

MOTIVATING OTHERS BY KENNETH "BUZZ" SHAW

## THE HUMAN EXCHANGE



**G**etting others on board, to give their all for the team is the crux of leadership. In an earlier life, I had a very close friend whose name was Senator Sam, a very effective state senator. At one of our lunches, I could see I didn't have his undivided attention — he was writing something in a little black book. I asked him what he was doing; he apologized and said that he had just thought of a favor that he had done for another person and wanted to write it down so that he had it on record and could call in "chits" at a future time. Sam was no leadership specialist, but he had just perfectly articulated a very important approach to motivating others. It is called human exchange.

In our day-to-day activities we exchange favors. We give things to others and without articulating it, we feel we can count on them to return the favor. Dr. Stephen R. Covey, author of "The 7 Habits of High-

ly Effective People," calls it the building of an emotional bank account where we make deposits and build up a reserve of future favors.

Sounds easy enough: You are there for me and I will be there for you. But it isn't that easy; different currencies work for different people. This is why our attempts to motivate others often fail. Some colleagues are motivated by the organization's mission. An inspiring speech about the importance of the cause is enough to cause them to go more than the extra mile.

Others are more motivated by being given the tools to get the task done. They might just need information, quicker response time from others or additional help. Whatever you give them, you won't be disappointed. Some need such "position related currencies" such as recognition and the chance to be known as competent and effective. Recognition in the company newsletter charges their batteries. And there are those whose favored currency is more personal — they want their leader to like them, listen to their concerns and give them emotional backing when needed.

Beware of using the wrong currency. The task-oriented person may enjoy recognition but probably doesn't want to take a lot of time on personal matters. Those personal-

oriented might identify with the mission, but they are most concerned with what you think about them.

Human exchange does work as a motivator but there is another approach that is also effective. It is called the cognitive theory of motivation. It assumes that people are best motivated when they see the connection between their efforts, results and rewards.

According to Richard L. Hughes, co-author of "Leadership: Enhancing The Lessons Of Experience," this approach works best under the following conditions:

1. **Making goals specific and challenging**, not "just do your best" goals.
2. **Providing frequent feedback** regarding performance. Motivation is at its peak when there is a combination of clearly stated goals and frequent feedback.
3. **Showing that you are personally committed** and expect high standards of performance not only for your colleagues but also yourself.
4. **Making goals reachable** — but a stretch. Goals that are impossible to reach or too easy are real drags on motivation.

So, what is the best approach to motivate others? Do both. Used together, you will soon see better results. 📌

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Kenneth A. "Buzz" Shaw also makes his expertise available to the public through his Web site, <http://whitman.syr.edu/shaw/>, which includes videos, articles, pod casts, speeches and presentations for leaders and business professionals.

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