

# REDUCING EMPLOYEE'S UNMOTIVATION IN THE TIME OF CRISIS

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## **Abstract:**

*In these times of economic crisis, in today's turbulent, often chaotic, environment, commercial success depends on employees using their full talents, but because employers feel them unmotivated they do not involve really in the enterprises' activity. This generates low results and the crisis becomes deeper. This paper wishes to show why people are unmotivated, and especially young qualified people, from Romania, as well as to present some suggestions how to reduce employee's unmotivation.*

**Key words:** crisis, unmotivation, young people, qualified

**JEL classification:** M12

## **Why do we need motivated employees?**

This is an important question which was debated by a number of researchers. The answer for this greatly debated subject was the recognition of human resources as the "wealth of nations", this being a widely accepted explanation for economic progress in industrialized countries during the last half of the twentieth century.

The notion has received great publicity and was widely used by politicians from democratic societies. But the principle has enormous economic implications at national and international level.

Why do we need motivated employees? The answer is quite a simple one: organization's survival. Every rapidly changing organization needs motivated employees because they are more productive and help organizations to survive. In order to be more effective, managers need to understand what motivates employee. Of all the functions performed by a manager, motivating employees is nevertheless the most complex. This is due, in part, to the fact that the factors which motivate employees are constantly changing. For example, research suggests that as employees' income increases, money becomes less of a motivating factor. Also, as employees get older and more experienced, interesting work becomes more of a motivating factor.

In today's turbulent environment, commercial success depends on employees using all their talents. However with all the available theories and practices, managers often view motivation as something of a mystery. Mostly this is because each individual is motivated by different things and in different ways.

In addition, these are crises times when chaotic and stagnant hierarchies can create insecurity and lower staff morale. Moreover, now more than ever a lot of people are working part time or on limited-term contracts, and these employees are often more difficult to motivate.

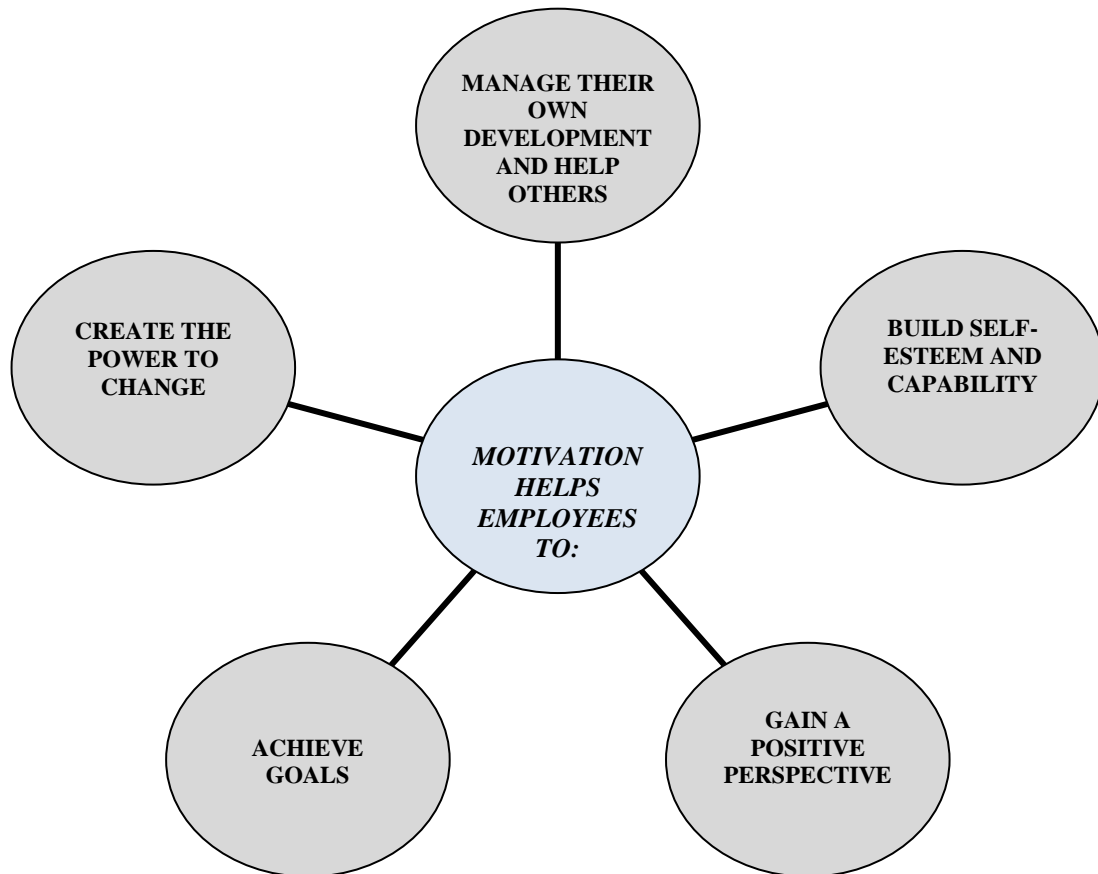
## **Definition of Employee Motivation**

