

Fundamental Motivators In The Non-Profit Global War on Talent

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What really motivates people to not just meet, but to *exceed* expectations? For some, it is the promise of financial rewards, while others want recognition, a step up on the corporate ladder, or political clout.

For many non-profits, it can feel as if they are in a race without the proper equipment. Unlike their corporate cousins, who can use financial rewards and perks to a much greater extent (as well as titles and promotions as wild cards), most non-profits have to find new and creative ways to drive key individuals to push beyond their perceived limits.

Most people have heard the characterization of “A” players - high performers often in the top 10 percentile of their peers in any given function. Leaders of today’s non-profit organizations have to find a way to attract, retain, motivate, and drive – while at the same time not burn out – their most valuable asset: the talent in their respective organizations.

Most executive directors realize that a passion for the cause, whether it’s puppetry arts, disabled veterans, homeless animals or the elderly, is the nucleus of most people who work in the non-profit field. As a leader of these organizations, the key to motivating employees is to take this passion and get creative in a fashion that is fundamental to their individual DNA – to who they really are and what they value most.

Remember that not everyone needs or will aim to be an A-player – that is an ideal state. Start by identifying the fundamental, critical moving parts of the organization and make sure those are driven by self-motivating, self-correcting, passionate people who are both willing and able to effect change.

The goal is to adapt the organization to not only meet its requirements as they stand today, but as governmental funding, compassion fatigue, and the global war for talent continues to battle non-profits, to find a way to keep A-players in the critical roles. Once the right people are in the key roles, each must be profiled so that there is a succinct understanding of what their fundamental motivators are.

Examples of Fundamental Motivators

Interest in Others – Some people are driven by a genuine interest in others. Some call this “chemistry,” or a feeling of “they get me” when talking with these types of people. They have an innate ability to engage and interact with others and make them feel an enormous amount of joy when being around them. These people, projecting the right level of polish and professionalism as an extension of the organization, should be charged with engaging as many different types of stakeholders as possible. Leverage their smiles to engage current and possible donors at open house events. Encourage them to interview incoming candidates. Make them ambassadors of the chairman’s ball, advocates of a new initiative, and tour guides of the new building. In short, embrace, encourage, and enable their desire to engage others.

Self-esteem – Effectively representing the cause or goals of a specific non-profit starts with a healthy self. Parents of young children build up their self-esteem so that nothing will ever break them down or chip away at their shield. A high level of self-esteem often influences conversations. Influencing the conversation ultimately influences the relationship. And influencing the relationship almost assuredly influences the outcome of any fundraising campaign, endowment, or strategic initiative within the organization. Leverage open and public recognition. Institute “most valuable player” awards. Empower these people to lead key initiatives. And when they fail, encourage them to fail fast, fail forward, and (hopefully) fail cheap. Learn from each interaction/experience to drive greater results the next time.

Purpose – Purpose is an individual’s guiding light. It transcends across time, function, realm of responsibility and any single project. Purpose is the motivator that drives individuals to make one more phone call to a prospective

donor on a Friday afternoon at 4:45 PM. Purpose allows them to skip the snooze button, get up at 5 AM, and attend a networking function at the local chamber of commerce. It is critical for this audience to understand the vision, mission, and strategy of the organization and to have input into the process and see that their ideas are heard and implemented. In short, these people need to succinctly understand where the ship is headed. Another best practice is to empower them to keep their finger on the pulse of various stakeholder communities. Think focus groups, donor surveys, parent advisory committees, and other avenues to verify, validate or void the key assumptions made in the direction and execution of key initiatives within the organization.

Change Agents – These people love to fix things. Put them in charge of succinctly identifying that which is broken - people, processes or tools within the organization. They are passionate about an evolution – if not a revolution – in the thought process, as well as the manner in which key initiatives are initiated. Hand them the donor survey results and empower them to constantly question the status quo. Enable them to read and explore best practices in other non-profit organizations, as well as across multiple industries, for the infusion of not just incrementalism – doing things better – but true innovation – doing things differently. This will enable the organization to thrive.

Innate Learners – Less than 5% of Americans read more than one business book a year. Less than 10% of Amazon.com's clients have bought more than four business books in the last year. Those who fit in each of these categories are *innate learners*. They believe that education is a life-long process. It is critical within any non-profit to explore opportunities to become self-sustaining without interference of dependency on governmental funding. As such, fundamental to the operating plan must be the growing-up process from a mom and pop daycare, rubber stamped by a board, to a business of care *empowered* by a board. Encourage personal and professional development in these individuals, which can include simple tasks such as subscriptions to thought leadership newsletters, attending guest lectures, or interacting with general subject matter experts. Thought leadership, along with practical, pragmatic, hands-on experience, will allow these individuals to blossom. Subsequently, by helping them raise their personal bar, the rising tides will also increase the propensity for success in the entire organization.

Mission-Driven – These are the zealots who are in the organization because they followed their hearts there. The ongoing challenge becomes how to balance the business nature and acumen it will take to succeed as a non-profit with the passion of the zealots. Again, the key is to identify the recipe of fundamental motivators.

The most valuable asset of any non-profit organization is its people. The key to motivating top talent is to invest in them and make them feel that their role is vital to the organization's mission and that their input is heard.

Over time, as leaders deliver this promised value, they begin to build what is called Relationship Currency®. In its most simple definition, Relationship Currency is a gift of time, talent, knowledge, or an influential relationship that is exchanged between individuals with the intent of adding quantifiable value in the process. The key is to uncover what is important to each individual on the team and make the appropriate "deposit" of Relationship Currency. And when these deposits are made in the organization's most valuable assets, the dividends will be paid back many fold.

The power of Relationship Currency comes from its ability to *enable* – the lubricant in society to getting things done. Social capital is made up of tangible things in daily life such as good will, fellowship, sympathy and general social interactions. By improving the lives of its key team members, not only will the organization as a whole benefit, but its leaders will also accumulate influence, earn trust, and create a more highly motivated team as a result.

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David Nour is one of the foremost thought leaders on the quantifiable value of business relationships. A native of Iran, David came to the U.S. with a suitcase, \$100, limited family ties and no fluency in English! Fast forward 25 years and he has built an impressive career of entrepreneurial success, both within large corporations and early stage ventures. David is an author, a senior management advisor, and a featured speaker for corporate, association and academic forums, where he shares his knowledge and experience as a leading change agent and visionary for Relationship Economics® - the art and science of relationships. To learn more, please visit: www.relationshipeconomics.NET or call 1-888-339-1333.