

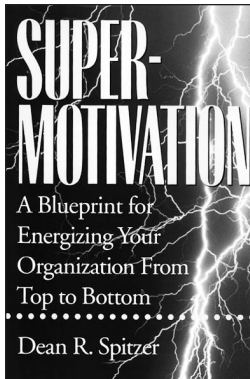
SOUNDVIEW **Executive**  
**Book Summaries®**

FILE: MANAGEMENT

*Energize Your Organization from Top to Bottom*

# SUPERMOTIVATION

By Dean R. Spitzer



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## THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

No matter what you do, it seems, your employees do only what's absolutely necessary to get along. You've handed out raises across the board year after year. You've been as generous as you can be with various incentives. Now you're at your wits' end. You ask in frustration, "What will it take to motivate my employees?"

The answer is not in the workers, but in your organization.

Employee motivation is usually treated as a problem of the individual worker. Motivation programs and initiatives try to inspire employees to work harder, but they do nothing about the work conditions that continue to demotivate those same employees.

The result: As many as 50 percent of workers recently surveyed said they only put enough effort into their work to hold onto their jobs. And 84 percent said they could work better — if they wanted to.

If you want to buck these statistics, says author Dean Spitzer, don't try to fix your workers. Fix your company.

Discover the flaws in your organizational systems that are demotivating your employees and eliminate them. For example, if your reward systems reward speed over safety, then your employees aren't motivated to work safely. Eliminate unclear or conflicting expectations.

At the same time, add elements that motivate your employees. Delegating authority, for example, is a motivator.

In this summary, you will learn which demotivators to reduce and which motivators to add. From planning and production to evaluation and compensation, you'll learn how to build self-sustaining, long-term motivation throughout your organization.

Any motivation program, such as an inspiring speaker, can create an instant surge of motivation. But it soon dissipates. SuperMotivation takes a different approach. It creates a work structure that naturally leads employees to be — and remain — motivated.

Here's how you can do the same for your company.

## I'd Rather Be Golfing

When you play golf, you spend half a day of your leisure time walking long distances just to hit a tiny ball into a little hole — again and again.

Doesn't sound very motivating.

What makes golf exciting is the *context* that surrounds the admittedly boring *task* of hitting a ball into a hole. Contextual factors include variety (different strokes, different terrain), competition, scorekeeping, challenge, social interaction, exercise, etc.

Work, like golf, is more than a single task or even a series of tasks. It is also surrounded by contextual factors, including interaction with co-workers and supervisors, the physical workplace, equipment, rules and regulations, training, and rewards.

As with golf, these contextual factors make the tasks at work motivating — or demotivating.

Imagine, for example, that golf was designed like a typical work task. Your assignment is to drive the ball off the twelfth tee. That's all you do, over and over again. And you're told exactly how, when, and where you are supposed to hit the ball.

Not very motivating, is it?

## Identify and Eliminate Demotivators

Demotivators are the negative conditions surrounding tasks that decrease employee motivation.

The first step in creating the SuperMotivating organization is to rid your company of demotivators.

In most cases, demotivators don't result from explicit wrongdoing by the company. Instead, they are the result of normal operating practices whose negative influence on workers' motivation is unnoticed — or underestimated.

### Common Work Demotivators

- *Office politics.* Why work hard when politics, not performance, is what gets you ahead?
- *Unclear expectations.* For example, don't push for speed at all costs, then demand quality.
- *Unnecessary rules.* Don't prohibit talking, for example, when talking doesn't hinder performance.
- *Poorly designed work processes.* Divide the process into boring, repetitious work, and you'll get bored, demotivated workers.
- *Unproductive meetings.* Forcing employees to waste time in useless meetings won't push them to be more efficient back on the job.
- *Lack of follow-up.* Flavor-of-the-month programs excite nobody.
- *Constant change.* A habit of

last-minute changes will erode the patience of even the most motivated of employees.

