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The Holy Grail of Workplace Motivation

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Human motivation is complex.

Motivating humans in the workplace seems to be a question business owners continue to struggle with.

I've also found two key factors that motivate consistently across all generations in the workplace: **autonomy** and **transparency**.

Autonomy

Human beings are autonomous creatures. We all want to have autonomy over how we live, work and play.

Yet, from the time of the industrial revolution work has been very structured, set up with lots of guidelines and time schedules.

This approach creates a workforce that is compliant with requirements, but shows little commitment to helping their companies achieve results beyond doing what is required.

(The importance of autonomy in the workplace was powerfully articulated in Daniel Pink's 2010 book ***Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us.***)

What if a work environment gave employees more autonomy? How would this work? How could this work?

Very simply, systems are created that allow employees autonomy over the following criteria:

- What they do
- How they do it
- When they do it
- Where they do it
- With whom they do it

This management approach takes more creativity to identify the right people to bring on as employees, as well as more clearly defining the results employees are required to achieve and contribute. It also requires significantly more diligence in holding people accountable to achieving the results their role requires.

But, it works. An entire philosophy is beginning to emerge called **Results Only Work Environments** or **ROWEs**.

Two former human resource executives at Best Buy, Cali Ressler and Jodi Thompson, started this movement that is based on the concept of 100% autonomy over how people do their jobs.

I've applied this strategy with a number of clients and it works to create a more motivated, committed workforce.

It works because it treats employees like the adult, autonomous human beings they are.

Transparency

For small business owners transparency may be more frightening than autonomy.

Transparency is difficult for small business owners because it is opening them up to scrutiny they don't feel their employees are entitled to.

There is absolutely some validity to that belief.

But, that belief needs to be balanced with the desire to get the most and best from their employees. And, if the latter is desired transparency can create it.

Transparency breeds significantly higher levels of motivation and commitment because *it speaks directly to the level of trust in the workplace*. Research has shown that higher levels of trust can be directly related to higher levels of financial performance.

Offering transparency shows an employee a direct correlation between their role and the company's bottom line performance. It allows employees to understand the correlation between their compensation and the results the company achieves.

The biggest proponent of transparency in the workplace is a company called ***The Great Game of Business***, which offers strategies on open book management. I've applied some of their philosophies with my clients in conjunction with higher levels of autonomy and it's a powerful combination.

Business owners that embrace more autonomy and transparency in their workforce will be able to attract, and most importantly retain, the best of the best talent. And, in an environment where talent is beginning to get scarce, this approach can offer a huge return on investment in this competitive 21st century marketplace.

Do you have the courage to give it a try?

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