

## Background

### It's not about the money!

What motivates you to go to work? Is it money? Surveys carried out over the years seem to constantly suggest that people want more from their work than just their salary. Motivated workers equal happy workers which leads to better productivity. So, both employers and employees need to discover what really motivates people in the workplace.

Let's start with the issue of money – is it the most important factor? Many people these days think that it is not. Bob Nelson, in his *Workforce* article, 'The Ten Ironies of Motivation', claims that good pay 'is important, but most employees consider it a right—an exchange for the work one does.' Nelson and others argue that employers are slow to understand this, and the difference between what employers think motivates their staff and what actually does, is huge. So if money is not the main motivator, then what is?

Research suggests that the biggest factor in job motivation is recognition. Employees like to have their efforts recognized and rewarded. They want to be treated like human beings and receive acknowledgement that they have achieved something special or made a significant contribution. Mai Hui, a human resources specialist, provides interesting evidence to support this. One of the most demotivating factors claims Hui is when employers don't deal with non-performing members of staff. According to Hui over 50% of respondents in a recent survey said they would like to see their non-performing colleagues fired. This might seem surprising but, as Hui says, 'employees feel it is not fair if less-dedicated members of staff are rewarded in the same way as their better-performing colleagues. In the end everyone will be brought down to the lower level.'

Recognition is not the only factor. Giving employees some responsibility is also an important motivating tool. Hui argues that giving employees control of their work will

help to keep them motivated. Employees should be part of the decision-making process or at the very least be kept up to date with decisions and developments in their department and – importantly how those decisions were reached. Good lines of communication throughout the company are crucial for a happy working environment, claims Carwyn Williams, a US-based HR consultant. In a recent happiness survey poor communication was the number-one cause of unhappiness in work, while ideas being ignored also reached the top ten. Therefore, as Williams argues, it is essential for employees to feel they have the ability to affect decisions.

Employers also have to recognize that professional development is part and parcel of employee motivation. Williams argues that traditionally, companies have been worried about providing education and training to their staff because they feel that by developing your employees' marketable skills you are risking losing those employees to your competitors. But Williams claims that the evidence suggests this is not in fact the case. Employees who are offered in-service training are often more loyal to the company as it makes them realize that their company values them. The opportunity for self-improvement, growth and development can energize the workforce and it reduces anxiety created by uncertainties in the job market.

Ultimately there is no magic motivation formula but Nelson warns that employers often only deal with motivation once it has become a problem. 'Managers are often too busy focusing on what's urgent and forget about regularly motivating and recognizing employees,' he writes. However, he also points out that it takes less effort to keep the workforce motivated than it does to recreate motivation after it is lost. His final piece of advice is simply to treat the employees like they are your greatest assets and then you will see the benefits.

## Exercises

- 1 Work with a partner. Discuss these three questions.**
  - 1 What is motivation?
  - 2 What motivates people to go to work?
  - 3 What motivates you to go to work?
  
- 2 Read the text quickly and see if any of your ideas from the discussion you had in 1 are mentioned.**
  
- 3 Read the text again and decide if these statements are true (T) or false (F).**
  - 1 Surveys suggest that money is the most important motivating factor.
  - 2 Workers want their bosses to recognize what they do.
  - 3 Workers are demotivated when colleagues do not work as hard as them.
  - 4 Employees would like 50 % of their colleagues to be sacked.
  - 5 Workers want to be involved in making decisions.
  - 6 Providing further training for employees can increase loyalty.
  
- 4 Read the text again and answer these questions.**
  - 1 Why is money not the main motivator of workers?
  - 2 Why is recognition important?
  - 3 What is the importance of good communication?
  - 4 How do employers and employees' opinions differ on in-service training?
  - 5 What advice does the writer give employers at the end of the text?
  
- 5 Work with a partner. Discuss these questions.**
  - 1 Do you think the ideas in the text are good ideas?
  - 2 Would employees in your country list the same ideas?
  - 3 Does the company you work for follow the advice?
  
- 6 Match 1–10 to a–j. Then look in the text to check your answers.**

1 to carry	a up to date with
2 to consider	b down
3 to receive	c the workforce
4 to provide	d anxiety
5 to bring	e out a survey
6 to keep	f on what's urgent
7 to reach	g it a right
8 to energize	h a decision
9 to reduce	i evidence
10 to focus	j acknowledgement
  
- 7 Using the text to help you, decide what the phrases in 6 mean.**
  
- 8 Think of other words that collocate with the verbs in 6.**
  
- 9 Look back at the text and choose three words that you could use in your day-to-day work.**