- *Internal competition.* Internal competition is not healthy. It creates a mentality of us vs. them.
- *Dishonesty.*
- *Hypocrisy.*
- *Withholding information.* Employees who aren't trusted, or who are lied to, aren't inspired to work harder for the company.
- *Discouraging responses.* Naysayers in management eventually kill the drive to initiate.
- *Criticism.* Criticism is never constructive. Value mistakes, for in them lie the seeds of success.
- *Underutilization.* Idle workers lose drive and motivation.
- *Tolerating poor performance.* Other employees will ask: Why bother to perform well?
- *Being taken for granted.* Employees will make the extra effort if you show you appreciate it.
- *Overcontrol.* Don't treat employees like children or dummies and expect them to be responsible.
- *Unfairness.* Employees may not say anything, but productivity will take a dive.
- *Being forced to do poor quality work.* ☆

## SuperMotivation by Dean R. Spitzer

*Selected by Soundview as an Outstanding Book for Business People*

**The author:** Dean R. Spitzer, a former manager for three Fortune 500 companies, has been a consultant to more than one hundred organizations in the U.S., Europe, the Middle East, and Australia.

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## Turn Desires into Self-Motivation

Traditionally, work motivation has depended on external rewards such as pay and promotions.

As a result, employees have become conditioned to wait for external incentives or threats before taking action.

External motivation is, however, temporary, depending on the potency of the reward or threat.

To foster long-term, sustained motivation, organizations must inspire employees to draw their motivation from inside rather than outside. They must push their employees to be self-motivated rather than externally motivated.

### The Eight Desires

The key to self-motivation is tapping the eight human desires shared by all of us. From these eight desires will emerge the *motivators* — the work conditions that motivate employees (see chart at right).

**1. Desire for activity.** People want to be active and involved.

In our personal lives, most people avoid boredom and monotony. Yet at work, employees are expected to accept boring, repetitious, monotonous jobs happily.

**2. Desire for ownership.** Owning things makes people feel better about themselves. Psychological ownership is even more important than physical ownership. Employees want to psychologically “own” their work. They want input into their work and want to feel responsible for their jobs.

**3. Desire for power.** People want to control their destiny. They don’t want to feel powerless over external forces shaping their lives.

Traditionally, employees have been helpless in the face of rigid, top-down, control organizations. Today, more and more, employees are demanding their freedom back.

**4. Desire for affiliation.** People are social creatures. They like to in-

teract and socialize with one another. While the degree of sociability varies, almost everyone desires some sort of affiliation.

Social support and helping relationships are among the many benefits provided by work.

**5. Desire for competence.** Competence is at the core of self-esteem. People welcome opportunities to feel more competent. Work can provide those opportunities.

**6. Desire for achievement.** People want to accomplish something, to succeed at something.

Under the right conditions, employees will be willing to work hard and overcome obstacles to achieve a goal.

**7. Desire for recognition.** People want to feel appreciated by others, to be positively recognized for their merits. Recognition is a powerful

force that managers can use to unleash energy and motivation.

