



## SENIOR EXECUTIVE ROUNDTABLE

### People Do What They Want to Do

A mentor of mine said, “people do what they want to do, even if you are paying them.” There is a lot of truth to this statement, and even more so today when there is a relative shortage of high quality employees available.

So the question is not, “how can you get people **to do** what you want them to do?” The question is, “how can you get people **to want to do** what you want them to do?”

You’ve heard the saying, “you can lead a horse to water but you can’t make him drink.” You can if you know what makes a horse thirsty.

So what kinds of things help a staff member **want** to do the kinds of things that you want them to do? Consider these ideas:

- **Understand what motivates them.** It’s important to remember that the things that excite or motivate you are not necessarily the things that excite or motivate someone else. Some people are motivated by money, others by recognition, some by relationship, and others by flexibility. Money no longer is the primary motivator for many younger workers. You should know enough about every person who reports to you to know the things that connect with them most strongly.
- **Help them feel something.** Almost no behavior change takes place unless a person’s feelings change. People will be more focused and effective when they are emotionally connected to what is happening.
- **Connect them to the story.** People want to be involved in something bigger than themselves. Figure out how to talk about what you are doing in ways that describe a bigger picture without being hokey or out-of-touch. How does your work benefit your customers, stakeholders, or the community in tangible ways?
- **Recognize and emphasize progress.** People appreciate when someone notices work that has been done. And they believe that bigger goals are possible when smaller ones are accomplished. Make sure that every staff function has a series of smaller milestones or recognition points that can help them stop and appreciate what has already been done.

- **Provide the resources they need to be successful.** There is almost nothing more discouraging to someone than being asked to do a task that you don't have the resources to do. Some people will be assertive in making sure that people know what they need; others will try to make do with what they have. People will want to do what you want them to do when they believe they have the support and opportunity to succeed.
- **Spend time with them one on one.** You should recognize that, because of the personality that probably helped you be successful, relational connection probably means less to you than the people you are leading. Many of them will replace trust with suspicion if they begin to feel that no one really cares about them as person. Spending time with them individually is a great way to fill their emotional bank account. *Pro tip: Start every meeting with a specific question about something happening in their life not related to work.*
- **Give them encouragement.** Encouragement is the food of the heart and every heart is a hungry heart. Be sure to recognize the good work they are doing and give them credit. Many leaders expect a lot from themselves and therefore just see someone's good work as earning their paycheck and nothing more. Most people need more than this - they need the encouragement of knowing that somebody sees and somebody cares.

Which of these are you the best at?

Which of these are you the worst at?

What practical step could you take to improve this week?