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IMPROVING PRACTICE & APPLICATION

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"I am loving the quarterly academic review! This series is so incredibly useful to me and my team – thank you for putting such good work into them."

—Charlotte Blank, Chief Behavioral Officer, Maritz



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This issue of the *IRF Quarterly Academic Review* marks the completion of eight editions of the journal and two years in publication. In that time, we have reviewed published papers from more than 75 researchers across dozens of countries and universities – in all, 43 summaries involving more than 100 rigorous experiments on the topic of human motivation and the use of incentives and rewards in the workplace.

In this edition of the *Quarterly*, we focus on the role of incentive design in building or strengthening workplace culture. More than ever, organizations depend on employee creativity, ideas, knowledge-sharing, collaboration and other pro-social behaviors that build strong cultures based on trust. Rewards, whether tangible or intangible, intrinsic or extrinsic, play a powerful role in helping leaders build the type of workplace culture that attracts, retains and engages high-performing talent.

We know, for example, from Dan Ariely's famous [robot construction experiments](#) and Adam Grant's [simple interventions in call centers](#), that people engage and perform better when they believe their work has meaning and makes a difference. In this issue, we learn that where work has little to no meaning or purpose, recognition far exceeds material rewards ineffectiveness, but for work with high meaning and purpose, material rewards boost performance where simple recognition does not.

On the other hand, in another study covered in this issue, researchers find that intangible rewards, like pure recognition, boost employee creativity but tangible rewards have a negative effect on employee creativity.

In another recent paper we review, researchers report that material, performance-contingent rewards not only encourage employees to share knowledge and ideas, but they are also necessary. In the authors' words: "*knowledge sharing's effect on helping behavior hinges on whether or not employees can expect rewards from employers for their help.*" The authors surmise that people place great value on their knowledge because it forms a key component of their identity. Thus, employees expect to be tangibly rewarded for sharing their knowledge and ideas at work.

On the age-old question of which type of motivation – intrinsic vs. extrinsic – is most predictive of performance, this issue reviews a recent study in which rewards strongly motivate people, not intrinsically, but extrinsically. And that extrinsic motivation sparks creativity, intrinsic motivation does not.

Finally, the last review covers a topic we haven't discussed before – the *efficacy* of disincentives and punishments for poor performance. Here the authors discover that "vivid" (certain, credible, severe and quick) disincentives have a significant, positive impact on effort and sales results among low performers.

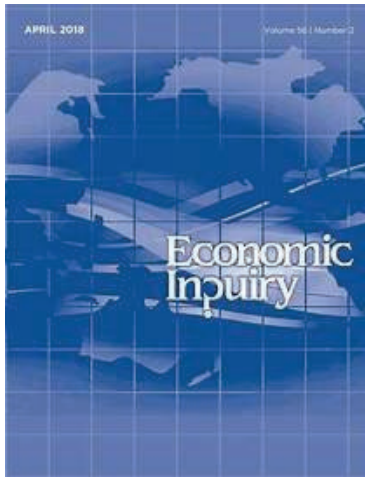
As distasteful as punishments may seem, the reality is that in most organizations, especially large ones, a small percentage of the workforce will “coast” on the work of others if allowed to do so. Nevertheless, despite the success of the experiment in improving effort and sales among low performers, the company involved in this research decided not to implement the program. Executives feared harming their culture. In an environment in which culture can almost be described as *everything*, the decision of the firm not to fire low performers may speak louder than the findings of the research itself.

We hope you enjoy this issue of the *Quarterly* and, as always, we look forward to your feedback.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "AS", is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Allan Schweyer
Chief Academic Advisor, Incentive Research Foundation



The Effects of Financial and Recognition Incentives Across Work Contexts: The Role of Meaning

Citation: Michael Kosfeld, Susanne Neckermann, and Xiaolan Yang. *Economic Inquiry* (ISSN 0095-2583) Vol. 55, No. 1, January 2017, 237–247

Availability: This article is available on request from Allan Schweyer at: allan.schweyer29@gmail.com

Summary

The literature on the effectiveness of financial and non-cash incentives in driving better performance among employees is inconsistent. Naysayers even question the usefulness of providing recognition and performance feedback let alone tangible rewards. The range of research findings suggests that different people respond to different rewards and that context also matters a great deal. A common thread, however, may be that all employees desire work that is purposeful and meaningful.