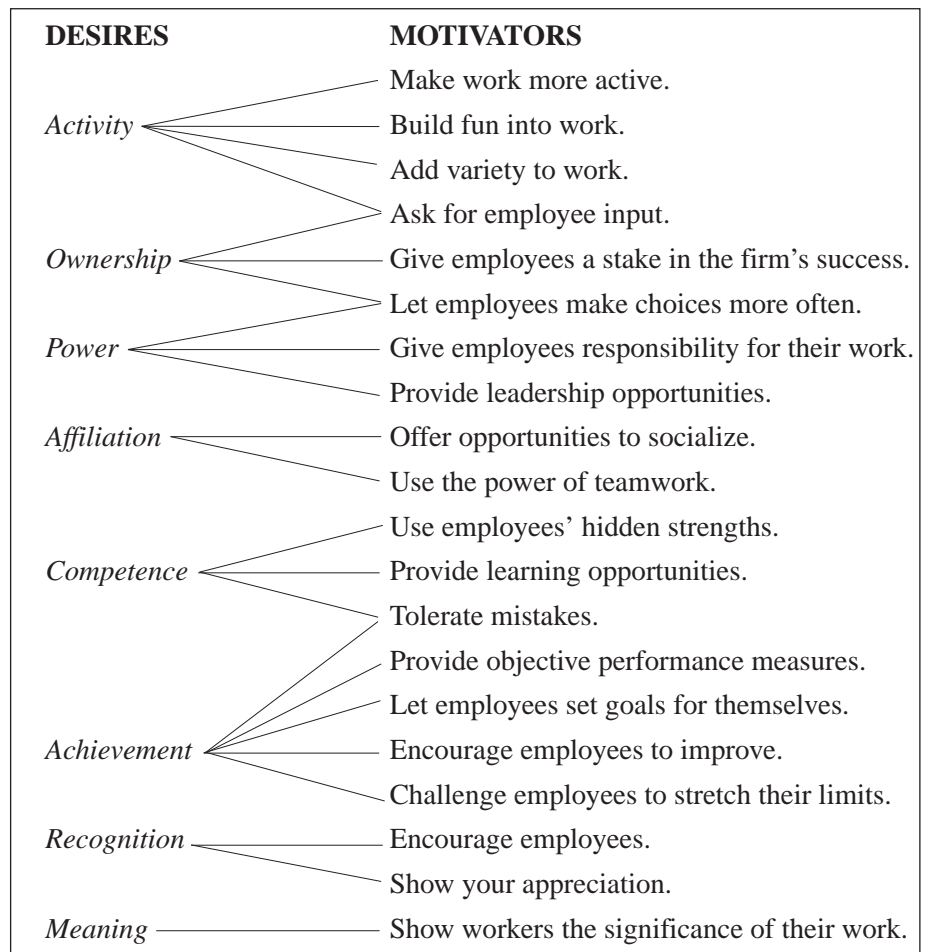
**8. Desire for meaning.** People want a reason to do something. They want to feel that their efforts, however humble, are making a difference. ☆

### The Next Step

The chart below shows the motivators inspired by the eight human desires.

On the following pages of this summary, we will look in more detail at how you can add these motivators to the production, planning, communication, training, evaluation, and rewards systems in your company.

By adding these motivators, and removing the demotivators discussed on page two, you will transform your company into a SuperMotivating organization.



## Reengineer Processes to Motivate Workers

Transforming production processes is currently a leading concern of managers worldwide. Companies are launching reengineering initiatives to redesign the production processes and make them more efficient.

But processes must also be redesigned to make them more motivating. Traditional production systems, which treat employees as cogs in a machine, have been notoriously demotivating. Employees are little more than robots, simply doing an assigned task over and over.

### Break with Tradition

Motivating employees means breaking from the employee-as-cog tradition. Encourage employees to be active, think and take initiatives, and enjoy their work.

Here are some ways to make this happen:

- *Keep employees productively busy.* In motivating organizations, employees should leave work feeling that they accomplished something worthwhile. Don't allow them to be passive.

Instead of letting them wait for assignments, for example, encourage them to use downtime to carry out self-improvement activities or ways to improve their jobs.

- *Make work fun.* Super-Motivating production systems encourage employees to have productive fun. For example, let employees jazz up the physical environment with personal decorations. Chances are productivity will go up.

- *Make variety a way of life.* Job rotations, job sharing, and temporary work assignments are some of the ways to add variety.

- *Let employees make more choices.* For example, let them choose work schedules, break times, special projects, or training.

- *Maximize employee input.* Employees are a great source of ideas.

And they will be committed to a company willing to listen to them.

- *Encourage productive social interaction.* Interaction enhances communication and cooperation.

- *Encourage teamwork.* Working on teams motivates all members.

