

Building & Maintaining Morale



OR...

*Keeping the
Troops Singing*



Brian Jeffrey

Times are tough and selling is tough and it's easy for a salesperson's morale and motivation to take a tumble. When that happens, sales can take a tumble as well. Here are some time-tested ideas to keep that from happening.

Enjoy the read.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian J". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and a stylized "J".

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Building and Maintaining Morale

by Brian Jeffrey



There are two times when morale within an organization is high. One is when everything is going well and sales are rolling in. The other is when everything is going bad and sales are just dribbling in, but no one realizes it yet! In the first case it's important to make sure that morale stays high. In the second case it's critical. When times and sales are good, it's easy to keep morale high. Almost anyone can do it. During difficult times, however, it's harder to do and that's when leaders, not just managers, are required.

In difficult times, the accounts receivable staff is usually the first to know. Word spreads quickly to other employees via the grapevine, often before management or the business owner knows what's happening. Before you know it, a pall hangs over the organization. As soon as it hits the sales department, the sales go from bad to worse and morale drops another notch.

Too often, management drops like a ton of bricks onto the salespeople with predictable results – panic. Or management puts on a brave face hoping their people will be fooled into thinking everything is all right. This is not the time to place a wall of silence between management and staff. It's the time for open and frank communication. Unsubstantiated rumours will destroy morale quicker than the worst truth.

So what do you do when times are bad? Call your salespeople together for a meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to make sure everyone is aware of the situation and to solicit their help in improving it. This is not the time to browbeat your salespeople into expending Herculean efforts to turn around the poor sales situation. Hitting salespeople when they are down just drives them further into despair and may even drive them out the door to another company. This is the time to provide support, leadership, and direction.

NOTE: When using the stick-and-carrot approach to raise morale, you have to use *both* the stick *and* the carrot. Too many sales managers use only the stick. A carrot in the form of an encouraging word every now and then can make a big difference.

Talk with your salespeople individually. Find out what tools they need to help get things on the right track for success. Don't be surprised if you hear a lot of whining and finger-pointing. Salespeople are good at that. Hear them out. Then ask: "What can *you* do to help us turn around?" The situation will probably be too much for them to digest at one time so help them develop some step-by-step plans for increasing sales.

Rather than putting them on the spot, ask them to give some thought to the matter and schedule another meeting to discuss their ideas. The follow-up meeting should be held within five days.

By asking your salespeople for their input and ideas, you are helping them become part of the solution rather than creating the impression in their minds that you consider them part of the problem. Even if they

are part of the problem, making them feel that way won't improve the situation.



If your salespeople aren't part of the solution, they're part of the problem.

Over my years of dealing with people, I've learned that there are three basic reasons why people don't do what you want them to. One is that they don't know *what* to do. Two, they don't know *how* to do it. And three, they don't *want* to do it!

As a sales *manager*, it's your job to show the "what" and "how" of the job. As a sales *leader*, you must establish an environment where your people "want" to do it. You do that by building and maintaining staff morale and creating a motivating environment to work in.

Motivating Salespeople

The word *motivate* stems from the words *motive* and *activate*. People become activated for their *own* motives, not someone else's. Your challenge is to understand what some of these motives are and to capitalize on them to activate your sales team into the kind of action that will achieve the desired results.

In order to motivate, you need to be sensitive to the inner needs and personal goals that drive salespeople's outer behaviour. It means spending some time exploring the various motivation theories and how they apply to salespeople and others. Here's a crash course on motivation, condensed into a few pages:

MOTIVATION THEORIES

The three most popular motivation theories belong to Maslow, Herzberg and McGregor. Having a brief understanding of their theories and how they mesh together will provide you with a good overview

of motivation. You may have to leave some of your old beliefs behind (such as “money motivates”) if you’re to take advantage of this sales management tool.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Abraham Maslow, a noted psychologist, contended that people take action to satisfy the needs that are important to them and that their needs, and therefore their actions, will change. In other words, needs drive action. He further defined people as having five levels of needs (Fig. 1).

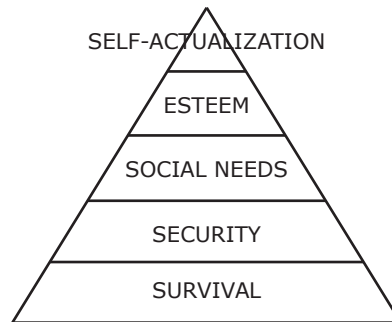


Figure 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

A person’s position on the hierarchy can and does change. You can quickly go from Esteem to Security when you show up for work on Monday morning and discover the company is laying off staff. You may drop to the Survival level if you are one of those being laid off!