This study examines the impact of financial rewards (cash) and non-financial rewards (recognition) on work performance where tasks are meaningful and purposeful versus those that are neither. The researchers found that people perform better when they perceive their work to have high meaning rather than low meaning. They find that material (tangible) incentives boost performance whether or not the work has meaning, but that non-financial rewards (recognition) boost performance only where the work has little meaning. The researchers find that recognition and meaningful work trigger the same motivational triggers in workers. They do not combine to deliver greater impact.

The Study

The researchers conducted a field experiment at a Chinese university where 413 students were paid about \$8 for 2 hours of monotonous work entering survey results into a database. Students entered surveys consisting of answers to 151 questions, including several free-form answers. All students received the fee regardless of the quantity or quality of the work performed. Afterward, the students completed a brief set of questions about their work, including their satisfaction with the tasks and the payment received.

The students were split into three groups. A control group that received only the \$8; a cash group that earned an additional \$1 per survey entered, and a group whose best-performing member received personal recognition from the attendant in front of the group at the end of the task. Half the students in each group were told that their work was important for an ongoing research project, the other half was told that their entries were backup only and would probably never be seen or used.

Results

- Students who were told their work had little purpose entered, on average, 1,598 questions in the 115-minute duration of the task. Those that were told their work would be used and valued entered 1,845 questions – 15.5% better. (*Figure 1*).
- Monetary incentives also increased performance but only by 8.7%

- Recognition increased performance the most – 18.2%.
- Interestingly, cash incentives boosted performance among students doing low and high meaning work in about the same proportions. Recognition improved performance in low meaning work dramatically but hardly at all in high meaning work (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Performance results – no reward, low meaning vs. high meaning

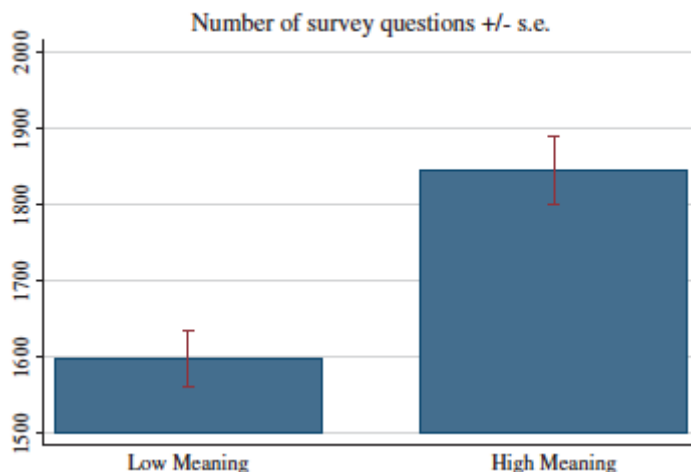
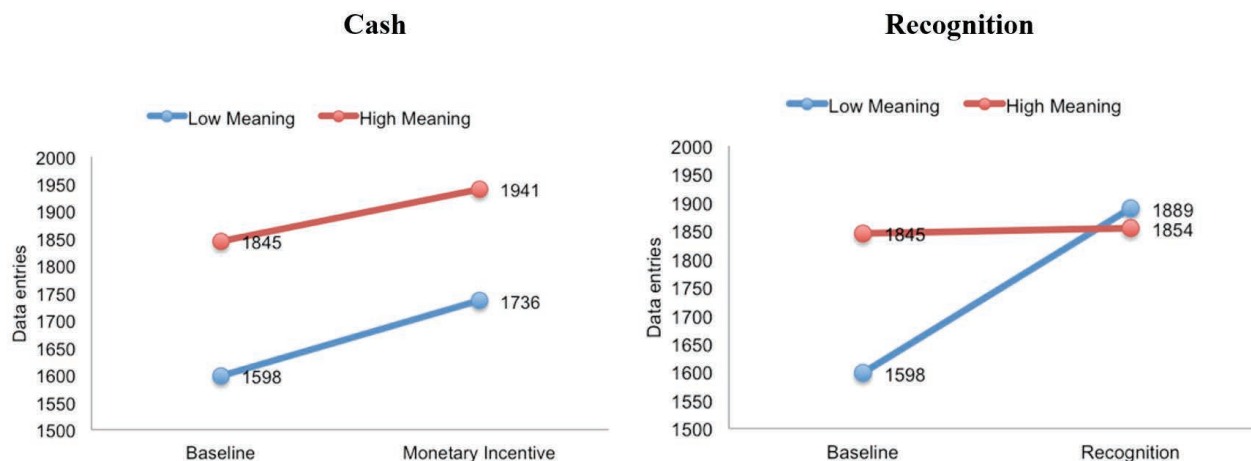