We can find in the specialty literature a lot of definition about motivation, but one of the scientists wrote about motivating employees what we consider as the most

representative definition, “The heart of motivation is to give people what they really want most from work. The more you are able to provide what they want, the more you should expect what you really want, namely: productivity, quality, and service.”

### **Advantages of Employee Motivation**

A positive motivational policy and practice should improve productivity, quality, and service. Motivation helps people:



*Figure no.1 Usefulness for employees of motivational factors*

### **Disadvantages of Employee Motivation**

There are no real disadvantages to successfully motivating employees, but there are many barriers which must be overcome. Barriers may be represented by manager’s unawareness or absence, inadequate buildings, outdated equipment, and ingrained attitudes, such as: “We don’t get paid extra to work harder.”; “We’ve always done it this way.”; “Our bosses don’t have a clue about what we do.”; “It doesn’t say that in my job description.”; “I’m going to do as little as possible without getting fired.”

Such views will require persuasion, perseverance, as well as the proof of experience in order to be dispelled.

### **Unmotivated employees**

Highly motivated employees are productive, energetic, eager to take on additional responsibilities, and pleasant to work with spreading their enthusiasm and work ethic to others; they represent the true assets of any organization.

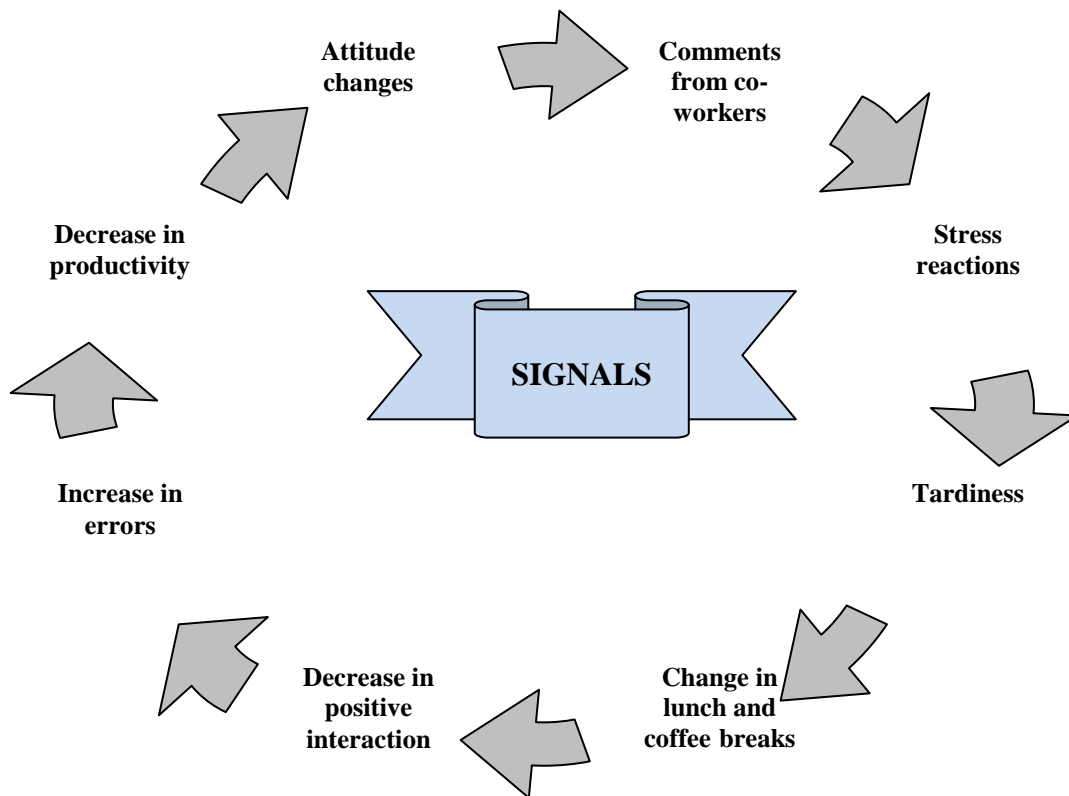
But, inevitably, every organization, regardless of the nature of its activity or its size, has also non-performing, unmotivated, burning out-or burnt-out-employees. Therefore, to increase success, every manager needs to deal with this obstacle by

