

How bosses can motivate an unmotivated team

As a startup, you know the importance of people, with each and every one having an important and pivotal role to play in helping your business thrive, grow and stand out from your competitors. But what do you do when one (or more) of them aren't motivated, when they've lost their mojo?

As a boss, there are steps you can take to bring this back, to move them from demotivated and disengaged to motivated, engaged, and ready and willing to help you and your business succeed. Here are three actions:

1. Empower your people

In a startup environment, one of the traps that many bosses fall into is micromanaging their people, being overly involved in their work, constantly controlling and prescribing what and how work is done. This often happens without even realising it as you're so used to doing things yourself when the business is starting out. But as your business grows, and you bring in people to help out, it's important to understand the difference between this and micromanaging. Micromanaging can squash the joy and meaning out of your people's work, leaving them resentful, resistant, frustrated and unmotivated.

“Empowerment is about letting your people stand in their own “space” and not crowding them with your presence.”

Did you recognise this in yourself? If so, here are a few things to think about:

Consider what it is that’s making you feel the need to micromanage. Is it a lack of trust, your own confidence, or the wrong people in jobs? Is there any way you can move away from micromanaging in this way?

How can I give my people more freedom and autonomy? If I’m scared about it being more work, how can I free up the time to do so, knowing it will ultimately make things easier and better for me and my people?

2. Listen (really listen) to your people

Another cause of demotivation is not being listened to, not being heard. In fact, according to a study by The Workforce Institute, listening can impact employee engagement, with 74% of employees saying that they feel more engaged at work, and are more satisfied and motivated when they think their voice is heard.

On the flip side, if their voices are not heard, after a while they shut down, saying to themselves – why try if no one is going to listen to me? Why put in the time and effort to speak up if it’s not going to be taken seriously? The seemingly simple act of ignoring and not listening to your people closes the door on their contributions, insights, and innovation, as well as their minds, hearts, and souls.

“Listening is a practice of being generous. Without saying a word, you can send the message to your people that what they are saying to you is important, that you value their input, and that you care and respect them enough to listen to them.”

Did you recognise this in yourself? If so, here are a few things to think about:

What can you do to give yourself the time and space to listen to your people, being fully and actively engaged with what they have to say?

Do something with what you hear from your people, taking action. Not only does this help you drive action and change at your company, but it also signals to your people that what they've just shared with you will not sit on a piece of paper, in a drawer, or in a file on your computer. It's here where you show your commitment to bringing their voices to life by taking the necessary and appropriate action.

3. Show your people appreciation

And finally, another reason people feel demotivated is that they don't feel seen and don't feel valued because of a lack of appreciation. This impacts motivation and engagement, with one study finding that employees are 44% more satisfied and 4 times more likely to be engaged when they are shown appreciation. It also impacts retention, with one study finding that a whopping eight out of 10 employees (79%) who quit their job cited a lack of recognition and appreciation as the key driver. And for those who have not left their company, another study found that employees who do not feel adequately recognised and appreciated are twice as likely to say they'll quit in the next year.

“If you hold back appreciation, you’re missing out on these powerful moments to capture and celebrate the good and great work and contributions that your people are making. You’re leaving them scratching their heads and wondering if what they’ve done is right, is good enough, or seen in the first place.”

Did you recognise this in yourself? If so, here are a few things to think about:

What can I do to make sure that I don't miss the great things my people are doing? Am I on the lookout for great work so that I can then show them appreciation for what they've achieved and done?

What can I do to make appreciation a more natural habit in my day-to-day routine, from simple (and no-cost) thank you's to more formal acts of appreciation?

We encourage you to take these actions as ways to motivate your people in the short and the long term. And if you'd like to learn about more actions to take, check out our new book titled '*Bad Bosses Ruin Lives: The Building Blocks for Being a Great Boss*,' and pick up some more helpful tips and tools.

Debra Corey and Ken Corey are the co authors of *Bad Bosses Ruin Lives: The Building Blocks for Being a Great Boss* (out now).

[Buy Bad Bosses Ruin Lives Now](#)

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