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A new view of management



**Where workplace
motivation
goes from here**

A new view of management



**Where workplace
motivation goes from here**

BY PAUL NOLAN

A story in the *Wall Street Journal* in early March headlined “Smile! Your Boss Is Tracking Your Happiness” began, “Your company wants to know what type of mood you are in today.”

It went on to explain that an increasing number of workplaces have begun using software to trawl emails, instant message discussions and other communication to watch for language that could indicate depression or burnout. Other companies have started asking employees to regularly log their frame of mind or track their moods on apps.

“Anxious to retain and energize staffers, more companies say they are making employee happiness a priority. The shift has fueled a cottage industry devoted to monitoring, analyzing and improving workers’ moods,” the story stated.

Employee morale was a distinctly different proposition in that first week of March than it is now. By mid-April, those workers who were still employed were uncertain whether they would return to their office in May — or if they would have a job to return to at all. (By April 17, a total of 22 million U.S. residents had applied for unemployment benefits since the coronavirus outbreak.)

What changes are permanent?

Managing through a crisis, whether it is specific to a company or wide-ranging, received plenty of attention prior to the COVID-19 pandemic toppling world order. In the short time that people have been completely focused on the coronavirus, there has been a flood of stories on how to keep remote workers engaged and productive. Terms like “new normal” get tossed around indiscriminately. The challenge for business leaders is determining what changes regarding management are temporary and what might be more lasting.

“Major disruptions can cause fundamental shifts in social attitudes and beliefs, which pave the way for new policies, ways of working and consumer needs and behaviors, some of which persist in the long run,” state a team of management consultants from Boston Consulting Group (BCG) in an [HBR article](#). The SARS outbreak in 2002 permanently increased the amount of e-commerce; 9/11 brought stricter air travel security; and World War II opened up the work force to women.

Commentators have stated that fallouts from the COVID-19 outbreak may include a shift in health care policies to be more inclusive and a retreat from international interdependencies. “At an individual level, it’s also possible that we may adjust how we view the balance between work and family life, having been reminded of what is truly important to us,” the BCG group states.

Since the outbreak, there has been a plethora of articles on how to manage and motivate remote work teams. Working remotely may be more widely embraced in a post-COVID world, but a shift to all remote all of the time isn’t expected on a grand scale. “There is something unique that humans get from interacting with one another that doesn’t come across as well through technology,” states a [Time magazine story](#) on working remotely.

“Screens are distancing,” Dartmouth College psychological and brain science professor Thalia Wheatley told Time. “In face-to-face communication, you are sharing a moment in time and space with someone.

That is incredibly compelling for our ancient brains.” The Time article points out that companies like Best Buy, Yahoo and Aetna all experimented with remote work in years past before telling employees to come back into the office.

Management skills that will always be in vogue

While the emphasis on managing remote teams may be moot for many within months, there are some management skills that should be kicked up during crises and not dismissed once things return to normal.

You can rarely have certainty in a crisis. You can offer clarity. Simply being able to accurately name what’s happening and point to the next best step can be tremendous leadership.”

- **Recognize** – As New Yorkers showed when they started standing outside nightly en masse to clap and cheer for frontline health care workers, it’s more important for recognition to be heartfelt than fancy. “Employees need it now, more than ever,” says Elizabeth Lombardo, a licensed psychologist, trainer and best-selling author of “Better Than Perfect: 7 Steps to Crush your Inner Critic and Create a Life You Love.” By doing so, she says, they are showing they truly care about their employees, and loyalty will increase long after the pandemic is over.

- **Focus on what’s important** – Remember the human and empathetic part of the manager/mentor relationship, says Ruth Gotian, assistant dean for mentoring at Weill Cornell Medicine. Focus on what is important to your team at this time. Consider their safety, specifically their physical, emotional and psychological state — and prioritize helping them to improve that in your role as a mentor. Gotian says her trainee reminded her, “This situation requires human kindness and empathy. Maybe mentorship here is just realizing the humanity in each of us and being there as equals with one another through an uncertain time.”

How you act now will be remembered

What we are learning about remote work will open up new opportunities for work-life balance, Kim Scott, a workplace consultant and the author of “Radical Candor: Be a Kickass Boss Without Losing Your Humanity,” told the *Wall Street Journal*.

“Everyone will remember how their boss responded during this time. Did they check in frequently? Did they focus on you at a human level? Did they communicate directly and honestly and give people time to voice their concerns? Did they share information or try to hide it?

