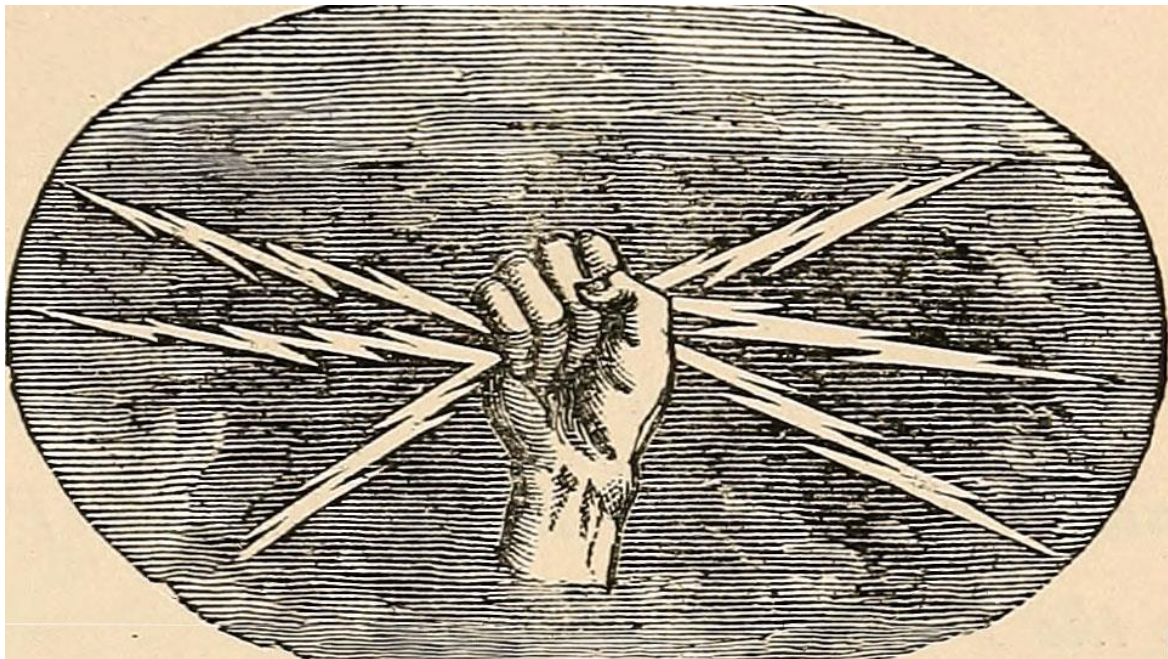


How to unleash the power of intrinsic motivation

26 Jan 2018 By Professor Randall S Peterson

With continued growth in the service economy, people are an organisation's greatest asset – but engagement remains low. Professor Randall S Peterson outlines his key tips to boost employee drive



If someone truly believes in the value of their work, they bring energy, commitment and internal motivation, and unleash their natural internal drive and dedication. So for organisational success, leaders need to fire up people's sense of intrinsic motivation. However, according to a recent study* by the Leadership Institute at London Business School, lack of employee engagement is the single biggest headache facing today's business leaders.

More than 1,200 managers and business leaders from across the globe gave us their views on key challenges, and employee engagement was their overriding concern. From financial services to manufacturing and professional services, this issue was the primary challenge for managers across diverse sectors and geographies.

But it really doesn't have to be like this. There are organisations that get it right – but it takes focused effort and commitment to help staff find meaning and purpose in their day-to-day work. Put simply, people have to feel good about their work and understand how they, as an individual, are making a unique contribution to something bigger and meaningful.

Team leaders need to regularly share the team's and organisation's overall aims; the role staff play in facilitating those ambitions; and the specific contribution of each person. Such discussions can be included as part of broader team meetings, proving very powerful in helping to create intrinsic motivation.

What else can you do in addition to connecting to purpose? Here are seven key levers for employee engagement, which are based on research and have been shown to reliably improve the performance of team members.

Design the job around the people

Can you redesign or tailor jobs to fit specific individuals and their values and preferences (while still supporting the overall corporate frame)? If feasible, consider reassigning aspects of roles to suit the individuals currently holding them. Just be sure to know what motivates each individual – and get their buy-in.

Explore training options

What skills does an individual need or want? Training can be formal or informal and include, for example, reverse mentoring and job shadowing, which are effective and inexpensive.

Widen decision-making

Can you include team members in decision-making for the group or organisation? At least be sure to consult staff on major decisions and apply the findings from employee surveys.

Value team mates

Do staff respect, value or even admire teammates and want to work with them? And do new hires share the same values as existing employees? When they do, employees will be more motivated.

Deal with poor performers

Are there processes that enable managers to deal with underperformance?

Check transparency of rules

Is everyone held to the same rules? This is where clear HR policies are vital so staff feel a sense of fairness. If they don't, find why this is and address the real (or imagined) inequity. Perception is crucial.

Make pay competitive

Are you paying the market rate? It's not essential or even desirable to be the top payer in the sector, although paying below average is likely to be short-sighted.

If an organisation commits to improving staff motivation, it shouldn't depend on huge budgets. Instead, it should focus its effort and commitment to help staff find meaning and purpose in their roles.

To obtain a copy of London Business School's Leadership Institute report and take a five-minute effective leadership test, visit the [school's website](#).

* A survey run by London Business School of 1,248 senior directors and executives, of which almost three-quarters came from global organisations, multinationals and large companies.

Professor Randall S Peterson is the academic director of the Leadership Institute at London Business School