On a more subtle level, what’s important to an employee a week before payday may not be so important after the pay cheque arrives. His needs have changed.

Table 1 on the following page will help broaden your understanding of Maslow’s various levels of needs and what you, as a manager, can do about them.

Table 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and how they are satisfied on the job.

Need Level	Satisfied on the job by:
Survival & Physiological Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rest periods and coffee breaks • Minimum or reasonable wages/salaries • Comfortable working environment • Proper temperature and humidity control • Shelter from the elements • Ergonomic considerations
Security & Safety Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steady work • Safe working conditions • Sickness and accident protection • Job security • Safety programs • Life insurance • Salary continuation insurance
Social Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendly co-workers • Compatible supervision • Team environment • Employee associations • Company-sponsored social functions • Company-sponsored sporting events • Peer recognition
Esteem & Ego Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praise and recognition from management • Good opinion of peers • Earning pay increases and bonuses • Project and job involvement • Job empowerment • Receiving awards • Honest and meaningful job evaluations • Group, project or team leadership
Self-Actualization or Self-Fulfillment Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job in line with aptitude, ability and training • Opportunity for personal development • Participation in decision-making • Creative and challenging work • Self-directed work • Flexibility and autonomy (empowerment) • Meaningful work

Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory

Frederick Herzberg, a noted sociologist, felt there was little a manager could do to satisfy the lower levels of Maslow’s hierarchy. He concluded that only the upper levels were left for motivational purposes. He called this higher level “Satisfiers” or “Motivators” and the lower level “Dissatisfiers” or “Maintenance Items.”

The theory is that if the items under the Maintenance Items list are not met, they will cause dissatisfaction. On the other hand, if you satisfy people through job enhancement, you will be more likely to motivate them (Table 2).

Table 2. Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory showing the dividing line between Motivators and Maintenance items.

Motivators (Satisfiers)	Maintenance Items (Dissatisfiers)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The job itself • Potential for personal growth • Advancement • Recognition • Responsibility • Achievement • Sense of belonging • Ability to influence events • Money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Money • Working conditions • Job security • Relationship with co-workers • Quality of supervision • Status (job title) • Job location • Fringe benefits • Type of business

Notice that money is on both lists. As a maintenance item, if you don’t have enough money, it becomes a dissatisfier. Yet money can act as a short-term motivator when used as a bonus or incentive for special effort. I say short-term motivator because it quickly changes from an incentive to an expectation.

For example, one company I worked for gave the employees a Christmas bonus whenever the company had a profitable year. They did this for five years and then had a very bad year. Even though the employees knew the rule about profitability, they still grumbled because they didn’t get their monetary bonus. It had become an expectation, not a motivator.

Herzberg contends that your job as a manager is to enhance the satisfiers and minimize the dissatisfiers. In many cases you can have little influence over the dissatisfiers. Take location for example. If your place of work is not conveniently located for an employee, you are unlikely to move to another location. On the other hand, if you can arrange for the employee to do at least some of his or her work from home, why not?

NOTE: Your job isn't to create a balance between Motivators and Maintenance Items. It's to create a serious imbalance with the Motivators being in the majority.

Sometimes the best you can do as sales manager is to build on the satisfiers (motivators) and create an ever-widening gulf between them and the dissatisfiers (maintenance items) over which you may have little influence.

McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y

Douglas McGregor, a professor of management at MIT, describes two contrasting views about the nature of employees in relation to work. Based on these two views, managers will make certain assumptions about their staff and will act accordingly towards them (Table 3). McGregor's premise is basically a management theory rather than a motivation theory. It's mentioned here because Theory X and Theory Y managers take a much different view towards motivation.

As you can imagine, a Theory X sales manager will operate quite differently than a Theory Y sales manager (Table 4).



The Theory X manager carries and wields a big stick. The Theory Y manager carries the same stick but uses it wisely.

Table 3. A summary of the assumptions McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y managers make.

