

5 ways to motivate

When you walk into the office in the morning with a fresh dream for success—say, opening a new store or expanding the scope of your practice—do you walk in confident in the knowledge that your staff will rise to the challenge? Or do you dread the flat response it will get from your legion of punch-clock drones?

If you're in the latter camp, then it's probably time to take a closer look at how you're managing your staff. Creating a motivated, empowered team of inspired thinkers will take a lot of work, but here are five things you can do to get started:

1. Information

Allowing people to be included in decision making is an important first step. Don't offhandedly dismiss someone's need for knowledge about the business just because they work in the dispensary rather than the boardroom.

Whether it's information they need to complete a specific project—say, sales figures and budget information so they can work on selecting new frames for the

dispensary—or more general information about the business and how it's doing, your staff need to know. Making information accessible to them, in a format they can understand, can help them to understand their own role within the company and how their decisions and personal successes can affect the bigger picture.

Information is often complicated, though. Take some time to help employees understand what you're giving them. Even consider providing cross-training, mentoring or a course to help them learn. You might be surprised by just how hungry they

are for knowledge, and by how that pays off in the long run.

2. Authority

Information is only one piece of the motivational puzzle. Without it, projects simply can't be completed. But another important factor is authority. When someone is in charge of a project—be it as small as purchasing office supplies or as major as a re-design of the practice—they need to be able to see it through to completion.

At the outset of any project, set boundaries and expectations. Give the people involved the information





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your staff

they need to do it right, and the authority to see it through. For example, if you're delegating frame buying in the dispensary, maybe you don't need to see orders before they're placed. Hand over the authority to make purchases up to a certain dollar value. Then, when a new line starts doing really well, the person who bought it can take pride in their decision.

3. Feedback

There's more to feedback than just a one-per-year performance review. Feedback has to be given to staff regularly, and both positive and negative points should be discussed. After all, an employee needs to know if you like something they're doing, particularly if it's benefiting the company. When it is negative, make sure it's delivered in such a fashion that the recipient can walk away with his or her dignity intact. Don't just dump on them, and don't blast them in front of the rest of the staff, or worse, in front of patients or customers.

4. Meaning

At the end of the day, most of us go to work because we have to. Even

those of us who like what we do are primarily there to make a living. But what separates drudgery from something we're proud of is a sense of meaning or purpose. Help employees see their role in the company's big picture, and why what they do is important. In some fields it's sometimes difficult to see the significance of the work we do. But in optical, there's always the immediate satisfaction of helping a patient see better—and that role is filled with a combination of doctors, dispensers, lab staff and others.

Go beyond that, though. Learn what's really important to the people who work with you, learn what makes them tick. You don't have to become best friends, but at least care enough to know some of the big things going on in their lives outside work. That way they'll know they're more than just cogs in a machine to you, and that they work somewhere where they're valued.

5. Compensation

Money is important, but it's not the deal-breaker that people often think it is. Compensation is significant, but should be seen as one piece of the

package, alongside feedback, meaning, etc. Paying someone a fortune is not enough in and of itself.

At the same time, take a look at how people are compensated. Seniority isn't necessarily the best reason for someone to be paid well. Long-term junior employees don't necessarily merit more pay than younger middle managers. However you decide to compensate, make sure there's a system that has logic to it.

Individually, providing information, authority, feedback, decent compensation and a sense of purpose won't go the distance. Authority, for example, is meaningless without information. Each is part of a package you can design to create an environment of motivation. But put them all together, and you've got the recipe for a great workplace—and a chance to be surprised by how creative and inventive those punch-clock drones can really be. ●

A pioneer in the field of coaching, Diane Davies' programs move individuals from complacency to leadership and are now implemented by organizations of all sizes. www.daviesandassociates.com