Figure 2: Effect of rewards in work with high and low meaning



Actionable Takeaways

- This research demonstrates that material incentives make a difference. And at least in cases where workers perform their tasks in isolation, tangible, performance-contingent rewards do not “crowd-out” intrinsic.
- This study also confirms much prior research that demonstrates the importance of meaningful and purposeful work on performance, regardless of whether rewards are also offered. People perform better when engaged in meaningful work. It is important to note, however, that they perform even better where material rewards are offered, regardless of whether the work is low meaning or high meaning.
- Surprisingly, in work of low meaning, recognition far exceeds material rewards in its effectiveness. It is interesting that in high meaning work, recognition does not boost performance. The researchers suggest that recognition provides meaning, therefore, it is the most effective and important where the work itself is low meaning. Where the work delivers purpose though, recognition just gives more of the same, it is essentially redundant. In the authors' words: *“Recognition and meaning are substitutes and work via the same motivational channel.”*

- The authors advise that: *“It might be more cost-effective for managers to talk to workers and spend time on the factory floor communicating the value of their work than to institute complex compensation schemes to incentivize performance.”*
- At the same time, the authors argue that material rewards spur significant performance increases and deliver the added benefit of working whether tasks have meaning or not.

Questions?

Please forward any questions you may have to the authors, Professors Michael Kosfeld, Susanne Neckermann and Xiaolan Yang.



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The Effects of Knowledge Sharing on Helping Behavior: Implications for Reward System Design

Citation: Katlijn Haesebrouck, Alexandra G. H. L. Van den Abbeele and Michael G. Williamson. Maastricht University, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (K.U.Leuven) and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign – Department of Accountancy (2015)

Availability: This article is available on request from Allan Schweyer at:

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Summary

Most organizations today compete on knowledge possessed by employees – both explicit and tacit. Beyond the value of information and ideas themselves, knowledge-sharing helps build a culture of trust, making it more important to any firm. It stands to reason – particularly in knowledge-economy firms – that knowledge-sharing is critical to success.

Employees understand that knowledge is valuable too; and that some knowledge might be detrimental to them, for example, in cases where their ideas for efficiency, could threaten their job. The authors posit, moreover, that knowledge-sharing is particularly challenging because employees perceive their knowledge to be a significant part of their identity and, therefore, costly to share.

The authors find that incentives and rewards for knowledge-sharing are important to encourage knowledge exchange between peers and between employees and the firm.

The Study

The researchers conducted laboratory experiments in which 168 business students were randomly given the role of employee or employer and paired together. Employee participants were given the information (formulas) and the time they needed to complete a series of seven number puzzles. They were paid €1.5 for each puzzle solved. Employers were not given the information nor the time they needed to solve the puzzles.

After the first round of the experiment, employees were given the option to help employers as much or as little as they wished (by helping with no puzzles, all the puzzles or any number in between). One form of help involved knowledge-sharing (giving employers the formulas), the other didn't (giving employers more time).

Employees understood that helping the employer would confer a benefit of €4.5 (per puzzle) on the firm but would require them (the employee) to forfeit the €1.5 per puzzle reward. Employers were given the option to reward employees for their help by giving them all or a part of the €4.5 (per puzzle).

Results

- Where employers offered no reward, employees were significantly less likely to offer help. This was especially true when that help included knowledge-sharing.

