

# Maximizing Motivation in the Workplace

MANAGEMENT CONNECTION



Tips for  
reinvigorating  
employee  
engagement

Employees are the backbone of your foodservice operation; they keep your kitchen running smoothly. Even with the best staff, though, a lack of motivation can rear its ugly head from time to time. As a foodservice manager, it's important to learn about the different types of motivation, as well as discover steps to reinvigorate employee engagement.

## TYPES OF MOTIVATION

There are two types of motivation that drive work performance: intrinsic and extrinsic.

Intrinsic motivation comes from within yourself. You feel a reason to complete your job well because the act of working

is rewarding in and of itself. Examples of intrinsic motivators include:

- Being passionate about the type of work you do
- Feeling satisfaction for a job well done
- Enjoying a new challenge at work because you like problem solving
- Participating in continuing education because you want to learn more about your field

Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is driven by external factors. This could be any action you take to receive something of value or to avoid negative consequences. For example, extrinsic motivation could be working because...



**Chrissy Carroll, MPH, RD** is a registered dietitian, freelance writer, and brand consultant based in central Massachusetts.

- You hope to earn a bonus
- It's necessary to provide an income for your family
- There's potential for a job promotion
- You enjoy hearing praise from your boss
- You're afraid of being fired and unemployed

Extrinsic motivators can be useful in a workplace setting, but keep in mind there is a phenomenon known as the overjustification effect. This theory suggests that too many external rewards and motivators can actually decrease a person's intrinsic motivation.

That said, it is a reality that many employees simply do not have strong intrinsic motivation for their job. In fact, the Gallup "State of the American Workplace" report found that only one-third of employees feel engaged. In other words, if you're looking at the six staff you've got in the kitchen right now, it's a very real possibility that four are not feeling motivated.

Herein lies one of the biggest challenges as a leader – maintaining the intrinsic motivation of the employees who are engaged, while providing extrinsic motivators to encourage those who are not. Clearly, it's a careful balance, but one you can excel at with a few simple strategies.

## 8 STRATEGIES TO MOTIVATE EMPLOYEES

### 1. Create a positive environment.

We all know the saying "misery loves company." When your staff is negative and feeling down, even those that enjoy their job can be pulled into the muck.

This is especially true if that negativity stems from leadership. In fact, the *State of the American Workplace* report found that poor company culture is one of the main reasons people decide to leave jobs.



However, the opposite holds true too. When there is a culture of positivity, it raises the vibe of the entire department, helping motivate those who may not be intrinsically interested in their work.

Lead with positivity, and your employees will follow. For example:

- Act supportive, showcasing yourself as a role model and team player.

- Be willing to jump in when needed.
- Avoid excessive complaining to (or at) your team.
- Be open to your team's frustrations and acknowledge their concerns—but guide these conversations towards a proactive and positive problem-solving approach.

### 2. Be specific in praise.

Praise is an excellent external motivator, and does not seem to reduce intrinsic motivation when used properly. For example, research in *Behavior Analysis* found that even

## PRAISE IS AN EXCELLENT EXTERNAL MOTIVATOR

and does not seem to reduce intrinsic motivation when used properly. Even among those with high intrinsic interest in a task, verbal rewards still enhanced motivation.

among those with high intrinsic interest in a task, verbal rewards still enhanced motivation.

The key is making praise authentic and specific. It's easy to spot a manager giving praise inauthentically, such as a disguised insult ("You did a good job on the tray line today; I wish you could pay attention like that every day").

*Continued on page 12*

When you have authentic praise, be clear in the compliment and focus on the behavior or process. For example, “you did a great job today” will certainly make someone feel good, but isn’t very specific.

However, compare that to this: “You did a great job today with Mr. Smith in the dining room. I know it can be challenging when a resident is impolite, and sometimes that can happen out of their loneliness and frustration. You helped calm him down, got him the meal that he needed, and did it in a kind and compassionate way – that was an excellent example of how to handle the situation.”