identifying unmotivated employees and “turning them around”. But this process isn't as easy as it may seem, especially because as the employer you can't really “make” anyone be motivated!

**Identifying the Signs of Burnout**

What are the signs of a lack of motivation or burnout? A decrease in performance or productivity represents one of the key symptoms of burnout. This can be established by comparing an employee's past performance with his current performance. If you can't find a serious reason to explain this change, then demotivation is usually the correct reason.

In Figure 2 we present a number of signals you need to be looking for and must begin to address:



*Figure no.2 Possible signals of burnout*

The root causes of motivational and behavior problems in a department are well known to most managers, but keep in mind that there is no quick solution that you can apply for most of these problems. We all agree that a manager can't implement a policy tomorrow and have the problem resolved the next day. Most problems evolved over a long period of time, and it might take years to resolve them. In Table 1 we present the root causes, as well as the proven methods for eliminating or at least improving the situation.

**Table no. 1**  
*Root causes for motivational and behavior problems*

| Causes                    | Methods for eliminating or improving the situation  |
|---------------------------|---|
| <b>Poor communication</b> | This is one of the top problems in all organizations. Whether we are talking about bad or unpleasant news for employees, they will receive it better if |

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|  | managers communicate them properly. Some potential solutions would be meetings, notices, and clear policies on the organizations' operating systems.  |
| <b>Unfair use of policies</b>                | This problem is critical. Whatever the department's policies, they must be administered fairly to everyone.   |
| <b>Lack of discipline and responsibility</b> | This issue is one of the most difficult to change. Employees must follow all rules, and managers must hold them responsible for their actions and performance. Correcting this problem should begin with effective performance appraisals.  |
| <b>Poor hiring practices</b>                 | In this case, the saying you get what you hire applies. Make sure you have job descriptions and requirements, as well as simple aptitude tests to measure and improve the quality of a new employee.  |
| <b>Lack of training</b>                      | World-class organizations train their employees 5-10% of total hours at work. This is a costly solution but you will enjoy much more the benefits.  |
| <b>Lack of recognition and praise</b>        | Develop recognition programs for all employees, because it doesn't take much to make people feel good about themselves. A quick "Thank you" or a handshake can work wonders sometimes.  |
| <b>Lack of planning</b>                      | The more structured the work environment is, the happier and more motivated employees will be. Weekly planning meetings and written work schedules will communicate goals and expectations, not to mention that they will help the departments progress more smoothly.  |
| <b>Parts and supply shortages</b>            | This problem is common to all maintenance and engineering organizations, and it is the top complaint of maintenance technicians. But it affects much more than the attitude of maintenance employees. It can detriment customer satisfaction, work quality, cost of work, and the efficiency of the maintenance effort. |
| <b>Limited opportunity for advancement</b>   | Even the best employees can become demoralized quickly if they think they are   |

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
|                               | in a dead-end job. It is difficult, if not impossible to find motivation when you believe that there is no advancement possibility. In these cases, a brainstorming at management level is necessary to convince employees to give their best. Sometimes, leaving the department is the only remedies.   |
| <b>Unmotivated leadership</b> | This problem can be troubling and difficult to repair. Typically, the task of assembling a quality team of motivated employees starts at the top. If the team's leadership and management are suffering from the "Isn't it awful?" syndrome, the employees will adopt the same attitude. The only way to correct this issue is to change their attitude.                 |
| <b>Poor leadership</b>        | Can your leadership team achieve the demanded tasks? In our opinion, most of these motivation problems are rooted in the lack of quality at management level. Being born with leadership qualities and skills is the easiest way to succeed as a leader, but don't ignore the fact that training is the next best thing for any management position in any organization. |

