

# ***The Ten Commandments of Workplace Motivation***

By Roxanne Emmerich

Excuse me for going all Charlton Heston on you, but I've got some commandments for you. If you can step away from the Golden Calf for a moment and take a look, I think you'll be glad you did.

Notice that they are carved in stone. We only do this with ideas that have been field-tested and mother-approved. The topic is workplace motivation, which (if you'll excuse me mixing my Testaments) is the Holy Grail of organizational success.

Unmotivated employees have rightly been called "the black holes of the business universe," producing work of lower quality and quantity while killing the attitudes and productivity of those around them. They are more likely to steal, more likely to dislike and undercut management, and more likely to leave, adding hiring and training costs to the rest of their legacy.

Fortunately, motivation is not something a person is born with or without. Applying these ten commandments can go a long way to helping existing employees find their motivation.

So let's begin.

## **THE FIRST COMMANDMENT: Commit with all thy heart so others might follow**

Before you ask your employees to commit to finding their motivation, you must be fully committed yourself. Anything less than 10 on the commitment scale simply won't do.

Commitment is not the sort of thing you can dictate from a distance. Throw your heart over the bar, make that complete commitment, and others will follow—and the transformation can begin.

## **THE SECOND COMMANDMENT: Call it tight on dysfunctional behaviors**

If there is a polar opposite of motivation, dysfunctional behavior is it. For every watt of energy you put into positive motivation, dysfunction sucks two watts away. You don't have to be a math master to see where *that* graph will end up.

That's why you have to declare an absolutely no-kidding zero-tolerance policy for dysfunctional behaviors. People saying one thing and meaning another, giving lip service to new ideas and then undercutting them in private, getting defensive, loving drama, deflecting blame, gossiping, backstabbing...

Once you decide to create a motivated workforce, you must enlist a company-wide commitment to stop every one of these de-motivating, crazy-making behaviors.

**THE THIRD COMMANDMENT: Show that you care, in every way**

Toiling away in thankless anonymity might work for a medieval monk, but the rest of us work better and feel better when we know that someone cares. Think of how it feels when someone takes an interest in your work, your mood, or your life—notices that you have a cough, remembers that your son was sick and asks how he's doing, says "Happy Birthday!" on your actual birthday instead of a week later. You can probably feel the glow just thinking about it.

If you want a motivated and happy workplace, make a commitment to show those around you that you care, not just about their productivity, but about *them*.

For best results, make the change throughout your life. Start with a single day. For everything you do today, decide to “show up fully” and pour all of yourself into it. Listen like you’ve never listened before. Decide to care like you’ve never cared before. And express that care with a kind word or a "good job," a pat on the back or a question about someone's health.

Then watch that generosity of spirit spread far and wide as others "pay it forward."

**THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT: Celebrate every victory**

One of the most enduring myths about workplace motivation is that it's all about the money. Pay people and they'll be motivated. Pay them more and they'll be *more* motivated.

Funny how something so obvious can be so wrong.

Once again, it's research to the rescue. Study after study shows that *fair* pay is important as a motivator, but beyond that, several other factors are at least as important as money. Among them are fair treatment, security, opportunities for advancement—and recognition of achievements.

It isn't enough to promise a party next year when The Big Project is finally launched. Every Big Project consists of scores of little victories along the way. Celebration builds confidence, and confident people are open to feedback and willing to grow.

**THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT: Clean up thy messes**

You're human, so you WILL make mistakes. Count on it. You'll miss deadlines. You'll disappoint people. You'll mess up in a hundred different ways.

Knowing that, it is critical to maintaining a motivated team that you possess the ability to clean up your messes as you make them.

A cleanup has two parts—acknowledgement and commitment. Acknowledge that the results are not okay, then make a commitment to put things right and prevent a recurrence.

When we don't, others lose faith in us and we lose faith in ourselves. Our self-esteem tumbles into a downward spiral which, once begun, leads to more broken promises and an even worse sense of self worth.

Say, "I blew it and it isn't okay. Here's what I'll do to correct it." That's all people need to hear. And that kind of faith in each other lends itself to powerful motivation.

**THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT: Use powerful and positive language**

What could be less motivating than vague instructions and an unclear sense of where we're headed and why? They say cleanliness is next to godliness, but for my money, clarity is even closer.

Saying what you mean, clearly and powerfully and positively, can do INCREDIBLE things for employee motivation. A jolt of happy juice goes coursing through an organization. People suddenly know what is expected of them and why. So take a moment before you send that memo or make that announcement to choose language that clarifies instead of muddying.

And for a little added power, throwing in the occasional "thy" or "thou" never hurts.

**THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT: Be unreasonable with thyself**

*"The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man."*

—George Bernard Shaw

Aiming low and being "reasonable" doesn't bring out the best of who you are. If you want to enliven your employees, make unreasonable requests of yourself. Show that you are willing to forego the excuses and happily do what needs doing, regardless of how "unreasonable" it seems, and they will be primed and ready to rise to the unreasonable themselves.

Soon, to paraphrase Alice, they'll be doing six impossible things before breakfast. And what could be more motivating than achieving the impossible?

**THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT: Reprogram thy limiting beliefs**

*The human spirit will not invest in mediocrity.* Think about it. Does a "good enough" product or an "adequate" investment opportunity get you reaching for your wallet? Never.

But we all come equipped with annoying little self-doubting mechanisms—those little voices that waggle their fingers and say *Just who do you think you are, Missy, wanting to play with the big boys and girls? You're not good enough. You're not ready. You'll fall on your face.*

If you want to motivate others to get past their own limiting beliefs, then physician, heal thyself! Begin living "as if" you are smart enough, good enough, and up to the challenge, and guess what—suddenly you will be.

### **THE NINTH COMMANDMENT: Choose joy**

How you interpret events, people, and things really does make a difference. Is a rainy day a good thing or a bad thing? It's neither. It's neutral. YOU decide if it's good or bad. Same with all things in your life.

When you develop a habit of interpreting things as good instead of bad, it actually alters the neural pathways in your brain, and your brain finds it *easier* to interpret things as good. You have rewired your brain for happiness.

So choose joy—and help others do the same.

### **THE TENTH COMMANDMENT: Give, Give, GIVE**

The fastest way to success and happiness is by giving. Life gives to the givers and takes from the takers, and life has a perfect accounting system. If you want your employees to shower your company with success, it's time for you to dig in and give like crazy to your employees.

No, I'm not talking about raises here—I'm talking about the nine commandments you just read. Give them your committed heart. Give them a functional environment. Give them care, celebration, integrity, clarity, and a vision of the impossible made possible. Give them a model of life without limiting beliefs. Most of all, show them the way by choosing joy.

Do these things, and you'll all end up in the Promised Land together.

## **SIDEBAR**

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2. Call it tight on dysfunctional behaviors
3. Show that you care, in every way
4. Celebrate every victory
5. Clean up thy messes
6. Use powerful and positive language
7. Be unreasonable with thyself
8. Reprogram thy limiting beliefs
9. Choose joy
10. Give, Give, GIVE

*Roxanne Emmerich is renowned for her ability to transform “ho-hum” workplaces into massive results-oriented “bring-it-on” environments. To discover how you can ignite the passion of your employees, catapult performance to new levels, and boost the morale of your company subscribe to the Thank God It's Monday<sup>™</sup> e-zine at [www.ThankGoditsMonday.com](http://www.ThankGoditsMonday.com).*