“We all need to take responsibility as leaders,” Scott continues. “If we conduct every interaction during this crisis with all the compassion and honesty we can muster, our work lives can emerge from it changed for the better.”

That’s solid guidance that thankfully will last much longer than a pandemic. **smm**

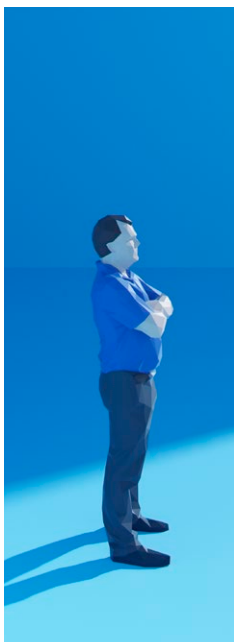
“Everyone will remember how their boss responded during this time. Did they focus on you at a human level?” — Kim Scott

- **Communicate** – I try to set the tone upfront with one rule: when in doubt, over-communicate,” says Paige Arnof-Fenn, founder and CEO of Mavens & Moguls, a global strategic marketing consulting firm. “If the lines of communication are open and everyone makes an effort to listen and be heard then collaboration will happen naturally and the information will flow. Once we lay this groundwork, it all will be in place to continue moving forward as the economy reopens and some businesses come back quicker than others.”

Many have said during the pandemic that the most important thing they want from government leaders is honesty and as much information as possible. That’s good advice for corporate leaders for the long term.

“People are looking for someone who can help reliably interpret events and lead them into the next best step. A lot of leaders lose credibility because they’re still focused on motivation when what their team or congregation needs is accurate information and some provisional navigation — some next steps,” says [Carrie Nieuwhof](#), a Canadian-based pastor and speaker on leadership.

“If you can gather reliable information and present it in a way that helps people make sense out of a very confusing moment, then people will begin to trust your leadership,” Nieuwhof adds, “Don’t worry about certainty for your next steps.



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Workers want a future, not foosball

To retain talent, focus on professional development over perks

BY CHRISTINE MELLON

Would your workers rather have ping-pong or foosball tables at the office?

As it turns out, the answer is neither. [A 2017 study](#) found that 86% of office workers feel fun features add no real value to their working life. What employees value more — and what companies should strive to offer — are opportunities for professional development.

When evaluating potential jobs, one of the most important aspects tech employees consider is [professional development opportunities](#). In fact, when employees were asked what they'd want to be doing in five years' time, 33% said they'd want to have a more specialized, technical role, while just 19% said they'd want to be doing the same job.

To keep employees engaged and help them advance in their careers, you need to look beyond fun features and foosball and make your company culture one of development. Before

investing in a ping-pong table, consider the following three ways to invest in employees:

1. Begin with learning and innovation.

Technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning are reshaping how employees work today. A recent report from the [United Nations Education Commission](#) found that half the world's jobs could give way to automation over the next several decades.

But tech talent isn't overly intimidated by automation — they're excited by it. More than 40% of developers say increasing automation is one of the [most exciting parts of AI](#). Letting AI focus on more routine tasks means they can devote time to projects that require human ingenuity and new skills.

Employers need to provide resources and training that let employees apply new skill sets to their work. Online learning platforms such as Degreed and Lynda.com offer structured learning pathways that teach employees new skills. Offline

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activities such as workshops, seminars or even book clubs encourage employees to explore new ideas outside the office.

2. Continue with collaboration.

For tech employees in particular, a sense of collaboration is key. Collaboration helps employees meet common goals and business objectives — and creates a sense of community. A [Stack Overflow global survey](#) found that 70% of developers feel a sense of connection with other developers. But it's important to make sure they feel a sense of connection to the company as well.

One effective way for employers to attract and retain talent is to communicate company plans for future growth. By giving employees a voice and including them in conversations, employees are able to make sure their opinions are heard and valued. In addition, these employees are more likely to care about the business.

3. Follow through with flexibility.

Employees who are learning and working diligently need the opportunity to take time off. This allows them to recharge and come back ready to tackle new projects.

Today's employees are looking for a sense of fulfillment, a chance to develop their skills and, ultimately, a company that cares about them and that will support them throughout their career.

Employees can't deliver quality work when they're burned out, nor are they in the best position to learn new skills. Longer hours spent burning the midnight oil doesn't always equate to better work. A [LinkedIn report](#) revealed that one of the best ways to retain employees is to offer strong benefits such as paid time off (PTO), parental leave and a strong work/life balance.