- *Encourage self-measurement.* Use performance measurement positively to encourage, facilitate, and guide — not to control, punish, or find fault. Allow employees to measure their own performance. It's the surest way of showing that the system is there to help them, not to "get" them.

- *Create a climate of appreciation.* Most traditional production systems provide a low level of positive recognition. Well thought out expressions of appreciation are powerful motivators. ☆

## Involve Employees in Planning

Traditionally, management does the planning while employees are simply asked to implement what management has planned. This separation between "thinkers" and "doers" is demotivating to non-management employees.

SuperMotivating planning systems involve all employees — from executive suite to shop floor — in both strategic and operational planning. This is a radical change from the past, and not always easily accepted by managers or employees.

### Basic Steps

Here are some basic steps to involve employees in planning.

- *Maximize opportunities for employee input in planning.* This is not only motivating to the worker, but it also helps the company. Workers are often more knowledgeable about many of the technical aspects of their own work processes than most supervisors. And they are often closer to the customer.

- *Start small.* Phase in employee

## Rule Number One: Just Think

Delegating responsibility and authority is one of the fundamental ways to motivate employees. With more responsibility and authority, employees will begin to act more like owners.

More and more organizations are giving greater freedom to employees to take initiatives and make decisions.

For example, at one large manufacturer, employees have taken on traditional staff responsibilities for scheduling, quality, safety, hiring, and training.

More informally, a department store chain tells its employees: "Rule number one is to use your good judgment in all situations; there are no additional rules."

involvement. Start them off as technical consultants and eventually involve them in complex strategic and operational planning.

- *Involve employees in goal-setting.* Employees will be much more committed to goals set by themselves.

- *Don't forget strategic planning.* Employees may be technical experts, but they will also have ideas on the big questions: Who are our customers? What are our strengths and weaknesses? How can we improve our long-term performance?

- *Provide recognition for planning efforts.* Let your employees know: "You are making a major contribution to the organization."

Involving employees in planning shows the company's respect for their skills, encourages employees to increase their contributions to the company, and gives them an ownership stake in what they will be asked to do in the future. The "doers" will do things better than ever before. ☆

## Communicate Openly and Positively

In most employee-attitude surveys, one of the most common concerns employees have is lack of communication.

In fact, lack of communication is a root cause of half of the demotivators listed on page two — and indirectly related to the other half. How employees perceive, and feel about, communication in their organization plays a large part in the motivational climate.

Communication done right, therefore, is one of management's key motivational tools.

### *Open Communication*

When you're on an airplane and it encounters turbulence, or if the flight is delayed, you want to know why. Not knowing the whole story makes you nervous.

Employees also want to know what is causing the bumpy rides in their organizations. What people

don't understand, they often perceive as a threat.

And if they can't find out what they want to know from you, they'll start looking elsewhere. That's why every organization has a grapevine or rumor mill to compensate for lack of information.

You will defeat the rumor mills and remove perceived threats to employees by communicating as openly as possible.

There is little that you should hold back. Employees want to be, and should be, aware of the company's strategy, goals, sales, costs, profit and loss, etc.

Also communicate frequently and promptly. If something of importance happens, don't wait to tell employees. They'll hear about it through the grapevine, will wonder why they weren't told, and start to distrust your communication.

### *Bad and Good News*

Make a point of sharing the good

## The Trust Bucket

Companies must communicate openly and honestly to their employees — without exception.

Building trust is like filling up a bucket drop by drop.

It takes a lot of time to fill the bucket. However, a single act of dishonesty or perceived dishonesty can overturn the entire bucket and spill out the trust so painfully accumulated.

news. When something good happens in a particular area, let the entire organization know about it.

Employees will be excited about working in a company where so many positive things are happening.

But don't just communicate the good news.

Employees know that the news is not always good. They will assume that you are keeping the bad news to yourselves if they never hear about it.

Once again, they'll lose trust in you. ☆

## Employee Suggestions: Avoid the Black Hole

One of the outstanding features of Japanese companies is the successful use of employee suggestions. Employee suggestions in some companies can actually number in the millions per year.

