want to motivate, inspire, and influence audiences. he is a speaker, coach, and author of *Real Leaders Don't Do PowerPoint: How to Sell Yourself and Your Ideas*. www.wittcom.com