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Workers want a future, not foosball

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Currently, only 1% to 2% of U.S. employers offer unlimited vacation, but more should take the opportunity to explore it. Providing employees with unlimited vacation shows them you have confidence in their ability to get their work done and allows them to take the time they need to rest, play and recharge.

Companies can put ping-pong tables, snacks and beer in the break room, but employees want a sense of fulfillment, a chance

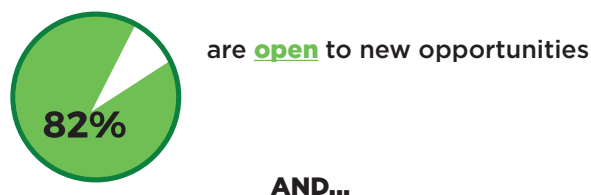
to develop their skills and, ultimately, a company that cares about them and will support them throughout their career.

A ping-pong table is great. But having engaged employees who are there to play it? That's even more valuable.

Christine Mellon is senior vice president and chief human resources officer at [CSG](#), a global leader in providing business support solutions.

LaSalle Network, a national staffing, recruiting and culture firm, polled 8,000 sales professionals about what they're seeking in a company and career. The results should concern sales managers.

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Top-performing companies do incentives differently

BY MIKE MAY

With everything happening in our economy, it is essential to understand which business tactics are critical for driving sales and which can be paused for a bit. Nearly all of America's top-performing companies utilize non-cash sales incentives. Now, more than ever, we should evaluate what fuels their success.

The Incentive Research Foundation (IRF) analyzed top-performing companies based on their strong revenues, sales growth, customer satisfaction and employee ratings. The IRF published a ["signature series"](#) of fascinating trends and findings on what the best-of-the-best do differently with their incentive programs. Applying these success drivers will optimize sales organizations, help retain top talent and power the prospect pipelines.



3 expected findings

Belief – The executives at these top companies believe more strongly in non-cash rewards and recognition. Specifically, top-performing companies were 20% more likely than average companies to say non-cash rewards positively affect recruiting, retention and overall engagement – and 30% higher on their conviction that incentives motivate behavior positively. While “cash is king” is a well-worn dogma, this empirical research signals that non-cash rewards are beginning to assume the throne.

Retention – Retaining talent is at the top of most CEOs' lists of priorities. A [recent IRF report](#) drilled deeper into the financial services vertical and found that top-performing companies were 36% more likely than average peers to proclaim their reward and recognition programs are effective retention tools. That is even stronger than the 20% differential in the IRF's first general study. The analytical research validates

CEOs' street smarts. Non-cash rewards and recognition keep top-performing sales reps in star roles on your team.

Better trips – Conventional wisdom would expect top-performing companies to have better club trips and the research validates it. They invest more. The financial services vertical study reports average incentive trip spending of \$6,438 per person, and the technology vertical study reports \$6,833 – versus the benchmark of \$5,193 from a broader-based survey by IRF called the 2018 Incentive Travel Industry Index. Sponsoring an incentive trip that stands above the rest is a success driver for top-performing companies.

3 unexpected findings

Reach – Everyone expects recognition of top employees. Researchers call this “exclusivity.” But these top-performer studies reveal a surprising twist: greater reach was found in elite companies, with wider groups of salespeople earning varying levels of recognition or award tiers. In other words, if a sales rep was not in the top 10% qualifying for the President's Club trip to Maui, they might earn a merchandise award or a gift card. “Motivating the middle” has been popular advice in the incentive industry for years, and now these studies reinforce this success trait.

Simplify – The study adds a new insight that rings especially true in today's torrent of emails and marketing messages – simplification. Simple program rules and simple metrics are differentiators that make or break an incentive program. Simplicity cuts down on clutter, regains focus and makes everything easier to consume. Employees are overwhelmed with too much information. They appreciate concise messaging. Steve Jobs said, “That's one of my mantras – focus and simplicity.”

Agencies – Top performers are more likely to look to outside incentive agencies for expertise and help. 88% of these companies seek outside partners on the best ways to recognize and motivate participants, which is 20% higher than average performing companies. In the same way these companies partner with legal firms, marketing agencies or IT partners, they work with incentive agencies because they know there is a level of creativity, experience and management that incentive agencies deliver.

Mike May served as 2018 and 2019 chairman of the Incentive Research Foundation Board of Trustees and is President of [Brightspot Incentives and Events](#) in Dallas.

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