Stepthinking
Common Sense Consultancy

Motivating Your Teams

Stop thinking about "how to motivate your team" and instead think about "what are the things in our environment that drain motivation?". Address those and the motivated team will follow.

1

Make priorities crystal clear
Ambiguity is one of the fastest routes to disengagement. When people don't know what matters most, or everything is presented as urgent, they default to safety behaviours, which usually means busy work lacking impact. Leaders need to translate strategy into a small number (three) of impactful high priority items to focus on.

2

Give people ownership and trust them with it
Real ownership goes beyond task allocation. It includes decision-making rights and accountability for the outcomes, good or bad. When people feel true ownership, they give more discretionary effort because they are invested in the outcomes. Too frequent interference erodes that ownership and the team member's accountability for the outcomes.

3

Remove friction from delivery
Few things demotivate high-performers faster than unnecessary obstacles. Idenfify where work gets stuck and actively clear the path ahead and your teams can focus on getting stuff done, which is motivating in itself. The easier it is to get work done, the more energy people will bring to it.

4

Deal with underperformance
A team that feels they are carrying underperformers, while their leaders do nothing to address it, is incredibly demotivating for good team members. Why would they go the extra mile when these people who aren't pulling their weight go unchecked? Motivation is linked to a feeling that standards are upheld.

5

Recognise meaningful contribution
The other side of the same coin. Whilst dealing with poor performance, make sure you're elevating good performance. Recognition might be as simple as saying "that was a great piece of work, well done and thank you" in front of the rest of the team.