

I'm An Executive Coach Who Doesn't Use Motivation – Here's Why

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Have you ever found yourself getting caught up in all of the “how to get motivated” information out there? A quick Google search of “how to be motivated” brings up over 200 million results, in addition to scores of subtopics like “how to stay motivated” and “how to motivate yourself.”

So why don't I use motivation? Let me share a story to illustrate.

Several years ago, I was a keynote speaker at a conference for a network marketing company. After my presentation, one of the top leaders of the company came up to me and said: “Noah, I took six pages of notes while I was listening to you speak. That was one of the best presentations I've ever heard.”

I thanked her, then she said something that I'll never forget. She said, “But there's something wrong.”

Uh oh, I thought. Here it comes.

She said, “In our program, it says you're a motivational speaker. But you're *not* a motivational speaker.”

“Really,” I said. “What am I?”

She said, “You're not a *motivational* speaker. You're a *motivating* speaker.”

I said, “Wow, that’s very interesting. What’s the difference?”

She said, “Well, a *motivational* speaker is someone who gets you all pumped up, tells a bunch of stories and gets you all excited. Then you go into the office on Monday, and all of that ‘motivation’ has evaporated. And you’re like, ‘*What am I supposed to do now?*’.”

She continued, “But you showed us exactly what to do and how to do it. You gave a step-by-step blueprint of exactly how I can reach my goals faster. That’s why you *motivated* me.”

What is motivation?

The word *motivation* comes from the Latin word *movere*, which means “to move.” The word *motivation* has the same root as the word *motor*. That origination helps me to remember that *motivation* in human beings is like the *motor* in your car – it’s the thing that causes both of them to move.

Therefore, when you’re thinking about your own motivation, it’s helpful to consider what actually makes you move, as well as what makes you not move. For example, most entrepreneurs and business leaders assume that the No. 1 thing that motivates people is money. Of course, everyone wants more money, and there’s nothing inherently wrong with that.

However, where many entrepreneurs and leaders go astray is assuming that money is *the* motivator for all of their employees. Interestingly, when I interview entrepreneurs and thought leaders, I often ask them what their motivation for starting their business was. Their answers vary from “I wanted to make a difference,” to “I wanted to help people,” to “I wanted to make the world a better place.” I can’t remember one of the 200 entrepreneurs I’ve interviewed who answered “I wanted to make a lot of money.”

What do you want?

Of course you know that one of the tenets of goal-setting is to, um, set your goals. That is, to know what you want. I call this process identifying your pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

Ask yourself questions like:

- What do I want in my business?
- What do I want in my relationships?
- What do I want in my family life?
- What do I want to do with my time?

Just like driving in your car, it's crucial that you know where you want to go. You wouldn't just jump in your car and drive around in circles, would you? Yet that's what millions of people are unconsciously doing in their lives.

Why do you want that?

After you've identified your pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, the next step is to ask these key questions that most people forget: Why?

- Why do you want that goal you set in your business?
- In your relationships?
- In your family life?
- With your free time?

There are only a few reasons why we humans take action, and most (if not all) of them come down to emotions or feelings. So when people tell me their goals, I always ask them, "Why do you want that?"

Focus on what you actually want

Of course, we all want more time, more money, and more

influence. That's all well and good, but why do you want those things? When I ask them this question, my coaching clients will answer:

- I want to feel important.
- I want to be heard.
- I want to be seen.
- I want to feel special.
- I want to be appreciated.

In fact, many of the entrepreneurs, executives and athletes I've coached over the last two decades discovered that they had been going after external things without realizing the internal reasons that were actually driving them to go after them in the first place.

The truth is, there's nothing "wrong" with motivation. In fact, motivation is the motor that will keep you moving toward your pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. However, understanding not just what you want (your outer motivation), but why you want it (your inner motivation), means that you can move beyond motivation and finally give yourself permission to succeed.

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