- Where employers did offer a reward, employees were significantly more likely to offer help. This effect was especially pronounced when the help included knowledge-sharing.
- Employees expected more rewards when their help included knowledge-sharing. In post-experiment questionnaires, employees, on average, stated an expectation of €6.54 in the reward when their help included knowledge-sharing and €5.77 when it did not.
- Employees also believe, to a statistically significant extent, that when help includes knowledge-sharing it should forge stronger bonds and trust with the employer than when help does not include knowledge-sharing.
- Interestingly, in deciding whether or how much to reward employees who helped them, employers did not distinguish significantly between help involving or not involving knowledge sharing. Employers who judged the task of low interest paid marginally better rewards for knowledge-sharing compared to employers who assessed the task as challenging and interesting.

Actionable Takeaways

- In the authors' words: *"knowledge sharing's effect on helping behavior hinges on whether or not employees can expect rewards from employers for their help."* People tend to place great value on their knowledge because it forms a key component of their identity. The authors point to organizations like PwC, who tangibly reward knowledge and idea-sharing for this reason.
- Organizations that desire greater knowledge and idea-sharing should specifically target those behaviors with material rewards.
- By rewarding knowledge-sharing, organizations might also improve trust and collaboration in the workplace.

Questions?

Please forward any questions you may have to the author, Dr. White.



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Tangible and Intangible Rewards and Employee Creativity: The Mediating Role of Situational Extrinsic Motivation

Citation: Hye Jung Yoon, Sun Young Sung, Jin Nam Choi, Kyungmook Lee, and Seongsu Kim. *Creativity Research Journal*. L, 27(4), 383–393, 2015

Availability: This article is available on request from Allan Schweyer at: allan.schweyer29@gmail.com

Summary

For most modern organizations, employee creativity has grown synonymous with success, if not survival. Many firms offer cash rewards for ideas and other creative efforts and outcomes. Some researchers argue that extrinsic rewards like these undermine innovation and creativity because they focus employees on rewards rather than the task. Others have found that extrinsic, tangible – even performance-contingent – rewards enhance intrinsic motivation and that extrinsic motivators are a more powerful driver of creativity than intrinsic motivators. Explicit rewards for creativity may signal the organization’s interest and priorities, provide employees with goals, give them license to experiment, and make the exercising of creativity psychologically safe.

“In business organizations, expecting employees to engage in tasks purely based on intrinsic motivation without drawing upon any external inducements seems unrealistic.”

This study aimed to test the efficacy of “creativity-contingent rewards” and whether tangible (bonuses, promotions, etc.) or intangible rewards (praise, approval, etc.) work better in various situations and contexts. Unlike most past related studies, this one was conducted in a field setting rather than in a lab.

