

Grumpy Motivation

Introduction

In order to willfully achieve self-imposed goals and fulfill accomplishments, motivation is necessary. In motivating oneself and others, or at the very least, not diminishing any existing motivation, it is fruitful to strengthen already existing motivation.

Motivation is often recognized in behavior which is labelled as “positive”. It is easy to find motivation in enthusiasm, devotion, excitement, joy, etc. Phrases, such as “Yes, let’s do this...!”, “and - and”, “also...”, “what I want.../what we want”, are the key to change and are easy to spot for the motivator.

Pros and Cons Motivation

There is another side to the world of motivation that can be explored if behavior which is seen as “negative” gets the attention that it deserves. For many change ambassadors such as trainers, coaches, advisors and leaders it is not an apparent path to take. When motivation is desired or required, complaining, sulking, feeling blue, or other expressions of frustration are often seen as taboo. Utterances such as, “No, I am opposed!”, “or - or”, “but...”, “what I don’t want.../ what we don’t want...” are not valued. Talking about problems is not done in the land of change. The common opinion is, “Thou shalt speak of opportunities and challenges, or else we will question your motivation? !”

“You have made clear what you don’t want... But what DO you want?”

“You talk about all the things that bother you...but what is the CHALLENGE and what LEARNING POINTS do you draw from all this?”

“The problems are clear by now, but which SOLUTIONS do you suggest?”

“You talk primarily of all the trials and tribulations, but do you also see any OPPORTUNITIES and POSSIBILITIES?”

It is as though people who know what they want are more motivated than people who know what they don’t want. As though being able to point out the problems is less valuable than coming up with solutions.

As though frustration is a feeling of lower quality than enthusiasm.

This taboo on so-called negative behavior is adopted by so many people that they start correcting themselves while talking.

“The problem is.... Uh... Of course I meant to say ‘the challenge is...’”. “My problem is... hmmm.... I mean, my area of development is....”.



Grumpy Motivation as the Starting Point for change

I advocate that more attention be paid to “grumpy motivation”. Many world changing events have emerged out of protest. Of course we can put these events in a more positive light such as the desire for freedom, democracy, a fair division of power and resources. However, the starting point of most movements is the question of what does one *not* want, what is bothersome and what one is fed up with.

Some suggestions for optimal use of the power of grumpy motivation:

- At the beginning of the meeting- or training session, don’t only ask the participants what the (learning) goals are, but also how difficult it was to make time for this event. You can try to spot what is truly important to them.
- During the introduction or kick-off, don’t only ask for a change plan, but ask the participants to verbalize the different forms of “yeah, but” and the possible disadvantages for those involved. Respect all contributions and look at them as a gift of rich information which is provided via these conditions and will help the change plan to succeed.
- Ask the employees/clients in every consultation what bothers them, what they find difficult and what requires a lot of effort on their part. By answering these questions, they present the desired professional guidance on a silver platter.
- Ask yourself what bothers you, what you would like to see change and what is problematic for you. Pure, unabashed moping gives relief and it tells you which help you need. This gives direction to the support that you can create.

A Final Note

I am curious to hear your thoughts on this blog. Do not hesitate to also include any objections, all the things you do not agree with and any negative results this could prove when put into practice. Perhaps it will be useful to the both of us ;-)

A video that I find useful for multiple reasons is:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9REhdmJ36rg>