

MOTIVATION

In workshops and coaching sessions my clients often ask me about motivation – ‘*How do I get myself (or my team) to do x?*’ My observation is that when we are poorly motivated it is often because we are using the wrong type of motivation in the wrong way. Sources of motivation can be broadly divided into four categories - Extrinsic, Intrinsic, Introjected and Internalised.

Extrinsic motivation is about external rewards. ‘*If I do x, then I will get y*’. Our brain is very good at unconsciously processing this sort of equation and deciding whether to put the effort in – ‘*How hard is it for me to do x? How likely is it that I will get y? Do I really want y?*’

Extrinsic motivation can also be about avoiding a negative consequence. ‘*If I do the washing up, then my partner won’t get angry with me*’.

The major problem with extrinsic motivation is that we quickly get used to external rewards – money and material possessions are particularly vulnerable to this effect. However, extrinsic rewards that lead us to feel we belong and are valued, particularly by people we care about, are less prone to habituation. For example, a conversation with some one who gives us their full attention and who is genuinely interested in what we have achieved tends to affect us much more deeply than a few words of praise.

We are **intrinsically motivated** when we do an activity for the pure joy of doing it. To maximize intrinsic motivation it is helpful to set up the activity so that we are more likely to get into ‘flow’. Make it challenging enough to engage you but not so challenging that it is stressful. Try and ensure time without interruptions so you can really focus (switch off your mobile!). If you want to encourage someone else to do an activity they find intrinsically rewarding, be wary of attaching an extrinsic reward to the activity – it can paradoxically decrease motivation. Instead set up the situation so they can get into flow.

Introjected motivation relates to all the ‘shoulds’ and ‘oughts’ we use to force ourselves to do the things we don’t want to do. These are usually rules of behaviour or expectations we have been taught by our family or society. The problem with introjected motivation is that we often feel resentful about the activities we do in response to our ‘shoulds’. Whereas, when we *don’t* do something that we think we *should* do, we often feel guilty. You can’t win with this form of motivation!

Internalised motivation occurs when we do something because it connects with our deeply held values. We may not enjoy the activity but we feel good about ourselves for living in line with what is important to us. It can be helpful to consciously build this sort of motivation and ask yourself – ‘*How does this goal connect to what is really important to me?*’

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