



INSPIRING^{AND} MOTIVATING YOUR TEAM

Especially in mission-driven environments, managers are asked to do more than assign tasks and monitor performance. You are culture builders, change leaders, and steady influencers in times of uncertainty. True leadership isn't just about directing work. It's about inspiring people to do their best work. Here's how you can motivate your team in meaningful, sustainable ways.



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INFLUENCE VS. AUTHORITY: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Authority comes from your title.

Influence comes from trust.

Authority allows you to assign tasks, make decisions, and enforce policies. Influence, however, determines whether people feel motivated, committed, and engaged in carrying out those decisions.

When employees act only because they “have to,” you get compliance. When they act because they “want to,” you get commitment.

To build influence:

- Follow through consistently.
- Be transparent about decisions.
- Invite input before finalizing plans.
- Model the behaviors you expect.

Influence grows when employees believe you are fair, competent, and genuinely invested in their success.

INSPIRE BEHAVIOR CHANGE THROUGH POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

Behavior that gets recognized gets repeated. Positive reinforcement doesn't require grand gestures. Small, specific acknowledgments often have the greatest effect:

- “I noticed how calmly and professionally you handled that caller's concern.”
- “Your preparation for this meeting made a real difference.”
- “Thank you for supporting the team under pressure.”

Effective reinforcement is:

- **Timely:** Delivered promptly after the behavior.
- **Specific:** Focused on what was done well.
- **Aligned with team goals:** Emphasizing actions that advance your mission.

When managers highlight what “good” looks like, they clarify expectations and shape culture simultaneously.

ALIGN ACTIONS WITH VALUES

Motivation deepens when work feels meaningful. Employees are more engaged when they understand how their efforts connect to shared values such as service, integrity, innovation, collaboration, or public impact.

As a leader, you can:

- Tie projects back to organizational purpose.
- Highlight how individual contributions support the bigger mission.
- Reinforce values during decision-making conversations.

For example:

- “We're choosing this approach because transparency is one of our core values.”
- “Your attention to detail reflects our commitment to excellence.”

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USE ACTIVE LISTENING, STORYTELLING, AND EMPATHY

1 Listening builds trust

Motivation begins with feeling heard, and employees who feel understood are more willing to engage and stretch. When interacting with employees, practice active listening. Minimize interruptions, reflect back what you're hearing, and ask open-ended questions.

2 Storytelling creates meaning

Data informs, stories inspire. Share real examples of challenges you've overcome, team successes, or lessons learned. Stories humanize leadership and help your team envision themselves in the mission.

3 Empathy strengthens connection

Having compassion doesn't mean lowering standards. It's recognizing that employees are human beings balancing multiple demands.

Try statements like:

- "I know this has been a heavy week. What support would help?"
- "That's a challenging situation. Let's think through it together."

IT'S ABOUT CONSISTENCY, NOT CHARISMA

When you lead through influence rather than relying solely on authority, you reinforce positive behaviors, align decisions with values, listen actively, and lead with empathy, creating an environment where employees feel motivated from within.

As a manager or supervisor, your daily interactions shape your team's energy, engagement, and performance. Even small shifts in how you communicate and recognize effort can create powerful ripple effects.

LET US HELP. Your Employee Assistance Program is available 24/7 to support you through daily management challenges, hone your professional development skills, or address any personal concerns. Call any time to schedule a management consultation.

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