



The Energy of Conversation

Dedicated to Learning & Improvement

The Four Cornerstones – understanding job satisfaction

There is an internal dialogue that keeps some managers awake at night and that is the question of how to motivate their team. In answering a question such as this, we must look at the emotional needs of an employee and first ask ourselves, how do we want to *feel* when we are work? In doing this we create the four cornerstones of job satisfaction:

Community – to feel that I am part of an interacting group

Worth – to feel that I am heard, appreciated and valued

Inspiration – to feel I am challenged and motivated into action

Growth – to feel that I am continually learning and developing

In a corporate environment, managers may need the support of a coach to help them lift the performance of their team. The four cornerstones can be a useful model to illustrate the motivational drives of an employee. Similarly, when coaching individuals in the team, the model can be useful in helping the coachee to work through their values.

In his legendary work *FLOW*, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi speaks of two psychological processes: *differentiation* – the need to stand out and *integration* – the need to fit in. This dual aspect can create internal conflict in the mind of an employee and both must be addressed by the line manager.

Let's first look at *integration*. If an individual does not feel part of a local team or of the overall organisation, they will never be truly happy at work and this insecurity will distract them from fulfilling their potential. Although a sense of **community** can be encouraged in very simple and obvious ways, it is easy to neglect this fundamental aspect of human motivation.

Equally it is a basic human need to be appreciated. Without positive feedback, employees can quickly become resentful and business leaders not recognising this risk losing their team's commitment and attention. All employees must feel a deep sense of **worth**.

It has been well documented that the motivational value of salary increases and performance-related bonuses is limited and fairly short-term. Dan Pink - in his landmark work *DRIVE* – proclaims that once a person finds a task that he or she truly loves, external motivation is not only unnecessary but may even negate or diminish accumulated motivation levels.

To develop inner motivation every employee should be encouraged to adopt or design a *special project* which can provide balance in the working day. This project should be an initiative that benefits the organization and also develops the knowledge, confidence and skillset of the individual. This is where *differentiation* is achieved and coaches can help here too by facilitating creative

conversations to help fuel the project. Business leaders often feel responsible for motivating teams but they need to focus on providing individuals with the **inspiration** to motivate themselves.

The fourth cornerstone is about the importance of learning and development – be it personal coaching, group workshops or training courses – whatever is appropriate to the individual, their role and the organisation. Motivation is lifted on multiple levels during effective L&D programmes:

1. Knowing that the organisation has invested in personal development is motivational
2. Support received by the line manager before and after the course is motivational
3. Ideas and concepts gleaned from workshops or training courses is motivational
4. Evidence that the learning can be applied in the working day is motivational

The **growth** of the individual in an organisation is critical to motivating employees, whilst effective and long term *performance management* cannot be achieved before first addressing the four cornerstones of job satisfaction.

The Four Cornerstones article © 2011 The Energy of Conversation Ltd. David Finney is Managing director of The Energy of Conversation, an organization dedicated to learning and improvement. Prior to running his own business, David spent 20 years in management and staff development in the market research industry.

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