Theory X	Theory Y
<p>The manager assumes employees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack integrity • Are basically lazy • Avoid responsibility • Are not achievement-oriented • Are not self-directed • Are indifferent to department needs • Prefer direction by others • Need to be managed • Avoid decision-making • Are not too bright • Need to be watched 	<p>The manager assumes employees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have integrity • Will work hard when committed • Welcome responsibility • Desire to achieve • Are capable of self-direction • Want the department to succeed • Are not passive and submissive • Welcome empowerment • Will make decisions • Are not stupid • Can work well unsupervised

Table 4. How the roles of a Theory X and Theory Y manager differ.

Role of a Manager	
Theory X	Theory Y
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persuade • Reward • Punish • Coerce • Control • Direct 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create opportunity • Release potential • Remove obstacles • Encourage growth • Monitor results • Provide guidelines

While there's no right or wrong style, your style must be appropriate to the work environment and situation. The best sales managers will incorporate and use the best of both theories.

You will sometimes find a Theory X manager joining a company to help them "shape up." These people often have a heavy hand and the shake-up will cause the weak limbs to fall off the tree. The rest of the "branches" start to bloom real fast to avoid getting "pruned" in the shake-up process. If a manager takes too hard a Theory X stance, morale can all but disappear and the staff will find themselves in a race for the door.

Ouchi's Theory Z

In the 1970s, author Thomas Ouchi wrote a book titled, *Theory Z, the Japanese Approach to Management*. It was basically an extension of McGregor's Theory Y concept and stressed teamwork as the key to success in the workplace. It became the forerunner to the Total Quality Management (TQM) and Quality Circles movement that swept North America in the late '70s and early '80s.

The theory seems to have all but disappeared, although the concepts of teamwork, self-directed teams, and employee empowerment have continued to grow.

While no longer popular as a management or motivation theory, Theory Z and the concept of teamwork is the basis of most successful sales organizations.

Putting the Theories Together

The following (Fig 2) shows how the lower levels of Maslow's Hierarchy have the same impact on an individual as Herzberg's Maintenance items. It also shows that the Theory X management style works best with people who are at these lower levels.

Here endith the lesson on the psychology behind the various motivation theories.

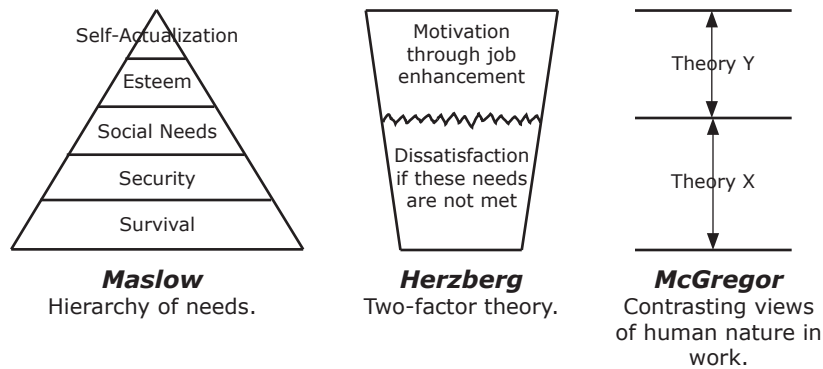


Figure 2. Shows how the lower levels of Maslow's Hierarchy have the same impact on an individual as Herzberg's maintenance items and that the Theory X management style works best with people who are at these lower levels.

MONEY AS A MOTIVATOR

Money is a motivator; money isn't a motivator. Confused? You should be. We've already seen that money is both a satisfier and a dissatisfier. In a classic study several years ago, employees were asked to list the top 10 things they wanted from their jobs and their managers were asked to list the top 10 things they *thought* their employees wanted from their jobs. Managers consistently ranked wages as being number one while the employees consistently ranked income lower on their list (Table 5).



Money talks loudest when you don't have any to listen to.

Table 5. Summary of a study. The list has been rearranged so the items appear in the order that the employees preferred them. The employer's ranking is on the right. When you look at the difference between the first three items, you have to wonder if management ever talked to the employees or vice versa!

What Employees Want From Their Jobs		
Employee Ranking	Item	Employer Ranking
1	Appreciation for work done	8
2	Feeling "in" on things	10
3	Sympathetic understanding of personal problems	9
4	Job security	2
5	Good wages	1
6	Interesting work	5
7	Promotion and growth	3
8	Management loyalty	6
9	Good working conditions	4
10	Tactful disciplining	7

The list is not cast in stone and priorities will change as economic situations change. In tight economic times, job security is likely to move higher in the employee's list and wages move even lower. In good economic times, you should expect the interest in wages to move up (a natural desire to share the wealth) but employees are still likely to put other priorities ahead if it.