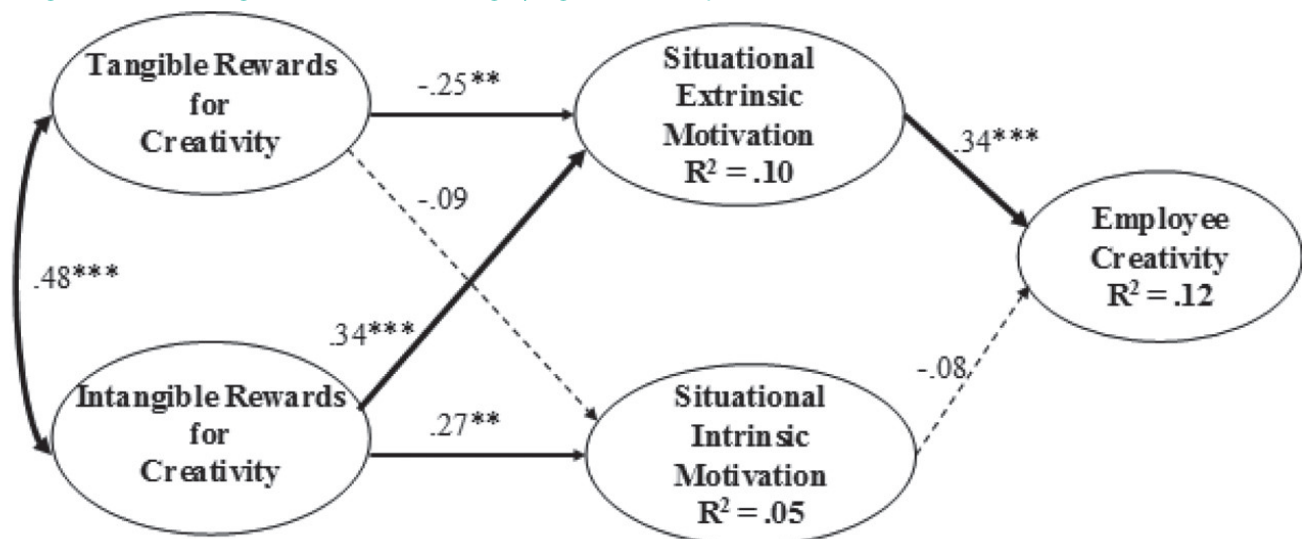
The Study

A large insurance company in South Korea wanted to increase team sales efforts, as well as innovation, collaboration and learning among financial planners whose compensation was partly fixed but mostly contingent on sales. To promote those priorities, the firm introduced additional incentives aimed at creativity, teamwork, and learning. The researchers surveyed 271 employees and 91 supervisors. Each was asked questions related to their situational motivations toward tasks (effort they exert for reward vs. effort exerted due to interest) and perception of the rewards offered – tangible (cash bonuses) and intangible (praise, recognition). The survey also asked questions about employee creativity (i.e., problem-solving and propensity to find novel work methods, etc.).

Results

- In line with expectations, researchers found that “intangible rewards for creativity were significantly related to employee creativity.” To their surprise, they found that tangible rewards for creativity hurt employee creativity.
- Intangible rewards for creativity inspire both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, tangible rewards for creativity do not.
- Extrinsic motivation drives creativity, not intrinsic motivation.

Figure 1: Relationships among rewards for creativity, situational motivation, and creativity. Note that the significant relationship between tangible rewards for creativity and situational extrinsic motivation is significant but negative while intangible reward effect is highly significant and positive on both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.



Note. Solid lines represent statistically significant results. Dotted lines represent statistically insignificant results. ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Actionable Takeaways

- Prior research and intuition suggest that tangible rewards can have a positive impact on intrinsic motivation and creativity. Researchers disagree. Managers should be cognizant of the variety of findings in this arena and run small experiments of their own to observe outcomes.
- Participants in this study were all South Korean. In the authors' words: *"Their negative reactions to tangible and often publicly noticeable rewards seem to reflect the Asian tradition that discourages materialism... a virtuous person should not express or pursue individual materialistic desire to save face."*
- Nevertheless, where an organization wants to boost creativity and innovation, managers should consider the positive effects of intangible rewards, such as praise and social recognition. They should acknowledge that reliance on tangible rewards alone might backfire when it comes to inspiring creativity.
- Interestingly, intangible rewards in this study strongly motivated people, not intrinsically, but extrinsically. And that extrinsic motivation sparked creativity. intrinsic motivation did not.

Question & Answer with the Authors

Q: In your study, you studied the effects of cash rewards (tangible) and found that its use has a negative impact on creativity. Do you believe you would have reached similar findings if the tangible rewards were non-cash (e.g., incentive travel, merchandise, gift cards, etc.)?

A: *"We all agree that non-cash rewards might have different results; in our research, the rewards provided/perceived by the employees were contingent for the participants' career or work performance directly. However, non-cash rewards such as gift cards would create some psychological distance from the participants, and they would react in a different and/or opposing fashion."*

Questions?

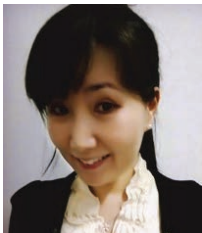
Please forward any questions you may have to the authors, Professors Jin Nam Choi, Sun Young Sung, Kyungmook Lee and Seongsu Kim.



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The Impact of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivators on Employee Engagement in Information Organizations

Citation: Rajesh Singh, Journal of Education for Library and Information Science. Vol.57, No.2, 2017

Availability: This article is available on request from Allan Schweyer at: allan.schweyer29@gmail.com

Summary

This research examines the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic incentives on library and information science students (future information professionals). Intrinsic motivation is defined in the paper as doing something for the inherent satisfaction or pleasure it brings – “psychological feelings that employees get from doing meaningful

work and performing it well.” Extrinsic motivation comes in working for external reward – money, promotions, choice assignments, etc.

