

Long-Term Care Survey Alert

Human Resources: Why Your Motivation Methods Aren't Working

There's no one size fits all.

One of your employees doesn't seem as content with her job as she used to. She is neither as upbeat nor as productive as she was. A little public recognition of her job used to motivate her, but now it barely gets a smile.

People's motivations change over time -- what was a goal six months ago may be just a memory today. Supervisors must tailor their motivational feedback to the employee's individual needs, says **Gary Topchik**, author of *The Accidental Manager*.

"Today, a team member may be focused on self-worth needs. Tomorrow, she can go out and buy a new house with a big mortgage. Then the need for job security and a higher salary becomes much more important," Topchik notes.

Topchik also says supervisors should individualize their feedback and motivational strategies because employees are motivated by different things. "One team member may be motivated by public recognition, while another might be motivated by the one-to-one feedback that he gets from his manager."

The following strategies are some ways to help you change your motivators to fit with your employees' needs:

- Find out what motivates each employee. Ask her what is most important to her about her job right now. If you would prefer a more indirect approach, observe her behavior and actions. Listen for clues when she talks with you. Her concerns will be tied to her goals in some way. For example, if she repeatedly asks for feedback, you know recognition is a priority with her at the moment.
- Avoid making assumptions. Don't assume you know what motivates a person before asking him or observing his behavior. Leave your values and assumptions out of your assessment.
- Reward, don't punish, your best performers. "Many managers and organizations punish their best performers each day and usually don't even know that they are doing it," Topchik says. Many supervisors "reward" their employee's good work with more work to do. This can alienate and depress even the most motivated employee.