Where a person places income really depends on that person's individual needs.

With Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, money will play a much bigger part in a person's life if that person is in the first two stages (Survival and Security) and less a part as the person moves up through the stages. That's not to say that people who are at stages four or five (Esteem or Self-Actualization) aren't interested in making even more money, they just aren't as "motivated" about making it.

As we saw before in Herzberg's theory, money is at the bottom of the Motivator list and at the top of the Maintenance Item list. If the job motivators are low and the dissatisfiers are high, you better be prepared to pay top bucks to keep your people. On the other hand, if you

have minimized the potential dissatisfiers and created a motivational environment to work in, you're not too likely to lose any good people to a competitor on money alone. You may lose them, but there will have to be extenuating circumstances beyond just remuneration.

You can argue that salespeople are different than other employees. Horse feathers! Beware of salespeople who are driven solely by the lust for income. They will sell more problems and get you into more bad "deals" than you really need in your life. I'll say it again, beware! You just have to read the business press to see how some large corporations have fallen because of money-driven salespeople who bent the rules. Sure everybody made money, including the companies, but where are they and their reputations now?

There's no doubt that salespeople like money, but money is not the primary motivator for most sales professionals.

If you want to use money as a motivator, find out what your salespeople want to *do* with the money they make. Now that's the real motivator! For example, if one of your salespeople is an avid boater, talk to him about boating and how his increased sales activities might allow him to get the boat of his dreams.



Money doesn't motivate, it satiates. It's not money, but what the money will buy, that motivates.

PRACTICAL TIPS ON MOTIVATION

How do you take all this theory and make some practical sense of it all? Here's a list of 18 things, other than money, that motivate people to perform better. As you read through the list, note the ones you *already do*, the ones that you *should do*, and select a few you *will do*.

1. Peer Pressure

Salespeople are competitive. They compete in the marketplace, with other salespeople within the company, and with themselves. Foster this competitiveness in a non-threatening way and your team will excel. Set up friendly internal competitions between individuals or sales teams.

Example: When I was managing a small computer store years ago, I would plot and display the daily sales of each salesperson. Everyone was eager to see how they compared to other staff members as well as how they were doing towards their monthly targets.

Already do Should do Will do

2. Recognition

Public recognition, either inside or outside the company, helps give a salesperson a better self-image and enhances personal self-confidence. Some companies place newspaper ads to recognize their top performers, either as a group or as individuals. Plaques, certificates, movie tickets, or dinner vouchers, presented publicly, all help. Recognition is one of the top four ways to motivate. I'll share the other three with you later.

Already do Should do Will do

3. Credit

Credit is a close cousin to recognition. It's making sure that people get credit for their achievements. The more public (within the organization) the better.

Already do Should do Will do

4. Awards

This is a more tangible form of recognition. Plaques, certificates, pins, pens, etc, are all simple ways to recognize performers and say thank you. Consider varying the size and value of the awards so that

people at the lower end of the performance scale also get something. Even a booby prize can spur on a low performer. Make sure the award doesn't embarrass, however. If you can't make it fun, don't do it.

Already do Should do Will do

5. Contests

Keep contests simple, easy to participate in, and fun. Contests can be particularly powerful if the salesperson's spouse can share in the rewards. Make sure the contest is fair and everyone has a chance to win, not just your top performers.

Already do Should do Will do

6. Trust

This is the bond between salespeople and their sales manager that must be earned by the manager. Individuals work hardest for people they trust the most. The more trust you give, the more you will get in return. Trust and belief in your people will make them work hard for you because they'll want to retain the trust.

Already do Should do Will do

7. Unlimited Earnings

An uncapped compensation plan will be particularly appealing to salespeople with big dreams and goals. Salespeople love "toys" and having the potential to buy more toys is hard to resist. Know what toys your people are looking for and help them get them. Be on their "toy team."

Already do Should do Will do

8. Opportunity for Advancement

Everyone likes to feel they're moving forwards and upwards in their career. If the opportunity for advancement truly exists, it can be a powerful motivator for some salespeople. Advancement doesn't necessarily mean into management. It might mean taking over a better territory or account, increased responsibility, etc.