You can see how the more specific praise not only tells employees that you’re paying attention, but also reinforces their motivation to continue the exact behaviors you’d like to see.

### 3. Show the way.

John Maxwell, leadership author and expert, once said “A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.” As a leader, you can help show your employees the way to effectiveness, efficiency, and growth.

This starts with proper training, of course. Research among foodservice employees indicates that establishment of acceptable norms and proper

training are key in motivating employees to follow food safety guidelines. For younger generations, explaining the why—and not just the how—will help them better follow standards.

Providing constructive feedback is part of “showing the way.” While there are some aspects of failure in food service that are unacceptable (such as those which risk patient/client safety), other small mistakes should be viewed as steppingstones in the path to success.

For the latter, avoid making employees feel helpless or defeated. Instead, help them identify what led to the mistake and, together, figure out a way to correct it. This helps build them up and keeps them motivated.

For example, if the mistake arose from a lack of knowledge, maybe that individual (or the whole team) could use extra training on the topic. If the mistake was driven by decision fatigue, emphasizing an earlier breaktime could help. Or, if the mistake happened because the employee is dealing with personal stressors, you could provide a reminder about any employee assistance program (EAP) resources.

### 4. Think about a living wage.

Most research suggests pay is weakly, though

positively, associated with job satisfaction. However, among low income workers, small increases in pay may provide large increases in stress relief and job motivation.

As a foodservice manager, you may or may not have control over your employee salaries. If you do, or if you have input with your human resources department, examine if your employees are receiving a living wage.

The concept of living wage is an alternative model of assessing salary; it refers to the amount a worker must earn to meet basic needs in a particular geographic location. There is an excellent living wage calculator available through MIT (website in references) which allows you to see estimates of these hourly wages in your area.

While money does not continue to act as a major motivator once basic needs are met, it can provide considerable external motivation up to that point. Paying a living wage may be one way to increase job interest, motivation, and retention.

### 5. Fix the “broken carts.”

Think back to a time you’ve gone to the grocery store and ended up with a broken cart. You know the one—it’s got that wobbly wheel, squeaks, and seems to keep turning to

one side. At first, it seems like a minor annoyance, but over the shopping trip it gets more frustrating, affecting your mood.

Workplaces often have “broken carts” too. Think of these as ongoing issues that seem small, but put a damper on employee morale over time.

It could be a piece of equipment that isn’t working properly, like a dishwasher that keeps malfunctioning. It could be a lack of training for new employees, which frustrates both the new hire as well as the seasoned staff. Or perhaps it’s a schedule that’s always released later than expected each week.

It’s completely normal for not everything to run smoothly at all times. But when you can identify these “broken carts” and fix them, your employees will deal with less frustration and feel more motivated at work.

### 6. Switch things up.

Even intrinsically motivated people can become apathetic about their job if boredom creeps in. Think through ways you might be able to fight monotony.

Could employees do tasks in a new way? Could you offer more opportunities for learning different positions in the kitchen? Can you offer a pathway to leadership program? Get creative!

## 7. Consider rewards (sometimes).

It's important to avoid incentivizing every task, in order to reduce the risk of the overjustification effect. Similarly, excessive reward-based programs can leave employees constantly competing against each other, which can reduce overall team cohesion and strain relationships.

That said, small rewards here and there can be a fun way to increase motivation. Perhaps you're hosting an in-service for your staff, and you surprise one of your employees with a café gift card for excellent participation. Or maybe you run a cafeteria in corporate wellness, and you offer an incentive for the employee that upsells the most of a certain menu item that week.