We can also speak about an **unmotivated mentality**. Romanian young people feel unmotivated because they can not see the results of their efforts to be educated, to have professional knowledge and abilities. A lot of students recognize that, after they will finish their studies, they will not have the opportunity to be recruited in the domain they studied. Most of them, after they finish their studies, go abroad to work in unqualified jobs, but with more money than if they would accept to work here, in the domain they studied. So they begin to be unmotivated to learn better, to do more, and to gain knowledge. The result will be a vicious circle: unmotivated students to learn, because they know that there are no well paid work places in the domain they studied, and the reverse: they can not obtain well paid work places, as qualified workers because they haven't got enough knowledge.

How can this circle be stopped? To make a good link between education and business life: students have to gain knowledge and practice to be ready to obtain qualified work places. On the other hand employers must not seek to recruit only experienced young people. It is a very good opportunity to give the chance to young people to gain experience while they are students, being sponsored by an enterprise and after they finish their studies to be obliged to work in that enterprise for a while. It can be also an opportunity to recruit young people without experience or with less experience. It is a good way to motivate them by training and forming them to be adapted to the enterprise's needs and culture.

A lot of studies show that after graduating only 17% of the young people that are hired are satisfied with their jobs and less then 60% of them can't find a job in the

domain they studied. From those who were questioned 13% have a master degree, or more.

But not only young people are unmotivated in Romania. We can speak about qualified people that left from Romania abroad to gain more money, such examples would be: doctors, teachers, engineers, and nurses.

Statistics show that, in 2010 over 20000 Romanians worked abroad and more than half of them have higher education. A lot of them are working in the domain in which they are qualified, such as: medicine, engineering and IT. Most of the 20000 Romanians left Romania in the first semester of 2010 to work abroad.

More than 320000 people with high education applied for jobs abroad and 20000 of them were accepted and they were hired. Only 5200 Romanians with higher education do not work corresponding to their education level. They are working as taxi drivers, concierge or in agriculture.

The state's policy can stop this exodus of "young brains" by granting subventions to stimulate enterprises to hire young qualified people.

### **How can we reduce unmotivation?**

The key to successful motivation is to communicate often and well, treat employees fairly and openly, create more opportunities for work planning and scheduling, and make sure the members of your leadership team are the best they can be.

The Action Checklist for Motivating Employees is designed for managers with responsibilities for managing, motivating, and developing staff at a time when organizational structures and processes are undergoing a continual change and can help your organization.

While what people want from work is situational, depending on the person, their needs and the rewards that are meaningful to them, giving people what they want from work is really quite straight forward. Some of the people's necessities are:

- **Control of their work inspires motivation:** including such components as the ability to impact decisions; setting clear and measurable goals; clear responsibility for a complete, or at least defined, task; job enrichment; tasks performed in the work itself; and recognition for achievement.
- **Belonging to the in-crowd creates motivation:** including items such as receiving timely information and communication; understanding management's formulas for decision making; team and meeting participation opportunities; and visual documentation and posting of work progress and accomplishments.
- **The opportunity for growth and development is motivating:** and includes education and training; career paths; team participation; succession planning; cross-training; and field trips to successful workplaces.
- **Leadership is the key in motivation.** People want clear expectations that provide a picture of the desired outcomes, with goal setting and feedback and an appropriate structure or framework.
- **Recognition for Performance Creates Motivation.** Specialists say that people want recognition for their individual performance and remuneration tied to their performance. Employees want people who don't perform fired; in fact, failure to discipline and firing non-performers is one of the most demotivating actions an organization can take. This action is as bad as paying poor performers the same salary as non-performers in deflating motivation. Many companies are working

very hard and using limited resources on the wrong tools. People want employers to pay them above market rates; they seek flexible work schedules and want stock options, a chance to learn.

The key in creating a work environment that encourages motivation is represented by the individual's desires and needs. It is highly recommended that employers inquire employees what they want from work and whether they are getting it. After obtaining this information they have many simple and inexpensive opportunities to create a motivational and desirable work environment, because it's important to know what is important for the employees in order to achieve high motivation and positive morale. This will achieve great business success.

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