

Staff Motivation

THE CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

**An Early Years
Leaders Reflection**

Motivation?

It's a word we talk about a lot. We know the general meaning of it but where do we get it from? Is it possible to get it shipped from Amazon? Home Bargains perhaps? Or maybe its more bespoke than that? Perhaps it's only available on Etsy?!

Ah, if only that were the case! ...truth is though we can't get it ready made; motivation is the state of mind of an individual or team. It is a feeling or a desire to do something, achieve something and do it well.

While we could say an individual is responsible for ensuring they are in a role that inspires and motivates them, the leader also has a responsibility to provide the right climate to encourage motivation.

Work environments, if we aren't careful, can be demotivating places breeding a culture of resentment and frustration. Whilst it is natural that the levels of motivation will fluctuate and that a leader cannot control every anomaly, there are a few tricks to bounce back from low levels of motivation more effectively.

Lets have a think..



'Is it possible to get it shipped from Amazon?'

Before We Can Motivate



The life of an Early years leader is no breeze. You have every man and his dog to worry about. Luckily we all tend to be nurturing and warm individuals who naturally do this, however, of course there are times when we overlook things.

Recently I was working with an early years manager who could not motivate a member of her team. They were disengaged, demotivated and sadly a little dishevelled in appearance. The manager was getting increasingly frustrated at having tried some of our more frequently used motivation techniques and none working.

With this being the case it became clear that motivational techniques would only work if the individual had all of their basic needs met first.

On closer inspection it was evident that recently they had had to leave their rented accommodation as their partner had lost their job and move into a box room at their grandparents house.

The physical basic needs of this individual far outweighed any other motivational technique the manager was using.

This must be the first rule of motivating others. First of all make sure their basic needs are met, shelter, food, water, love and relationships, without these no motivation can take place.

The right side of 'The Line'



Although it is difficult to see someone struggling in this way it is imperative that as an early years leader we stay on the right side of the line, because if you should cross it there is no going back and it may open a whole host of issues. When supporting a staff member with any basic needs such as food, housing or relationships a listening ear and a signpost to the correct services should be what you offer. Perhaps a temporary amendment to duties but certainly no physical support or advice. By crossing that line you may make yourself vulnerable if anything should happen.

They are ready to be motivated! What now?

People get motivated by different things or a mixture of a few things. the main motivators, except for our basic physical needs as discussed above, are;

- Social
- Emotional
- Intellectual

Lets look at these a little closer and think about what techniques are effective under each one.



Socially Motivate People

Social motivators may be things such as status, job titles, money and recognition. To be motivated socially you need to feel a sense of value and appreciation for the work that you do, be properly rewarded for this through recognition, title or financial rewards.

The Early Years sector is not generally swimming in money to be able to financially reward people in the way that we would like to, however, appropriate financial compensation should be given as people increase their responsibilities.

Other ways to motivate people socially include;

- Staff members of the month
- Competitions and prizes
- Public gratitude and appreciation
- Leaving early or starting late as a reward
- Added responsibilities
- Team acknowledgement of a persons skill - the 'go to' person for a specific area.
- Becoming a coach or mentor to someone less experienced



Emotional connections are essential for someone to be their best and reach their full potential. We have seen this demonstrated in Maslows hierarchy of need and in the case study we explored earlier.

To emotionally motivate someone you need to understand them, who their primary connections are, their purpose for working and what is important to them.

Ways to Emotionally Motivate People;

- Know their primary connections and family members names and ask about them, especially when they are going through big life events or changes.
- Know that their family / primary connections are important to them and have empathy for their personal situations.
- Hold 'family days' in the setting where you invite your staff and their families in for food and drinks.
- Have a fair and consistent time off for dependants and bereavement policy.
- Your setting should feel like a home from home for your staff members. A sense of belonging, acceptance and warmth goes a very, very long way!

Intellectually Motivate People



Respecting a person's intellectual capabilities is a powerful motivational technique. As a leader you should never profess to be the best at everything. If you do, then your team will become demotivated as they feel they will never grow or develop. Even worse...they may feel dependent on you and your role will become increasingly stressful.

Try these techniques to motivate people intellectually;

- Access to training - this can be formal or informal
- Play to their skills and interests - Give them responsibilities that directly link to their main skills or interests.
- Ask them to help you. This should be with anything relevant to their skills.
- Ask them to research and feedback to you on a topic of interest to them.
- Use secondary loop learning so that all individuals that have been on training feedback their findings to others.
- Never allow someone to become stagnant, challenge them to think and learn new ideas..
- Spark curiosity!

What about me?



Of course nothing you have just read is going to work unless you, yourself are intrinsically motivated. You may not have a line manager or if you do perhaps they aren't big on motivating you.

First off, you need someone to talk to and this needs to be someone who you trust and who is at an equal level or senior to you. This is important to protect your workforce from any of your own anxieties. If you do have a line manager you can trust consider asking for monthly meetings.

You will also find value in signing up to our silver membership giving you access to monthly professional support. Did you know you can also ask the business owners to fund this for you as part of your ongoing professional development?

Just as you would for your team, consider the things you enjoy doing and get better at them. Invest in your CPD.

For tasks that you don't enjoy but need to be done make sure you are organised in doing them. There is nothing more demotivating than a task that you hate that hasn't been done and a deadline that is looming. Just like the feeling of a good spring clean, getting the awful jobs done in a timely way is motivating as you have the space to think, be creative, strategic and spend time doing things you enjoy. Be true to yourself and your dreams and aspirations. Make plans and aim to stay on track to achieve them. We all need a dream and an ambition.

