

How to motivate

Getting the best out of your staff is more important than poring over spreadsheets. In the first of a series of how to guides, Katie Puckett offers some inspirational advice

It's January, it's grey, the workers are feeling demotivated – and you can see their point. But, frankly, if you're going to carry on like that, you might as well hand in your notice now. How about following Plan B instead?

1 Stop snivelling and get on with it

"If you're taking a pay cheque as a manager, it's your job to motivate your staff," says Jim Lawless, a businessman-turned-motivational-speaker who has just published a book called *Taming Tigers*. "Most people forget that's their day job, not the reports and the spreadsheets." Every self-styled motivational guru has a gimmick and Lawless' one is that he trained to be a professional jockey in a year despite having never ridden a horse before. It's fair to say he knows a thing or two about positive thinking. "There's no point crying into your handkerchief in the corner and then expecting your staff to act cheerful. Leave your troubles at home – the place for your concerns is upwards or sideways, never ever downwards."

2 Recognise other people aren't so upbeat

But positive thinking will only take you so far. Leadership coach Philomena Hayward, director of Hayward Development Partnership, says that unless you acknowledge your employees' negative emotions, you won't be able to banish them. "If people are demotivated and have lost enthusiasm, it's pointless just saying 'let's go'," she says. This is particularly important after a round of redundancies. "People who are left behind may have all sorts of mixed emotions. All that needs to be acknowledged."

3 Get out there

It's very hard to be inspirational when you're cowering behind your office door. "Most leaders forget to be visible and communicate," says Lawless. "Half of it is being around, asking questions, answering questions. You should stand up on your chair in the canteen on Friday lunchtime and tell people how it is. But most don't do that – they stay in their office and get a sandwich brought up."

4 Tell people what to do ...

Lawless and Hayward agree that one of the most important motivators is knowing what your goal is. It sounds obvious but as Hayward points out: "Things change all the time. You need to make sure people know what they're trying to achieve in the short, medium and long term, whether it's changed, what's been working well, what might need to be done differently."

"People love to be part of making something happen," adds Lawless. "That's a trick we miss as managers. If people are aware of their role in delivering it, they know they're letting the team down if they're not doing it."

5 ... and how to do it

"If I said I'd pay you £1m to design a rocket and then left you to do it, you probably wouldn't be that motivated," says Lawless. "You wouldn't know how to do it and you wouldn't believe you could do it. You need a clear roadmap to show you how you can get to where you're going. That's really important."

6 Don't worry about money

Pay rises aren't actually that important for motivation – which is fortunate in the current climate. “Money becomes a symbol because organisations don't have any other ways of saying, ‘We appreciate your contribution’,” says Hayward. “But you can do other things like giving one-off rewards, so if a team's been working long hours on a project, you give them an extra day off. Or you could invest in someone's development – that's really powerful.”

7 Be like Harry Redknapp

In October, Tottenham Hotspur were at the foot of the Premier League table. Then they sacked manager Juande Ramos and replaced him with Harry Redknapp, left, and suddenly the same group of footballers began to do a lot better.

“A lot of players have talked about how Harry puts his arm round you, builds your confidence, tells you you're a good player,” says Hayward. “At some level, Ramos wasn't able to tap into that. How somebody feels about being a part of your team is fundamental to their performance. What you do is more important than what you say – people take their cues from your behaviour.”

Let's hope Ramos can take this on board in his new job at Real Madrid.

8 Shout about your success

People come to work to feel part of something successful. Lawless recommends managers get into the habit of shouting about things that go well, however small they might be. “Find reasons to praise people. Make it your business to send an email every day at 8am, or post a video of yourself on the intranet. Make it regular and punchy, and in their language, not yours.”

9 Shout even if things are going badly

But Lawless has also seen some of the most motivated workforces at companies that are in dire straits: “You can turn fighting adversity to your advantage. People can be proud of the underdog if you can make them feel like they have a fighting chance to turn things around.”

10 Be demanding

Finally, Lawless says you should demand all these things from your own bosses. “Don't just sit there in a victim strop. Unless you've put your hand up at the meeting and said, ‘This is what we need’, you can't complain when you don't get it.”

Better now?