Already do Should do Will do

9. Stability

Working for a stable organization can be a real motivator in times of turmoil. This doesn't mean you should shield your people from problems. It means you should manage your problems in a professional way.

Already do Should do Will do

10. Good Products

Professional salespeople want to be proud of (or at least pleased with) the product or service they sell. They want to feel they're offering good value for the asking price.

Already do Should do Will do

11. Decent and Fair Treatment

This is part and parcel of creating a work environment where people are motivated to give their best. The Golden Rule of Management is *not* "He who has the gold makes the rules." It is: "Do unto others as *they want done* unto them."

Already do Should do Will do

12. Affection

Hire people you like! Or at least like the people you hire and make sure you show it. I'm not suggesting you go around hugging people, but a smile, an encouraging word, or an expression of genuine interest will go a long way.

Already do Should do Will do

13. Realistic Goals

Help your salespeople succeed by setting realistic, achievable, attainable goals. Success motivates.

Already do Should do Will do

14. Input

Give your salespeople a say in the goal-setting process. Make them a part of it so they can take ownership of their quotas. Solicit their input on sales-related items. Help them feel part of the team.

Already do Should do Will do

15. Decision-making Responsibility

Giving salespeople the authority to make business decisions that affect their customers, such as price negotiations, helps build trust and involvement. Empowered salespeople are motivated ones.

Already do Should do Will do

16. Training

Training shows you care. Training should not be an event. It should be an ongoing process. Turn your sales meetings into mini training

sessions. You're never a prophet in your own land so it's wise to use outside training whenever possible.

Already do Should do Will do

17. Variety

Don't let your salespeople get stale. Make sure the job has enough variety to maintain interest. Find special projects for them to get involved in like doing competitive comparisons or getting more involved in trade show planning.

Already do Should do Will do

18. Achievement

A person's self-worth is tied to his or her achievements. Celebrate your salespeople's achievements, both large or small, both business and personal, and build morale.

Already do Should do Will do

TRIED AND TRUE MOTIVATORS

Here are the four biggies in sales motivation. They're all simple, easy to implement, and best of all – they work. Which ones can you make work for you? Review the list and decide which ideas you can put into place or reinforce to boost the morale at your company.

1. Recognition

Recognition for a job well done is rewarding the behaviour that you want repeated. When was the last time you publicly recognized one of your salespeople for a job well done?

2. Opportunity

An opportunity to succeed with the right product or service and lots of prospects for that product or service. Is it time to review your product/service offerings to get rid of the deadwood?

3. Support

The internal support systems to allow your salespeople to succeed. Build a supportive work environment where they're encouraged to excel. Do you use the POTB (pat-on-the-back) or KITA (kick-in-the-a**) sales management style?

4. Income Potential

Provide the potential to make an adequate income for your salespeople and their families. Is your sales compensation plan a win-win one?



Recharge your salepeople's batteries by giving them frequent boosts of confidence, recognition, importance, and support.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Make sure you don't have blinders on. In my sales management consulting work, I've discovered that many managers suffer from management myopia and selective vision. They see what they want to see and don't see what they don't want to (but should) see. There's always the possibility that *you* are the source of the morale problem within your company. Frightening thought! If in doubt, get an outside, unbiased, honest opinion.

There's an old expression about trying to drain the swamp when you're up to your you-know-what in alligators. That's why it's hard for managers to even consider the morale situation when times are difficult. Their minds are quite naturally on other things such as meeting payroll, putting out internal fires, or even survival.

In tight times, sales managers adopt the Smokey-the-Bear approach to management and spend most of their time stomping out fires. It's too easy to collapse in on yourself and forget your manager/leader responsibilities. You need to remember you have a responsibility to lead the company out of wherever it is now to where it ought to be. How do you do this? Through the efforts of your employees. And that's why it's critical that morale stays high.

Hey, who said managing was easy!

Good luck!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brian Jeffrey is a sales management consultant and former sales trainer with over 40 year's experience. He's the author of *The Sales Wizard's Secrets of Sales Management*, *The 5-Minute Sales trainer*, 18 ebooks, and over 100 articles on selling and sales management.

Brian provides sales management consulting, coaching, and mentoring to business owners and sales managers. He has had many sales successes (as well as a few spectacular failures) and has learned what works, what doesn't, and why — information he readily shares with others.

Find out how Brian helps companies maximize their sales at **www.Quintarra.com**.