Based on previous research, the author expects that students will sometimes be motivated to pursue their studies for the learning itself or to prove something to themselves. They may also do it for the money and promotions they expect to receive after graduating. These motivations, for most, are not binary, they exist on a continuum. Thus, a balance of intrinsic and extrinsic incentives often produces the best results.

The Study

The research involved 98 Masters of Library Science students in four different groups at a midwestern university. The students, all versed in major human motivation theories, were asked a simple question: what motivates them most at work? Students were asked to list the three most important factors that inspire them to help their organization succeed.

The students were placed into small groups to discuss their answers, followed by a full group discussion. The author describes the discussions as “lively, engaging, and passionate.” Afterward, the researcher-led a discussion centered on the “latest developments in motivation theory” as represented by Dan Pink’s book *Drive* (2009) and the work cultures at Google and Zappos.

Responses to the question were compiled and analyzed collectively and by each of the four groups of students and placed into five categories: Money, Autonomy, Recognition, Culture of Respect, Trust and Rapport, and Engagement in the Work Itself. In this study, money stands as the most direct proxy for all extrinsic rewards. Recognition and Engagement in Work straddle both intrinsic and extrinsic but lean closer to what the author describes as intrinsic motivation.

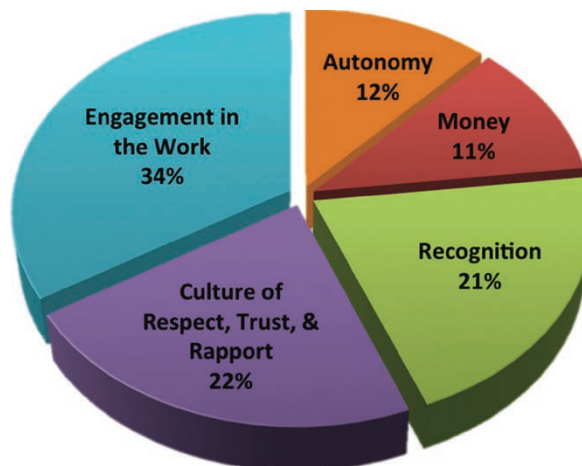
Results

- Though participants chose money least among the five categories (Figure 1), every respondent labeled it a “base need.” The author concludes that money might prove highly significant among entry-level and low-paid workers but loses significance once “basic needs” are met.
- Engagement in the work (involvement in challenging tasks that make a difference) stands out as the most selected category in the study. The author deduces from

students' responses that they would be willing to exert greater discretionary effort to help their firm succeed, if engaged.

- Respondents also signal a desire to work in healthy, functioning organizations, where people trust and respect one another, support each other, and collaborate. Some mentioned a desire for a mentor.
- Respondents expect to be noticed, valued and appreciated for their work.
- Finally, 12% of respondents chose autonomy, including flexible work hours and lack of micromanagement, as a vital motivator.

Figure 1: Summary of extrinsic and intrinsic motivators in four student cohorts.



Actionable Takeaways

- The author advises teachers to make sure students understand motivation theory and the value of intrinsic motivators to their future work.
- The author advises managers to learn each team member's interests and what motivates them to design the most effective incentives, including assigning challenging and meaningful tasks. He advises managers to avoid thinking only in terms of "more carrots."
 - Managers should grant autonomy but only with accountability.
 - Recognition should reinforce intrinsic motivators, for example, by using sincere "thank you(s)."
 - Leaders and managers should prioritize trust, respect, and collaboration in shaping their culture.
- Everyone is different. Even in this small study, differences between individuals and groups of students were significant. The author advises managers to "strike a good balance between extrinsic and intrinsic motivators" in engaging future generations of workers.
- For incentive program designers, this small, specific study offers additional evidence that cash is not king. It might also offer insight into the things new workers value most in their work.

Questions?

Please forward any questions you may have to the author, Professor Rajesh Singh.



