

Motivation Mojo

Alan E. Nelson



One of the key indicators of leadership strength and vitality is the motivation of the team members. *Esprit de Corps* is a French term referring to the spirit of a group. I can't tell you how many people I've run into over the years who complained about the lack of motivation of people in their organization or those they're trying to recruit. "Everyone's too busy." "No one wants to come to our meetings." "People just don't have time these days." Sound familiar?

From outward perceptions, we assume these comments are correct. There are so many options. In the world of students there are sports, tutoring, work, dating, entertainment, and homework. It's easy to write off a lack of motivation for leadership projects as an unfortunate result of opportunity overload. But in the world of leadership, "I'm busy" is code for saying, "As of now, you've not convinced me that I need to change my priorities. Your vision isn't compelling enough for me to make room for it in my limited schedule." People with a passion for motivating others are called leaders.

Someone, somewhere, at some time, motivated these students to do what they're now doing with their time. So how can you become one of those people? People are continually making changes in how they spend their time, money, and energy. Free will is fluid. That's what leaders do best, help people change their priorities.

Some leaders are quick to blame a lack of motivation on the team, instead of first looking in the mirror and asking, "How can I improve my leading so that people feel compelled to be a part of our team?" Whether it's running for student government, serving as president of a club, or committing to some other student leadership role, one of the primary purposes of the student adviser is to establish a reality that says, "This is important. You need to be a part of this program. We want to help you succeed."

The old saying goes, "There are no boring subjects, just boring teachers." It's similar for leaders. "There are no unmotivated people, just leaders who don't motivate."

Here are three leadership issues to consider when striving to motivate students:

Be a thermometer, not a thermostat. Instead of describing the existing temperature of apathy in your school, why not turn up the heat? The sale begins at 'no.' Leaders are salespeople. They're selling ideas, dreams, and themselves. When students lack motivation, it's an indicator we've failed to sell them on our vision of why we think student leadership is so important.

Prime the pump. Zig Ziglar used to say how silly it is to stand around a cold stove and criticize it. "As soon as you put out some heat, I'm going to toss in a log." If you want heat, you need to add some fuel. What have you done to energize students? How have you fueled their excitement for involvement?

Reward desired behavior. The oldest motivational secret is: sell the benefits. Begin by answering the fundamental questions students are asking (silently if not out loud); "What am I going to get out of this? What's in it for me?" One law of physics says that a body at rest tends to remain at rest. You need more energy to get students initially interested in student leadership than to keep them there. Once they get involved, what can you do to create tangible and intangible rewards that reinforce their involvement? Are your meetings fun? Do you strive to work around their schedules? Do they get to improve their skills, use their strengths, and make friends? (Don't underestimate the social factor.) Psychologists tell us that one size doesn't fit all. What motivates some people won't motivate others. Do you know the motivators of the students you're going after? If not, invest the time to find out.

There's no such thing as a truly unmotivated person. The teen slumping at his desk in math class, grunting answers to the teacher, runs to the gym for basketball practice. The student resembling a bump on a log in PE, beams as he walks into jazz band practice. Getting motivated people interested in school leadership activities will forever be a challenge, because the people we're most interested in recruiting tend to be talented, higher capacity people, inundated with opportunities as well as voices vying for their attention. But

that's all the more reason why we need to up our game and go after them. Your mission is individual recruitment and vision casting. "Jason, you're an incredibly talented student. Why don't you consider being on our student council? It would look great on your college resume, give you skills you can use in your career, and help your school be a better place. People will follow

you. What would it take for us to have you on our team?"

Don't rely on public announcements or generic, cattle call marketing. Identify your dream team list and go after them. Your ability to convince them has a lot to do with your leadership energy. Leaders like to be well led. They're waiting for someone to ask them to do something great. Why not

be the one? So when you encounter low motivation, consider how your leading can create the mojo of motivation. ■

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<LEADERSHIP LESSON —TEACHING VIDEOS>

Procedure: Identify and discuss the elements that make a video presentation effective. View and compare student videos if possible.

- Discuss some broad leadership topic areas and lead the group in brainstorming a variety of possible topics that could be developed into a presentation.
- Divide the group into small groups and instruct them to create an exciting, informative video approximately 10 minutes long that will reach or demonstrate an important skill or trait for leaders. They should also create a 50-minute teaching presentation that will feature their 10-minute video and include supporting materials that can be given to the class members.
- Have each group turn in a topic selection sheet that indicates its final topic selection, possible resources that will help the group members in developing their lesson and video, and goals for the teaching session.
- Assign each group a day on which its presentation will be given to the class.
- On the designated days, each group does its presentation for the rest of the group, including showing its teaching videos. Solicit feedback from class members on the effectiveness of the presentations.

Processing: After completing their presentation, students should complete a self-evaluation form that addresses the following questions.

Group Questions

- How did your group function as a team?
- What difficulties did you encounter?
- Did all members of your group share the responsibilities of the assignment?

Individual Questions

- How did you function as a team member?

- In your opinion, did all members share equally?
- How would you approach the assignment if you were beginning it again?
- Are there areas of the assignment you would change to provide a better team experience for all members?
- Do you have any comments about the assignment?

Objective: To create a 50-minute teaching presentation (that includes a self-created video) in which students will demonstrate effective instruction/workshop presentation skills.

Materials: Video camera, paper for topic selection and evaluations

Time Required: One class period for the initial assignment and one 50-minute class period for each small group's presentation.

Evaluation

Group # _____

Presenters _____

50 total points possible

Preparation Apparent	_____	Teaching Presentation	_____
Opening	_____	Group Effectiveness	_____
Hand-out Content	_____	Group Member Participation	_____
Video Content	_____	Reinforcement of Points	_____
Video Artistic	_____	Value Closure	_____
Total Points	_____		

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