

SIGMATM EI Series



**Great Leaders
Are Motivated**



GREAT LEADERS ARE MOTIVATED

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**The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago.
The second best time is now.**

– Proverb

Motivation is important because it gives employees a reason to show up each day and fulfill their responsibilities. However, most people find that their motivation at work ebbs and flows, sometimes over the course of a year (e.g., less motivated near the holidays), or even a day (e.g., feeling more energized in the morning than after lunch). While these fluctuations in motivation are normal, the best leaders know how to manage their emotions to sustain motivation over time using a mix of external and internal incentives. This is a valuable skill, because consistent motivation at work has been shown to improve both performance¹ and engagement.²

Although it's helpful for employees to keep track of their own motivational levels, leaders are also responsible for managing the motivation of their followers. In particular, leaders should seek to model strong internal motivation (i.e., pursuing their goals with drive and perseverance) to set an example and a standard for their team.

In assessing your motivation levels, ask yourself the following questions:

- What kinds of rewards am I using to motivate myself?
- Am I feeling fulfilled by my achievements at work?
- Do I set myself work-related goals?
- How can my coworkers help me stay motivated?
- Do my daily routines seem to help or hinder my motivation at work?

Improve Your Motivation

Fuel your body: Motivation requires energy, so it's important to build your stamina with health-promoting behaviors. For instance, when people are sleep deprived, they tend to lose motivation.³ To maintain energy, make sure that you're eating well, getting enough sleep, and exercising regularly. Aim to eat a balance of protein, carbohydrates, and fats, get 7-8 hours of sleep every night,⁴ and exercise at least 150 minutes per week.⁵ The good news is that once you start focusing on improving one behavior, the others can often follow with little effort (e.g., exercising tires you out, improving the quality of your sleep).

Work for the fun of it: Research has consistently demonstrated that people are more motivated and satisfied when they work for intrinsic, rather than extrinsic rewards.⁶ In other words, it's better to genuinely enjoy your work than to be doing it for the sake of bonuses or recognition. If you're currently trying to use rewards to motivate yourself on slow days, try infusing some fun in the activity instead (e.g., rather than eating a candy bar *after* responding to tedious emails, try listening to upbeat music *during* the task). You might soon look forward to responding to those emails because you get to have a music break!

Reflect on why your work is meaningful: Another way to think about what makes your work intrinsically rewarding is to recall your purpose. Reflect on the reasons why you went into your field in the first place. Perhaps there was a certain way you wanted to improve life for others. If you're having a hard time remembering, then you can take a moment to reflect the next time you feel like you had a good day at work. Make a list of what happened that day (e.g., what were you working on, who were you talking to?) then consider what aspects felt particularly meaningful to you.

Start Doing These 3 Things Now to Become More Motivated:

The following steps can help you become more motivated:

1. **Set SMARTer goals.** SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-Based (SMART) goals. These goals differ from typical "try your best" goals because they set clear targets for achievement. For example, a SMART goal would be to finish editing 5 pages of a report in the next 30 minutes. Leaders who set themselves a to-do list with bite-sized, detailed goals tend to achieve more than those who set themselves vague, long-term deadlines. Not only that, when you can track progress by checking off smaller goals on a list, you'll often feel more motivated to continue working towards larger ones.
2. **Stay accountable.** Another great way to stay motivated is by telling others about your goals. Share your commitments with leaders and co-workers so that they can help you stay on track by reminding you of your deadlines. For example, if direct reports are looking for you to sign off on something, let them know at the end of the meeting when they can expect to receive your reply (e.g., "I'll have this back to you by end of day Thursday"). This way, you will feel motivated to meet the deadline that you set, and your direct reports will follow up with you if you do not.
3. **Change your routine.** Sometimes leaders lose motivation when they feel stuck in their routines. This sense of boredom may affect your emotional wellbeing, and the energy you use to work towards your work goals. Try changing your habits to see if that makes a difference in your motivation. For instance, you might pick up a new hobby outside of work that helps you feel more fulfilled on a daily basis (e.g., learning a new sport, pursuing artistic talent, or getting involved in activism and volunteering). Another tip you can try is taking productive breaks during low energy points in the day (e.g., taking a late lunch at 1 pm during your mid-afternoon slump rather than at 12 pm).

Resources



[What Makes Us Feel Good About Our Work?](#)



[How to Keep Working When You're Just Not Feeling It](#)



Develop your motivation by taking advantage of SIGMA's coaching services.

Contact SIGMA for coaching on developing your skills as a leader.

SIGMA Assessment Systems, Inc.

Email: support@SigmaHR.com

Call: 800-265-1285

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