



Motivating People

An Online Continuing Education Course for Engineers

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Motivating People

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students taking this course will learn to:

1. Define the term “motivation.”
2. Apply the concept of motivation in the workplace and daily life.
3. Explain and play the “mental game” that lies hidden behind workplace decisions and events.
4. Identify motivational opportunities that lie within events at work.
5. Discover what will motivate their employees individually.
6. Create and maintain a “motivational cycle” with his or her employees for a positive impact on productivity.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This is a practical approach to the concept of motivation: what it is, what it means to different people, how to discover what motivates different people, and how to create a motivational culture in a workplace. There are several thought-provoking questions to help the student apply the course to themselves and their workplace in a simple, consistent, and straightforward manner.

WHAT IS “MOTIVATION”?



Essentially, motivation is the unspoken answer people hear when they ask themselves **“Why would I want to do that,”** or **“What’s in it for me?”**

If their internal answer gives them a good reason to act, they will. If not, they will not act.

The unspoken answers to internal questions are typically something like this:

Situation	Internal Question	Internal Answer and Action (the motivation)
Seeing new clothes for sale at the mall	<i>“Why would I want to spend that much on a suit?”</i>	“Because it will make me look so good!” and buy it or “I need the money for something else that I want more” and not buy it.
Your boss asks for volunteers to work late	<i>“Why would I want to do that?”</i>	“Because I want to get off early next week to see my child’s game” and volunteer or “I don’t like him/her – why should I help?” and not volunteer.
You see a charity asking for donations	<i>“Why would I want to donate to that?”</i>	“Because it makes me feel good to help others” and donate or “Nobody helped me when I needed it” and do not donate.
You see a potential problem coming up at work that no one else sees.	<i>“Why would I want to tell the boss about this?”</i>	“Because I like my boss, and this is a good place to work” and tell someone or “If my boss and this company doesn’t care about me, why should I care about them?” and stay quiet.
What have you seen recently?	<i>What would be the question?</i>	What are the choices of actions?



HOW DOES KNOWING THAT APPLY TO A LEADER?

It is because a leader should have an answer for the employee's internal question of "*Why would I want to do that*" **BEFORE** they ask someone to do something.



Before we go much farther and explain why you should have an answer for them asking themselves "*Why would I want to do that*" you must consider something else first.

There can be as many reasons why people are motivated to act (or not act) as there are people. Some of the more common reasons include:

- I *materially* gain from it (money or property)
- I *gain emotionally* from it (it makes me feel good)
- I *spiritually* gain from it (it heartens my soul)
- I *psychologically* gain from it (enhances my reputation or self-image)



WHAT ADDITIONAL REASONS CAN YOU ADD?

- Now before you ask someone to do something, take a moment to consider if there were a way that doing what you want will help him or her achieve any of the gains listed above.
- In other words, ask yourself this, "*How can I present this need of mine to them in such a way that it will help them achieve something they want?*" or "*How can I make it easy for them to want to do this?*"

Parents may say to a child, "The sooner you get your room cleaned up (what the parent wants), the sooner you can go out to play with your friends (what the child wants)."

While it is true the parents can still order the child to clean up their room; it may not have the speed and quality that the parent desires.

We are now getting into the mental game that can have career ramifications depending on how well you understand the concept of motivation.



This is a crucial part of this course – please review it as often as necessary to make sure it sticks.

Getting back to the need for someone to work late, ask yourself these questions:

1. Why do I need someone to work late?

- a. An unexpected event happened, and we must make up for it. *This could be an opportunity for you to demonstrate you are a good leader as you help the company recover.*
- b. It is poor planning on your part. *If so, what will you do differently the next time, so this does not happen again? This could be a danger for you because an important part of a leader's job is PLANNING and SCHEDULING.*
- c. We always work late currently because of workflows (like end-of-month processing.) *This is not a risk to you but maybe a chance to eliminate the periodic need to do this.*

2. How long will they have to stay?

- a. They stay until it is finished which may motivate them to work quickly.
- b. They must stay a specific amount of time. This may allow Parkinson's Law¹ to appear, ("Work expands to fill the time available for its completion.")

3. What is the quality of results I need?

- a. "Good enough to get by" means their frame of mind should be at least **neutral** instead of **vengeful** that can lead to sabotage, a poor work product, or seeding dissension among the employees. They would probably say, "I HAVE TO work late" when talking to coworkers.
- b. "Very good" means their frame of mind should be positive and would probably say, "I GET TO work late" or simply, "I AM WORKING late."