The reason that Japanese employees are ready to take the time to make suggestions is that they know their suggestions will be taken seriously.

Nothing is more demotivating than making a suggestion that gets stuck in a "black box" or a "black hole."

There's no use putting a suggestion box on the shop floor if you never implement suggestions. For employees, the suggestion box will only be a constant reminder that when it comes to communication, the company only pretends to listen.

## Interactive Communication Is Key

One-way communication sends an extremely demotivating message. It tells employees that their input is not valued or important.

Just proclaiming that management's "door is always open" is not enough. As one employee told author Spitzer: "Of course this company has an open-door policy. If anyone doesn't like the way things are done, management shows them to the open door."

Management must convince employees that they are truly interested in employee feedback.

For example, schedule regular "rap sessions" or "town meetings" in which senior executives sit down with employees in all areas of the company to discuss employee ideas and concerns.

It's a good idea to draft agendas for these meetings with input from

employee participants. This will give employees more ownership in the meeting.

Another idea is to select communication coordinators to improve communications between senior management and departments.

Of course, two-way communication doesn't have to be formalized in meetings or communication-related job positions.

One high-tech company has an e-mail hotline directly to the CEO. This leads to straightforward, informal, "electronic" discussions between the CEO and his employees.

And one airline chief executive arrives at work each morning by 7:15 A.M. He spends the next hour in the flight-operations area talking informally with pilots and flight attendants before heading into his office. ☆

## Show Your Commitment to Training

More and more companies realize that ignorance is more expensive than training. They are ready to invest time and money (\$50 billion per year in the U.S. alone).

Yet this commitment in funds is often not backed up by management attitudes.

For example, many managers underestimate the time and effort needed to learn new skills.

They drop their employees into brief training sessions, then plop them back on the job with unrealistic expectations of improvement. When these expectations aren't met, employers become frustrated and employees discouraged.

Often, managers are outright hostile to training efforts. Instead of encouraging employees to learn, supervisors often view training sessions as interruptions of work.

Employees return to their jobs and find that instead of using new skills they are simply pushed to catch up on the backlog.

Management attitude can be summarized as "OK, you've had your training, now get back to work!"

Under these pressures, employees

are, understandably, less motivated to learn new skills.

### Motivating Training

To motivate employees, managers have to show that they are committed to their employees' training.

Here's how:

- *Establish a supportive environment for learning.* Learning new skills can be an anxious experience. Managers can help employees learn with strong interpersonal support. Take the time to answer questions, and, most important, never criticize.

- *Schedule adequate time for training.* Training that is rushed is demotivating. It shows that training is an afterthought, not a priority.

- *Provide training just-in-time.* If employees know they will immediately be able to use their new skills, they'll be more motivated to learn.

- *Focus training on core competencies.* Don't let training deteriorate into information dumping provided to employees "just in case" they ever have to know. Focus training on a few core competencies to ensure employees really need what they are learning.

- *Concentrate on developing employees' strengths.* Too many training programs are focused on eliminating weaknesses.

When employees are operating in areas of weakness, they feel incompetent, and all the training in the world won't help much.

Don't try to put square pegs into round holes. Recognize employees' strengths and build these up. Instead of being frustrated at their lack of progress in an area not suited to them, employees will steadily improve their skills.

- *Give employees the time to practice.* Putting employees quickly on the firing line sends a message that their jobs (or training) aren't really that important, so it doesn't matter if they make mistakes. ☆

## From Training to Job

What happens after training is more important than what happens during it.

First, help employees adapt their newly learned skills to the job. Learning a new skill is motivating. Not using it on the job, or not knowing how to use it, is demotivating.

Group learning helps because employees support each other during the difficult on-the-job application of the new skills.

Follow-up meetings are also important as employees will have questions stemming from their on-the-job experiences with the new skills.

Also, get supervisors involved. One firm asks managers and supervisors to coach employees before and after the training sessions. Employees thus learn how to make their training applicable to the on-the-job requirements.

