

[youtube:http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jh7h7kDQtLI auto]

Keynote: How to make great things happen: motivation at work. How to lead more effectively, win the war for talent, build strong teams. □ Over 340,000 views of this keynote video - recorded some time ago but sharply relevant today - from a presentation to 500 of MTN's leaders.

Surveys show there's a huge crisis of motivation in most large corporations, which is why they continue to spend billions of dollars each year on motivation courses, training in motivation, meetings to boost motivation, incentives to strengthen motivation, meetings to analyse problems in workforce motivation, tools to measure motivation, mission statements and so on. Problems in recruitment, productivity and retention, problems of commitment to teams and corporate agendas.

But the motivation gap is fundamental, and I see this increasingly often as I travel the world giving keynotes.

People are passionate - but mainly about life outside of work. Indeed the very phrase "work-life balance" tells us that most people think that work is the opposite of life.

So how did we get to be in such a motivational crisis?

"How AI Will Change Your Life - A Futurist's Guide to a Super-Smart World" - Patrick Dixon's latest book on AI is published in September 2024 by Profile Books. □ It contains 38 chapters on the impact of AI across different industries, government and our wider world, including the impact of AI on leadership, management and motivation.

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Motivation has moved on and left most corporations behind

[youtube:https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBXYK6cgvf0]I speak at many of the world's largest corporate events, often sharing platforms with CEOs before giving my own keynote.

I can tell you that many CEO speeches tend to be about increasing market share, and what products or services are being launched, but these things can be poor motivators.

People need to know WHY. What is the PURPOSE of the business? How does the business make the world a better place?

One thing is clear: motivation is changing. Just look at the current obsession with work-life balance, which is now a very powerful force in every corporation, number one or two career priority for the majority of executives in the US, UK and Japan.

Forget the old days when ambition meant rushing up the career ladder. Today the great dual ambition is to have a satisfying job and a fulfilling personal life.

Or take the growing motivation for community action: 60% of all US workers give time each year to work for causes they passionately believe in.

The average time gift is 200 hours. If each hour given by a US citizen was charged out at the average industrial wage, you would be talking about an industry as large as 4.5% of GDP or 12% of the Federal budget.

And other countries are similar, whether people are rich or poor, in Western Europe or East Africa. Despite all the gloomy pundits some years back, community motivation remains very much alive.

But these motivation changes are rarely reflected in corporate policy - or if they are, in a very superficial way. That's because CEOs and senior teams are still over-influenced by last-century management ideology about efficiency, bottom-line profit, shareholder value, return on equity and other motivation - killing fixations.

"How you make a difference to people - why shareholder value is a lousy motivator"

[youtube:<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=loXJAeQKZI0>]

Video of keynote for fund managers - many fund managers are typical of those in other industries. They lack passion for what they do because they don't understand the impact they have on other people's lives - in their case helping pensioners / savers.

Management Gurus – high priests of confusion ?

You'll find that management theory is still mainly built on two things: psycho-theories from one or two centuries ago and also case histories of organisations. Both are rooted in the past, can be based on subjective interpretations of data, and rarely concentrate on motivation.

Case histories rapidly date as our world changes – just look at old business books and count the case examples of companies that now don't even exist, or are basket cases, or riddled with recent scandal - and the old psycho-theories raise many questions. Life in the third millennium has moved on a long way from unproveable nineteenth century introspections about unconscious motives and desires.

You'll find great business ideas formed often many decades ago about the nature of organizations, team management, excellence at work and the rest. All vital and important things without which no business can survive, but very little that grabs you by the throat when it comes to passion, commitment and motivation.

Hey – if there was, we wouldn't all be in this mess.

Without management experts we would all be the poorer, with lower productivity, inefficient structures, bad organizations and wasted resources. However it is a historical fact that management fads come and go faster than ever – often in less than a decade - leaving tens of thousands bruised, bashed and confused by each one that sweeps into their organization.

You just have to look at a list of business titles published over the last five decades to see that. And these fads actually undermine motivation.

