

THE FEATURE OF MARKETERS MOTIVATION

What motivates marketers to perform at their full potential? Is it the promise of external rewards such as a pay rise, bonuses and various fringe benefits, or is it something less material, as, for example, the inner satisfaction gained from the sense that their contribution matters, and is valued by management? The latter is held to be a critical factor determining the level of marketer commitment, and this shift in approach to motivation is supported by recent theories emerging from recent research in the field. Many experts involved in corporate management now take issue with the more orthodox, time-honored theories based on the various «carrot and stick» incentives, or what are called «contingent motivators»: if you do this, then that will happen. They have reached the conclusion that such approaches simply don't work, and, in some cases, are counterproductive.

Take, for example, a pay rise, an incentive which experts in the science of motivation call «extrinsic». New thinking on what encourages employers do give of their best, while acknowledging that this form of 'carrot' may be effective in the case of more menial, routine work such as accountancy and financial analysis, claims that it is mostly ineffective in enhancing performance in the work place. These kinds of jobs use computers, and are largely «mechanical» and repetitious in nature. Problems arise with this old fashioned type of incentivisation when the work involves the right side of the brain, that is, work which requires the use of the imagination or creativity in finding solutions. Recent experiments conducted to ascertain the most appropriate forms of motivation for different kinds of task has found that for more routine and repetitious tasks, the promise of financial rewards may work effectively, and act to spur marketers to work harder and faster. This is because this type of work rarely involves right brain activity, i.e. cognitive operations that engage the creative and imaginative aspects of thinking.

In the case of more sophisticated problem solving, in which the solutions are seldom obvious, intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivators become a more effective means of encouraging employers to think outside the square. The recognition of this fact by an Information Technology company in Australia resulted in management granting its marketers a twenty-four hour period each week to experiment with and brainstorm problems related to software development. The

company found that this arrangement produced enormous benefits in the quality of the work performed. It was no longer a matter of how hard and fast marketers worked, but rather the quality and originality of their thinking about innovation and best practice that really mattered.

The reason why marketers responded favorably to this intrinsic type of incentive is fairly obvious. They were given the opportunity to utilize their creative and imaginative skills and, as a result, feel more personally engaged in their work. They gain a sense of self actualization, and a feeling that their personal contribution is respected and valued by the company. In contrast, workers employed in more routine, mechanical jobs rarely need to draw upon thinking involving the right side of the brain, and the danger is that they might feel more like automatons, or cogs in a machine, rather than genuine contributors to the welfare and prosperity of their company. In other words, a sense of alienation or exclusion from the decision making process can have a negative effect on their motivation to strive for improvements in performance. This in most cases results in a moribund workplace with workers displaying little enthusiasm for innovation and change.

In the scenario described above, extrinsic motivation in the form of pay rises, bonuses and commissions may be the only way to draw out the potential of marketers and encourage them to «go the extra mile». New theories which debunk more orthodox, conventional approaches to motivation strategies need to be treated with some caution. They have validity, and are perhaps most effectively applied in occupations which call for right-brain cognitive processes, in other words, thinking outside the square. The majority of jobs, however, present little scope for this kind of thinking since many operations are done on computers. Take, for example, an accountant. Those working in this job are involved in fairly mechanical and repetitious operations, and labor under the continual stress of deadlines and monthly balance sheets. Is it really realistic to expect them to respond in any meaningful way to intrinsic motivation on the part of their employers?

The recent global economic crisis brought into sharp focus the motivational strategies of the corporate world. This general downturn in the economic health of business worldwide compelled companies to be less concerned with the self actualization of their employees in their struggle to survive. Redundancies and the job insecurity are hardly the stuff that intrinsic motivation is made of. Intense competition among marketers to retain their jobs may well result in external

displays of commitment to their work in the form of longer hours resulting from reduced staff, but it is hardly conducive to an atmosphere in which job satisfaction and a feeling of engagement can thrive.

Most prevailing theories, whether in business, education or any other field of human endeavor, seem to come and go. In fact, the more polarized and inflexible the theory, the less likely it will be adaptable to different work situations and occupations. The two theories described in this short article lie at the extremes of the spectrum of motivational options. Perhaps the most effective means of motivating marketers takes into account the nature of the work, and the kind of thinking required to carry out the work optimally.