### Ensure Early Success

Design your training so that employees master simple tasks before they go on to the more difficult ones.

Employees using the simple tasks on the job will be encouraged by their success — and motivated to continue the more substantial training ahead.

## The Privilege of Training

In some companies, training is seen as a punishment. Employees are made to feel they're not good enough at what they do. That's why they need training.

SuperMotivating companies tell employees — through words and behavior — that training is provided because they are valuable to the organization.

One firm requires regular education and training for everyone from the janitor to the CEO. In addition, it rewards top employees with additional education and training of their choice.

Training at this company is not a punishment, but a privilege.

## Self-Assessed Training Requirements

Employees involved in making training decisions that affect them are much more motivated to make the training work.

For example, at the beginning of each year, employees at one company rate their own skills on a self-assessment questionnaire.

Based on this self-assessment, employees, in collaboration with their supervisors, develop an annual training plan. ☆

## Evaluate the Right Things Objectively

There are two components to employee evaluation: measurement and feedback.

The first step in assuring that evaluations are positive and motivating is to create objective performance measures. No one wants his or her performance to be measured solely on the basis of another person's opinion.

If, on the other hand, objective measurement criteria have been defined, employees clearly understand what is expected of them — and when they are not performing up to expectations. They will thus be ready to accept the results of the evaluations without seeking to blame any failures on management or other factors.

### *Involve Employees*

Involve employees in developing the measures on which they will be evaluated.

They are often in a better position to know which measurements truly reflect the quality of their performance. There's nothing more demotivating than to receive a poor evaluation because of misleading or poor evaluation criteria.

For example, a hotel chain traditionally used two key measures to evaluate reservation-agent productivity: number of calls answered and number of reservations made.

These measures were unpopular with the agents because they did not measure the complexity of the calls, and they even discouraged quality customer service.

When finally asked for their input, the agents suggested a conversion rate (the ratio of number of reservations to calls received.) This, they felt, more adequately measured the quality of their performance on the phones.

Because the new measurement system didn't reveal the number of calls taken, employees were moti-

vated to sell reservations, not just answer calls. And they knew the performance criteria were fair; they could blame only themselves for any lack of performance.

### *Self-Measurement*

The ability to measure and keep track of their own performance also motivates employees. They have a sense of ownership over the evaluation process that pushes them to perform at their highest level.

Self-measurement also demonstrates the trust and esteem of the company, further motivating the employees to live up to that trust. ☆

## Increase Positive Feedback

One of the major reasons employees view evaluations negatively is because of the feedback such evaluations generate.

If you want to motivate employees and not discourage them, then you must ensure that the evaluation feedback is as positive as possible.

First, encourage and praise your employees frequently. When employees do something right, make sure people know about it.

If employees are doing something wrong, you can still turn normally negative feedback into a positive experience. Here's how:

- Correct employees only when it will help improve their future performance.
- Correct employees' mistakes when they happen, not days, weeks, or months later.
- Give negative feedback in private.
- Focus on the solution, not the problem.
- Close the discussion on a positive note.
- Be sure to recognize progress whenever it occurs. ☆

## Personal Development, Not Appraisal

Performance appraisal is often demotivating because appraisals are linked to compensation concerns — and sometimes to disciplinary measures.

Even employees that generally perform well will be defensive and fearful about any negative feedback they receive.

The purpose of appraisals is to encourage development, not focus on compensation or discipline.

One company completely reworked its performance appraisal system to reflect an emphasis on development over reward and punishment.

The name of the new program, "Performance Development Process," reflects this new focus. By including the word "process," the company sends another message: that performance appraisal is a continuous exercise and not just a year-end tally.

