Article 2

People and how we relate to our Personal Motivation Cycle

Our lives are driven by a built-in need to pursue growth. We use goals for this purpose but the essence of the motivation cycle is not the desire for reaching a goal but rather the desire for measuring personal growth. Self-motivating people intuitively use goals this way. When their goals become de-motivating, i.e. they no longer appear reachable or they no longer can use them for measuring growth, they change them to something to reach for while retaining their hope for personal growth. Managers who are good leaders also use goals this way, watching their people strive for their respective goals and helping them adjust them when they intuitively judge that their milestone has become a millstone.

But most management systems do *not* encourage us to use goals this way. For obvious reasons, we design them as logical processes where progress toward strategic objectives is measured objectively along the way. The only problem is that although our brains are rational, our spirits are not. We follow along, of course, pretending we are automatons, each of us hoping that we don't get caught being human. While these management systems are logical and business-like they are not motivating because people can't attach their personal motivation cycles to the process. They can motivate themselves or can be inspired by good leaders, but the system offers no motivational fuel.

The Best-kept Secrets about Motivation

For a process to be motivational we must design it to allow for the following best-kept secrets about personal motivation.

1. Don't give me a goal, I feel trapped.
2. Don't measure me, you're not qualified.
3. Don't ignore me, I need feedback.
4. Don't ask me where I am; ask me where I'm going.

1. Don't give me a goal, I feel trapped

Since we are setting a goal for ourselves, intuitively, all of the time, for the purpose of measuring our hope for personal growth; and since we wish to retain the option to change this goal, whenever we can not foresee potential personal growth, to a goal where we can foresee personal growth; then, when someone else gives us a goal for some other purpose and with the implication that if we don't make this goal we will be measured as lacking, *we feel trapped!*

This does not mean that we can't, or shouldn't give people goals. We have to assign goals, in order to appropriately distribute the corporate commitments to the corporate resources.

Nor does this mean that self-motivating people can not use corporately assigned goals to motivate themselves. Rather, this means that soliciting commitments for goals does not motivate people unless the individual adopts *personal* ownership of the goal. And we won't keep our motivation cycle attached to a goal that we can not use to measure hope for personal growth.

More instructively, this means that a motivational management process must provide a way for the participants to manage their business goals such that they can use them for managing hope for personal growth.

2. Don't measure me, you're not qualified

The measurements people use in order to motivate themselves are personal and subjective. When you give them goals and measure progress objectively you violate their personal motivation cycle because you and your business cycle are not qualified to participate, at least not directly.

You will be a more effective manager if your management process encourages them to use subjective personal measurements to fuel their motivational cycle while chasing your objective goals.

3. Don't ignore me, I need feedback

Except for hermits we are all social creatures and as much as we like to have control over ourselves, we desire feedback, especially from those important to us. In the context of working life there are two particular sources of external validation that should be managed.

First, there are the trust relationships between the individual and each other individual with whom s/he shares a dependency relationship, e. g. boss – employee, client – supplier, etc. If you have to second-guess whether your boss is getting the performance s/he wants or your client is getting the service s/he wants, your enthusiasm to act may be undermined. A management process that really taps into the power (energy) of people must include feedback to enable and encourage individuals to manage their respective individual trust relationships.

Second, there is the relationship between the individual and his/her peer-group with whom s/he shares a membership. This membership is based on values for behavior that are shared by the group. Breaking the code of behavior risks loneliness, perhaps ostracism. We are all familiar with this practice in its more visible forms, where members wear similar clothing or hairdos or accessories. This human trait is far more prevalent than we might think, if more subtle than this. Any group of people who spend time together will develop and maintain shared behavior values that have a strong influence on the behavior of its members. Management processes should include managing shared values such that they encourage a behavior convenient to the operation at hand.

4. Don't ask me where I am, ask me where I'm going

We are alive and constantly managing our hope for personal growth. We do this in a repetitive cycle of setting and seeking goals and measuring our potential growth. If you want your people to dedicate their real power (energy) to their work, then you want to tap into this motivation cycle.

If you ask me *where I'm going*, you are helping me to set my goal for the future. This is consistent with the beginning of my cycle. If you do this repetitively and regularly, with a reasonable frequency, you can join my cycle - even encourage me to use it. By asking me to reset the goal each time, you are conditioning me to believe that I have both the freedom and the personal obligation to change my goal if my heart isn't in it, and thereby share my true confidence level with you. Now you are in a position to negotiate the best current goal for both of us, by encouraging me to manage my confidence level.

If you ask me *where I am*, you are trying to tap into the middle of my cycle and are threatening to measure my performance. This approach is too invasive for my personal motivation cycle and my *energy of attention* will switch to ensuring that I am not being measured unjustly. Unfortunately, many organizations` management systems tend to assess *where we are with respect to where we planned to be*, and thereby fall into this trap. At Whocares-Managementcentre we call this trap the "Performance Measurement Syndrome".

Your management systems should measure progress toward goals in terms of *current commitments for completion* rather than compare actual against plan; this way their status reports will be both accurate and motivating.

For more information, visit our website: http://www.whocares-managementcentre.com/