



# Motivating Employees

by Mike Hawkins  
[mike@alpinelink.com](mailto:mike@alpinelink.com)

How often have you heard the phrase, “You can either motivate someone with a carrot or with a stick”? As in enticing a donkey to pull a cart, the phrase refers to motivation techniques that are either incentive-based — dangling a carrot in front of the donkey — or punishment-based — hitting it with a stick from behind.

For many organizations, these represent the two alternatives to motivating people. People are either rewarded for their good behavior or punished for their bad behavior — or a combination of both. In any case, the motivation is external. The source of the motivation is from an external source. It is not from within the individual.

There are several shortcomings in managing people through external motivation. When on the receiving end of the stick approach, people often feel degraded. They develop resentment. They become fearful of the next encounter and instead of applying their energy productively toward the next assignment, they expend their energy in fear and anxiety in avoiding the next assignment.

There are issues with the carrot approach, too. It is a short-term solution. When the incentives end, so does the desired behavior. In incentive-based systems, people often learn how to trick the system and achieve objectives without performing the work. Another problem with the carrot is that it doesn't result in self-improvement. The incentive is to perform, not to develop. The carrot represses self-initiative and individual ambition. It hinders genuine ownership and responsibility. It stifles creativity.

So what alternative to the carrot and the stick is there? Inner motivation. Peak performance occurs when an individual is motivated from within. Having passion and drive minimizes fear and anxiety. It leads to self-initiative and professional development. It stimulates creativity and ownership.

Here are six management principles enabling inner motivation:

- Employees desire meaning and purpose from their work. Look for opportunities to tie their individual passions to their work and the vision of the organization.
- Employees want to be involved. Find ways to allow your employees to voice their opinions and influence the direction of the organization.
- Employees want to use their talents. Get to know the unique talents of your employees and find ways to engage them.
- Employees have a need to belong. Create shared experiences, shared rewards and shared responsibilities that make them feel an integral part of your organizational community.
- Employees need to have pride in their workplace. Make their workplace a source of dignity.
- Employees require appreciation. Show them you believe in them through encouragement and gratitude.

Don't rely solely on incentives and consequences as motivational tools for your employees. Add focus on these principles to develop your employee's inner drive and create a more sustainable source of motivation.