
There's more to morale than money when it comes to employees.

It sounds like a strange claim as we assume that employees are only focused on making more money. Isn't that what we hope for in new jobs and in raises? Money is important, but it doesn't always motivate or keep employees happy. Sure, no one would say "no" if offered a raise or bonus, but throwing money at employees won't make them happier.

Employees like to be treated fairly and be appreciated. For example, money can de-motivate an employee if he or she finds out that they are making less than a similarly qualified peer.

So how do we make employees more productive and happier at work? Should their happiness be a priority? Happy employees are more productive and collaborative according to 2010 research by Harvard University business administration professor Teresa M. Amabile and independent researcher Steven J. Kramer.¹

On employees' best days they reported making progress in their work (76%) and being collaborative (53%). Those numbers plummeted to 25% and 43%, respectively, on days when employees felt unhappy.

So what will motivate employees?²

Employees want managers who:

- Are specific about their expectations
- Are fair
- Give employees the tools to get their jobs done
- Encourage their development
- Give regular praise – try telling employees something you appreciate about them, regularly.\

Employees want workplaces where:

- Their opinions seem to count
- They feel tied to the mission of the organization
- Colleagues are committed to quality work
- They can grow their skills

Sometimes a simple "thank you," is enough. Learning to communicate and to give and receive feedback are skills that all organizations can help foster. Does your organization need help increasing morale? Contact Laura Jacob.

¹ "The HBR List: Breakthrough Ideas for 2010. HBR January 2010

² Based on Marcus Buckingham's "First Break All the Rules"