

Motivation: Are We Doing It Right?

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Most companies have it all wrong. They don't have to motivate their employees. They have to stop *demotivating* them.

Consider this hiring scenario: After a long recruitment process, Mary, Marketing Director, hires Sam as a marketing manager in the consumer marketing department of a large telecommunications company. As this is a critical position, the HR department took a long time to identify the knowledge, skills, abilities required for the position and send qualified candidates. Mary almost lost Sam to a competitor, but she was able to sell him on the company's corporate culture and his potential career opportunities, plus offer him more money. With Sam on board, having completed his HR orientation and up to speed on his job responsibilities, Mary breathes a sigh of relief and returns to her real job. She'll check in with Sam periodically to assess his performance, and she'll review his work and career aspirations annually. She'll also make sure he's on the distribution list for e-mail information about corporate strategy and goals.

Sound familiar? The chances that Sam will stay with the company and grow into a position of more responsibility are very low. Why? Sam seemed to be the right person for the role and the company gave him more money. What's wrong in this scenario?

The majority of employees are quite enthusiastic when they start a new job. But research by *Sirota Survey Intelligence* shows that in about 85 percent of companies, employees' motivation sharply declines after their first six months—and continues to deteriorate for years afterward! (Based on surveys of about 1.2 million employees at 52 Fortune 1000 companies from 2001 through 2004)

What is Mary's *real* job? Mary has over 80 projects in her department, 1/4 of which she is personally managing. When will she have time to manage Sam or her other direct reports? One of the top reasons that employees become demotivated or disengaged and leave organizations is that there is not enough coaching and support from their manager.

For the past couple of decades, businesses have worked very hard to develop systems and resources to support managers in their role of managing, motivating, engaging and developing their employees. However, it seems that instead of giving managers more resources and time to bring out the best in the talent they have, it has in fact, allowed companies to assign more projects and processes to the managers, which in turn has decreased the amount of time and effort they can focus on their staff. In an age of email, telecommuting, and mobile phones have we created a culture of management by machines?

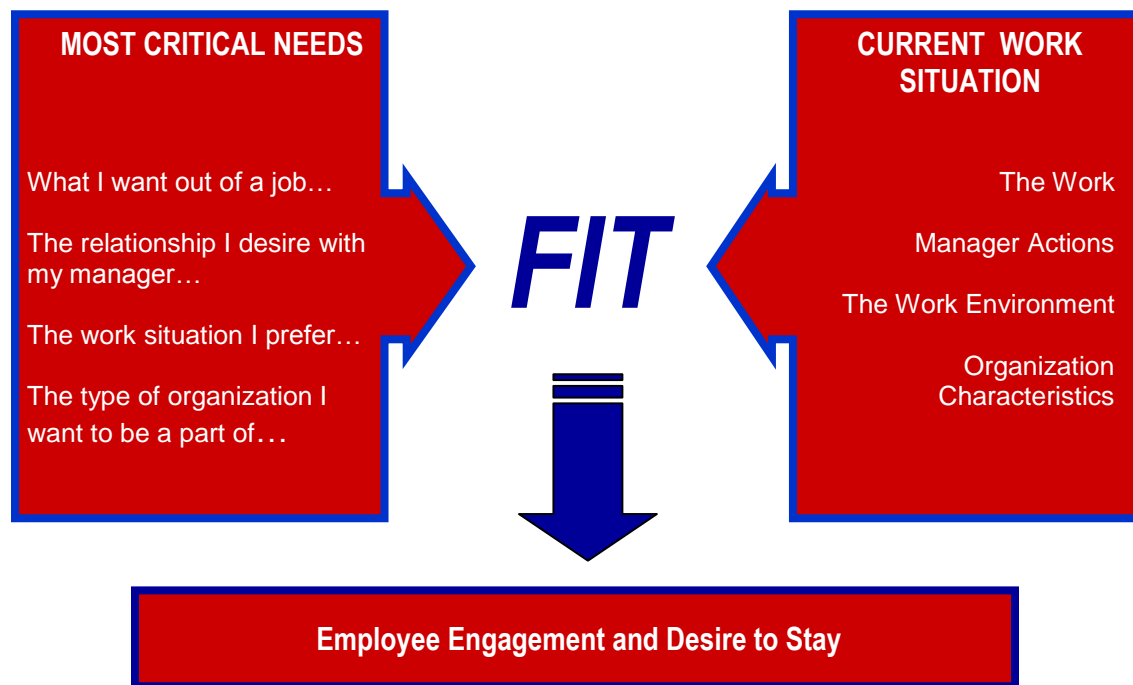
The Moderor Group says that all the many variables affecting employee motivation, engagement and retention can be summarized into four general areas from the employee's point of view:

- What I want out of a job
- The relationship I desire with my manager
- The work situation I prefer (includes compensation)
- The type of organization I want to be part of

The direct supervisor plays the key role in all four areas. The best supporting systems and resources in the world cannot effectively substitute for the direct one-to-one dialogue between the manager and employee as far as motivation, engagement and retention are concerned. An open, honest, robust one-to-one dialogue between the employee and the manager is the most effective way to discover what is “most critical” to cause the employee to engage, perform and stay with the organization.

Each person has a set of “most critical” needs, which when achieved within their current work situation causes them to engage, perform and want to stay. Some of these needs are directly related to the work they do every day. Some of these needs are wrapped around what their direct supervisor does or doesn’t do. Other needs are impacted by the work environment and what the organization offers.

Therefore, the management challenge is to understand each employee’s most critical needs, how it is really going, and then take action to make the appropriate changes to increase the “FIT” between what is most critical and the current work situation.



Companies must make time for managers to interact more with their employees. In the highly competitive talent market today, the most successful companies will use people systems and resources as they were originally designed – to create time for the managers to interact more with the employees. Success will be defined by turning managers into talent leaders.