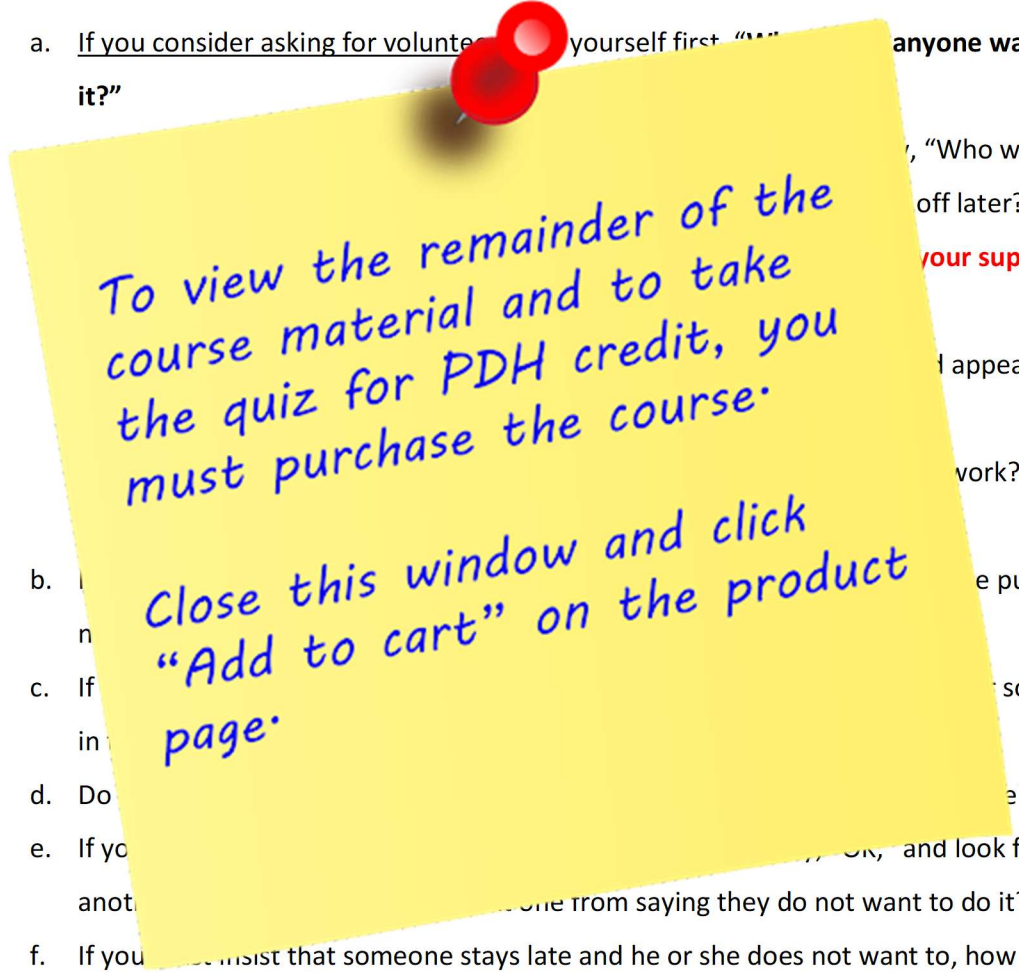
¹ C. Northcote Parkinson first articulated it in an article published in *The Economist* in 1955, later reprinted together with other essays in the book *Parkinson's Law: The Pursuit of Progress*, (London, John Murray, 1958) based on extensive experience in the British Civil Service. The scientific observations, which contributed to the law's development, included noting that as Britain's overseas empire declined in importance, the number of employees at the Colonial Office increased.

Getting back to their internal question, “Why would I want to do that”, you now must think about how to present the situation (the need to work late) to them that can do the most for your career (your motivation) or at least not harm your career (also a motivator):

1. *The work can be completed by anyone in the workforce.* If so, this gives you a broader potential audience for selection or volunteering.

How will you determine who does the work?

- a. If you consider asking for volunteers yourself first. “**Who** **do** **you** **want** **to** **do** **it?**”



- b. ... “Who wants to ... off later?” **(Note: ... your supervisor ... appeal to ... work? Is it part ... pulls a ... something ... e? ... and look for ... from saying they do not want to do it?**
- c. If ...
- d. Do ...
- e. If you ...
- f. If you ... insist that someone stays late and he or she does not want to, how may their attitude affect the quality of their work?

2. *The work can only be done by a select few.* How will you select them fairly and without it looking like favoritism or revenge?