*Continued on page 14*



## REFERENCES

- Arendt, SW, Roberts, KR, Strohhahn, C, Paez, P, Ellis, J, Meyer, JR. *Motivating Foodservice Employees to Follow Safe Food Handling Practices: Perspectives from a Multigenerational Workforce*. Apparel, Events and Hospitality Management Publications. 2014. 41. [https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/aeshm\\_pubs/41](https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/aeshm_pubs/41)
- *Boundless Psychology*. Modification of Incentive Theory of Motivation and Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Motivation. <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/teachereducationx92x1/chapter/incentive-theory-of-motivation-and-intrinsic-vs-extrinsic-motivation/>
- Cameron J, Banko KM, Pierce WD. Pervasive negative effects of rewards on intrinsic motivation: The myth continues. *Behav Anal*. 2001;24(1):1-44. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2731358/>
- Gallup. *State of the American Workplace*. 2017. <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/238085/state-american-workplace-report-2017.aspx>
- Glasseier and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. *Living Wage Calculator*. 2020. <https://livingwage.mit.edu/>
- Judge TA, Piccolo RF, Podsakoff NP, Shaw JC, Rich BL. The relationship between pay and job satisfaction: A meta-analysis of the literature. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*. 2010; 77(2): 157-167. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0001879110000722>
- Perreira TA, Innis J, Berta W. Work motivation in health care: a scoping literature review. *Int J Evid Based Healthc*. 2016 Dec;14(4):175-182. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27552534/>



But even more useful may be rewards that offer growth potential. For example, perhaps after a year of work, your company offers financial reimbursement to obtain the CDM, CFPP credential. This is both a reward and an

opportunity for the employee to further develop their skills (perhaps fanning the flames of intrinsic motivation). Not only can that motivate employees, but it can help with retention as employees stay to reap these benefits.

### 8. Start a conversation.

Lastly, don't hesitate to ask your employees what would help them feel more engaged and motivated at work. This could be in a group discussion, an online survey, or short one-on-one meetings. Going

directly to your staff could give you cost-effective ideas you never considered before.

Motivating employees can be a challenge, but one that will help improve your overall department as far as both productivity and morale. **E**

## CE Questions | MANAGEMENT CONNECTION



This Level II article assumes that the reader has a foundation of basic concepts of the topic. The desired outcome is to enhance knowledge and facilitate application of knowledge to practice.



Reading *Maximizing Motivation in the Workplace* and successfully completing these questions online has been approved for 1 hour of continuing education for CDM, CFPPs. CE credit is available ONLINE ONLY. To earn 1 GEN CE hour, access the online CE quiz in the ANFP Marketplace. Visit [www.ANFPonline.org/market](http://www.ANFPonline.org/market) and select "Edge CE Articles" within the Publications Section. If you don't see your article title on the first page, then search the title "*Maximizing Motivation in the Workplace*." Once on the article title page, purchase the article and complete the CE quiz.

- Which of the following is an example of intrinsic motivation? You help clients at work because...
  - It feels rewarding inside
  - You want a promotion
  - If you don't, you'd lose your job
- Which of the following is an example of extrinsic motivation? You take on a new role at your organization because...
  - It will be a fun challenge
  - You enjoy learning new things
  - It comes with a pay increase
- According to the Gallup "*State of the American Workplace*" report, what percentage of employees currently feel engaged at their job?
  - One-third
  - One-half
  - Two-thirds
- Which theory suggests that too many extrinsic motivators can decrease a person's intrinsic motivation?
  - Culture of positivity
  - Overjustification effect
  - The broken cart theory
- Which of the following is an example of authentic and specific praise?
  - "Good work today"
  - "Thanks for *finally* sanitizing the prep station right away"
  - "I appreciate you taking tips from our in-service last week and applying them today. I saw you took the initiative to sanitize prep areas on your own, and I really appreciate that"
- Which term refers to the amount a worker needs to earn to meet basic needs in a particular geographic location?
  - Minimum wage
  - Living wage
  - Optimal wage
- Which of the following would be *the best example* of a reward that could reinvigorate intrinsic motivation?
  - Cover tuition for a foodservice leadership program
  - Increase pay every six months
  - Provide coffee gift cards when employees arrive on time every day that month