

How Sales Leaders Can Tap into The Motivation Reservoir

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To refresh my key points from the last article, the critical formula for success in the sales profession is Knowledge + Skills x Motivation = Success. We determined that knowledge can absolutely be taught or self-attained. Hiring organizations can test, evaluate and determine to the best of their ability the skill set needed in the requisite position. But how in the world can they measure or affect someone's motivations?

In almost every sales organizations I have worked with over the years, the lowest common denominator to solve for the Motivation problem (or perceived problem) is through incentives, rewards and various alterations of the incentive compensation plan. Let's start with the compensation plan. We can all agree that compensation and related bonus plans are crucial for attracting and retaining the best talent. What has also been documented through scientific research is the diminishing return on how much money drives continuous performance and overall satisfaction. The other factor with incentive comp is that in a lot of cases, sales professionals aren't intimate enough with the IC plan construct. This leads to sales professionals doing the same things they did in the past and if they happen to hit the plan objectives, it's by happenstance. A lot of this falls on the lack of plan intimacy on the part of the manager (if they don't understand the plan, they don't have constructive conversations and strategic planning sessions with their reps).

Now let's tackle incentives and rewards. On the surface, over and above incentives (spiffs) sound like an easy way to change selling behavior. Sell two or three more widgets than the last quarter and you earn reward points, gift cards or merchandise. Everyone loves getting stuff, but does it actually create sustainable behavior change and does it serve the best interests of the organization or customer? The answer is typically no. Most incentive rule structures create an easy temptation to skip the steps necessary to foster collaboration, innovation and properly build customer relationships.



Take the Wells Fargo example. Sales teams and branch employees were tasked with crossselling and opening new account types in exchange for incentives. It didn't take long before the Wells Fargo reps were "opening" new accounts and credit cards without the knowledge of the customer. These reps earned a lot of incentives and millions of dollars of revenue for the bank, but at what cost? Try three billion dollars in settlement costs and an immeasurable hit on its reputation. When incentive rule structures and goal attainment are out of whack, there are rarely anything but negative consequences.

Back to the holy grail of motivation.

Incentives and rewards attempt to change the person. That is an incredibly difficult task without risking negative behaviors. In behavioral science, these are called driving forces. Sticks & carrots. The easiest way to affect sales motivation in the most positive and benevolent way is to understand what inherently motives your sales team in the first place. These inherent motivators are known as intrinsic motivators (what gets you up in the morning). They are the foundation of any behavior change initiative and if properly addresses and leaned into, will drive discretionary effort > engagement > productivity. It's a logical continuum, but one often perceived as too esoteric or complex. But is it really that complicated? If you knew that your sales team or sales rep was motivated by collaboration, wouldn't it make sense to provide opportunities for more teamwork? If that simple nudge can ultimately drive sales behaviors and productivity, it's certainly worth trying. And, this methodology is a lot less expensive than what you may have tried in the past.

At MotiveX, we didn't invent motivation, but we created an easy-to-use motivational profile that offers measurable, actionable insights into the forces that motivate employees. For more information, please visit us @ <u>www.ReviveMotivation.com</u> and email <u>info@motiveXsolutions.com</u>