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Managing Laggards: The Importance of a Deep Sales Bench

Citation: Jeffrey P. Boichuk, Raghu Bommaraju, Michael Ahearne, Florian Kraus, and Thomas J. Steenburgh. *Journal of Marketing Research* 2019, Vol. 56(4) 652-665

Availability: This article is available on request from Allan Schweyer at: allan.schweyer29@gmail.com

Summary

Most organizations use extrinsic incentives including contests, bonuses, trips, and commissions to motivate salespeople to perform

better. For higher-performing salespeople who believe they can win contests and trips (among other rewards) are powerful motivators, but what about low performers who don't believe they stand a chance?

Here, organizations often use disincentives – such as the threat of dismissal. When push comes to shove, however, sales managers often hesitate to fire laggards because the time and costs of replacing them are high and/or because they want to avoid delivering harsh discipline (preferring warnings or probation periods instead). Accordingly, low performers don't always assess threats as credible or severe enough to spur them into action.

“Punishment has beneficial effects when it is made contingent on inappropriate or dysfunctional behavior, and harmful effects, when it is arbitrarily administered.”

In this study, a large field experiment was conducted at a Fortune 500 company that sells commercial cleaning supplies. The researchers used a visible and credible threat: in 58 of the company's 140 districts, a sales trainee was hired early in the year and developed so that they would be ready to replace the last place performer in the district. Poor performers, they reasoned, would find this threat palpable (after all, they see their potential replacement regularly) and credible because they know they have a good chance of finishing last. The researchers called this the “Bench Program.”

Over the course of the experiment, senior managers (not sales managers) replaced 46 “last-place” salespeople (not including any who met quota) with trainees, reducing replacement costs and time. As hypothesized, this disincentive caused salespeople, especially poor-performers, to improve their performance markedly, especially those with strong peer support networks – people a low performer could turn to for good advice.

The authors conclude that organizations should add “vivid” disincentives to rewards in the design of the sales incentive programs. However, they warn that firing someone central to the network of the sales team – even a low performer – can have negative effects.

The Experiments

The researchers cite past studies that demonstrate that a threat of punishment drives sales performance. To this literature, they add three components to their experiment. First, sales managers are relieved of having to discipline low performers. The researchers believe this frees them up to offer more coaching and support. Second, as noted above, the experiments include a

very credible threat given the presence of trainees, and third, the researchers measure the effects of a salesperson's peer network.

"To be effective, disciplinary actions need to be certain, severe, speedy, and justifiable."

The experiment included a control group of 159 salespeople from 82 territories chosen for their similarities to the experiment group. The performance was measured against progress toward quota before, during and after the experiment. Peer network strength was determined using an organizational network analysis approach that measured the size of a salesperson's network and their own centrality within the broader network of salespeople.

Results

- Overall, salespeople in the experiment performed 4% better than those in the control group. Most sales employees' performance improved.
- This effect was greater on the bottom 75% of the sales team and greater still on the lowest 12% of performers. Previous year's last-place performers exhibited the greatest gains, performing nearly 10% better than previous year performance would have predicted (as measured by sales). Second-to-last place performers performed almost 6% better.
- Salespeople with comparatively small peer networks saw gains of only about 2.5% overall, while those with large networks improved, on average, by almost 6%.
- On discontinuation of the program, performance dropped to where it was before the program began. This effect was more pronounced among low performers.
- Where a sales territory lost a salesperson, who was more central to the peer network, performance after the program dropped significantly more than in territories that did not experience such a loss.
- Overall, the performance gains observed were achieved because salespeople worked harder, not smarter.

Actionable Takeaways

- Sales executives should consider coupling incentives and rewards with disincentives and punishments. They should choose disincentives that are vivid. In other words, certain, credible, severe and quick.
- Firing decisions must be clear and justifiable based on understood measures of performance and/or behavior. For example, if a person meets quota – even if they come in last – they should not be fired.
- Understand the peer network dynamics among your salesforce. Where the last place salesperson who doesn't meet quota must be replaced, spend extra time communicating the objective, measurable reasons for their dismissal.
- Despite the success of this experiment, executives in the firm involved chose not to implement the Bench Program after the experiment. They felt the gains were not worth the risk to the culture. Consider the same thing in your firm.