The Performance Development Process consists of four steps:

1. *Performance planning.* Employees and their supervisors meet at the beginning of each performance period to discuss expectations.
2. *Regular feedback.* Employees receive ongoing, if informal, feedback — on a daily basis if possible, on a weekly basis at minimum.
3. *Interim reviews.* Employees shouldn't have to wait for the end of the year for comprehensive feedback. Interim reviews (weekly, monthly, or quarterly) remove many of the negatives associated with one-shot annual reviews.
4. *Annual reviews.* The company deemphasizes the annual review. Nothing new is included at this stage, which is more of a summary of previous reviews.

## Recognition Is More Valuable than Money

Rewards play a pivotal role in how organizations motivate their employees.

However, organizations are increasingly discovering that traditional rewards are becoming more and more costly — and less and less motivating.

### Demotivating Rewards

Reward systems include base pay, incentive pay (such as bonuses and commissions), nonmonetary rewards (such as gifts, celebrations, and personal recognition), promotions, and benefits.

Traditionally, organizations have linked the motivating effectiveness of their reward systems to monetary value. The more money involved, the more motivating the reward.

However, there is another part of the reward that is even more motivating than money: the recognition value. The recognition value concerns the emotional impact of the reward on the participant.

For example, if an employee receives an unexpected Christmas bonus of a week's pay as a reward for exceptional performance, the employee will be very pleased. The recognition value is high.

If all employees receive Christ-

mas bonuses every year, they will not be pleased. They will be expecting the bonus, and thus will only be displeased if they don't get it.

The recognition value in this case is low.

Monetary value is irrelevant to recognition value.

Employees feel more recognized — and more motivated — when they are the only ones to receive a bonus *week's* pay, than when everyone receives an extra *month's* pay.

### Nonmonetary Rewards

The best rewards can have little or no monetary value.

What's important is to show your employees that you genuinely appreciate their specific contributions.

In addition to verbally expressing your appreciation, you can communicate this appreciation in an endless number of nonmonetary ways.

Here are some examples from other companies:

- A supervisor brought a home-cooked meal to his night shift workers in appreciation of their extra efforts during a very stressful period.
- A senior executive installed a special telephone in his office so that

purchasing agents could call him directly and tell him about the price concessions that they had won.

The executive thanked them on the phone and followed up with a personal congratulatory note.

- One company gives a stuffed koala bear to employees who contribute significantly to quality

*I can live for two months on a good compliment.*

– Mark Twain

improvement.

The company calls it the Koala T. Bear Award. ☆

## Motivating Paychecks

In future SuperMotivating companies, paychecks will become more motivating as the base pay portion of the salary is reduced and the performance-based portion is increased.

Performance-based pay is already standard for salespeople. But in other jobs, the performance-based portion is minimal.

Here are some performance-based pay options currently available:

- *Performance bonuses.* These bonuses must really be performance-based and not annual entitlements expected by employees.

- *Gainsharing.* The company rewards employees for improvements in the company's performance, for example in productivity, quality, or reducing costs. Reward amounts are based on a predetermined formula.

- *Profit sharing.* Each employee gets a percentage of the company's profits.

- *Employee Stock Ownership Plans.* Employees get company stock. (This option is less motivating because it is long-term and not tied to specific employee contributions.)

Whatever performance-based compensation system you choose, don't neglect the base compensation package. Low or inequitable wages is a major demotivator that no amount of performance-based pay will overcome. ☆

## Six Keys to Effective Recognition

1. **Do it often.** Don't keep waiting for something "significant enough" to happen.
2. **Do it promptly.** Late recognition is weak recognition.
3. **Be creative.** Make recognition fun and memorable.
4. **Make it easy for people to do.** Recognition is not always something people feel comfortable doing. Some companies give out pre-printed pads of recognition notes for supervisors to fill in.
5. **Involve all employees.** Recognition isn't the domain only of supervisors. Peers and team members should also be able to recognize their co-workers.
6. **Build it into the system.** Establish a "recognition culture" in your company. For example, giving recognition should be part of the job description of all supervisors — and their bosses. Thus supervisors who take the time to recognize employees will in turn be recognized themselves.