Bashed by all the latest fads

Core competencies, empowerment, balanced scorecard, adhocracy, action learning, 360 degree appraisals, the learning organization, career anchors, champions, decentralization, vertical integration, quality management, re-engineering, down-sizing, psychological contract, mission statement, portfolio working, management by objectives, managerial hierarchies, just-in-time, lateral thinking, emotional intelligence and work/life balance.

First are four top turn-of-the-century gurus: Peter Drucker, Tom Peters, Michael Porter and Gary Hamil. Each has had a huge impact on business thinking today but are not so strong on motivation..

Between them these giants of corporate thinking have contributed a huge amount to corporate efficiency, productivity and effectiveness, generating wealth for millions, contributing to the economy and to society.

What about passion for living?

Great leaders, great visionaries, passionate about their messages – but what do they tell us more generally about human passion for life?

What do they tell us about why people act as they do? The choices they make? The things they feel strongly about? The culture we live in and the changing lifestyles choices people are making?

Of course, all of them have addressed every topic under the sun at one time or another on platforms or in writings, but what happens when you look at the main thrust of their influence?

Peter Drucker

The problem is that Drucker says everything about managing a corporation but far less that captivates the human spirit. Almost nothing about managing personal life as a whole – or about work / life balance or broader motivation issues.

Tom Peters

Tom Peters talks of excellence in companies, and also talks about passion in [leadership](#) but says almost nothing about excellence of personal quality of life, why personal commitment to workplace goals is falling and why for most people, their strongest sense of motivation is for the

work they are not paid to do, the things they do outside of work, simply because they believe those things are worthwhile.

Michael Porter

Michael Porter talks of being competitive, but people are more than links in a value chain. He has a good understanding of company survival, but a relatively poor understanding of personal survival and of what people are looking for in life. Motivation is hardly at the heart of what he writes or says.

Core competency has become a widely accepted concept, encouraging corporations to focus on strengths. However, finding a company's core competency, or even changing future corporate history does nothing to motivate me to get out of bed in the morning.

The world's leading management gurus, on whom hundreds of thousands of management consultants base their work, are relatively silent when it comes to motivation, and are nowhere when it comes to finding one single unifying factor that drives all human action.

And we find the same when we review dozens of other widely respected gurus of management theory. Here are a few more popular buzz-words:

Actions are not the same as understanding passion that drives these actions. Strategy does not necessarily provoke personal motivation.

Leadership can encourage motivation but only if it understands what makes people passionate. What's the point of a balanced team if people can't care less? Leaders doing the right thing is often not the same as having a fired-up workforce. Passion is based on more than mere ideas.

Since when did anyone at work get really get excited about a structure? Quality of products and services is hardly the core motivation for individual life, for what we do or what we buy. Re-engineering of the corporation is not the same as re-engineering people's motivation.

Objectives do not provide people with meaning and ultimate sense of purpose.

Team psychology is almost irrelevant to question of personal passion and aims in life. "Company-wide quality management" is not the same as connecting with what people feel strongly about.

Global branding does nothing to motivate.

There is more to motivating people than having great style.

Most recognised authorities on management score low on motivation with the exception of Charles Handy, Edward Schein, Elton Mayo, Elspeth Ross Kanter, and Douglas MacGregor. And most of those who scored high are dead, or retired, and most of their works were published decades ago.

Why corporations have been given such a narrow view of motivation

Why the problem? Well one obvious reason is that he who pays the piper calls the tune and management consultants by definition are asked in by corporations to improve their bottom line profitability, not to massage the inner needs and motivation of their employees, except as a profit-enhancing exercise.

So its hardly suprising that we get on the whole a very narrow view.

One thing is clear: there is one mega black-hole of fresh thinking about motivation, about what really makes people tick, about why people act as they do.

Harness all the passions people have and they will follow you to the ends of the earth.

For a different approach altogether to motivation - look at this recent presentation. Discover the secret of the Four Circles of the Human Heart.

Leadership: motivation to make things happen. Video segment of Skynet Belgacom presentation on direct marketing, looking at the most powerful [leadership](#) speech in the world, and how to harness the same power in marketing, management and motivation.

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