Question & Answer with the Authors

We asked the authors whether they believe that they would have seen the same results among non-sales employees whose work can be easily measured. They answered *"Yes - We think it would work equally well in a call center setting. The key is the performance is in the control of the salesperson and the organization can objectively measure that performance."*

We also asked about the organization's decision not to adopt the Bench Program after the experiment. The authors answered: *"Many organizations already have competitive sales cultures. In*

fact, there are a number of famous examples in financial services, auto sales, and industrial products (e.g., GE under Jack Welch). These types of organizations would have no cultural clash with this type of program. However, an organization that historically does not share salesperson information or foster competition among salespeople would likely have culture issues as was the case here.”

Other Questions?

Please forward any questions you may have to the authors, Professors Boichuk, Steenburgh, Ahearne, Kraus, and Bommaraju.



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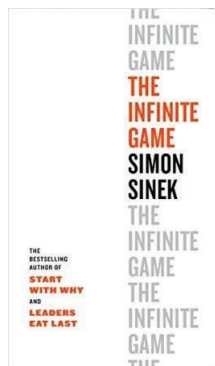


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BOOKS REVIEWED & RECOMMENDED



The Infinite Game

In keeping with the themes of this issue, Sinek argues that great leaders set the conditions in which employees thrive – the culture. These include a psychologically-safe and trusting environment, where employees enjoy autonomy and security while pursuing a purpose much greater than self or money – what author Simon Sinek refers to as a Just Cause. Where most firms chase short-term goals such as winning or being number one, wise leaders look way beyond the zero-sum game – generations ahead – in pursuit of impossible, world-changing goals like those in the United States Declaration of Independence: An Infinite Game. Sinek makes familiar arguments but uses new and compelling language.

Talking
to
Strangers

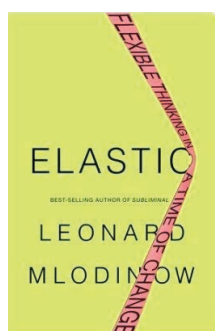


Malcolm
Gladwell

BY NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF OUTLIEERS
AND HILL OF THE GARGOYLES AND CRIMINAL MINDS

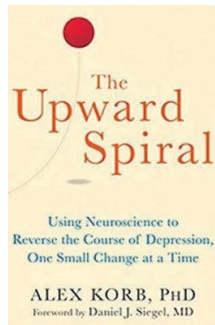
Talking to Strangers

Malcolm Gladwell often takes forever to get to his point, but the journey almost always makes it worthwhile. His telling of the Amanda Knox murder case, for example, enthralls. Using everything from CIA interrogations to interactions with sex offenders, he illustrates aspects of stranger-to-stranger dynamics that prove far more complicated than you might think. His heart-wrenching description of Sandra Bland’s encounter with a Texas cop in 2015 delivers his message like a punch to the gut. The warning comes through loud and clear, take nothing for granted in talking with strangers. The subtler message may be even more important at work: take nothing for granted when interpreting colleagues or, in the case of managers, team members. Getting to know a person, it turns out, takes a lot more effort and time than most people realize.



Elastic

Leonard Mlodinow proves again that he has no superior when it comes to explaining science to the average reader. But beyond his lucidity, Mlodinow tells engaging stories and displays a wit and humor that makes learning from his work thoroughly enjoyable. Here, in the theme of this issue of the *Quarterly*, he condenses decades of brain science into a brief explanation of creativity – what inhibits it and what encourages it. Moreover, he offers at least half-a-dozen specific and practical ways most people can use to loosen up and let the ideas flow more freely. Anyone wanting to boost their creativity and/or the creativity of others will gain from *Elastic*.



The Upward Spiral

At first glance, Dr. Kolb's book appears to be aimed only at those battling depression. In fact, it's a book for anyone who wants to combat stress, anxiety and other pressures that, if left unchecked, can cause a downward spiral into depression. If you question the benefits of yoga, socializing and showing gratitude, read on. Neuroscientist Alex Korb explains why these things – plus sleep, exercise and better habits – matter. As you might expect, he does so by describing how your brain and body communicate, and how chemical reactions and neurotransmitters – like endorphins, dopamine and oxytocin – release when you take the right actions, reducing your stress, improving your mood and fighting depression. Korb writes as though you know nothing about the topic, this will delight novices but could frustrate those with more knowledge.
