

## How Managers Can Best Motivate Top-Performers

Top-performing employees are a critical force at your company, capable of 400 percent greater productivity than the average worker, according to research published in *Personnel Psychology*. Beyond their personal output, top talent inspire and motivate other employees to do their best work.

Despite their production and leadership capabilities, top performers need to be motivated too, and this is largely the responsibility of the manager. As the *Harvard Business Review* notes, top talent at an organization are often defined as such in part because they have the technical skills and interpersonal adeptness to do their managers' jobs. This in turn makes them more sensitive to areas where management falls short. "High-performing employees are also motivated by different types of recognition, incentives and management styles than other workers," said Anne Hayden, vice president of human resources for MRINetwork. "As a result, supervisors need to make a constant, conscious effort to engage top-performing employees in the specific ways that appeal to them most."

Hayden recommends four ways managers can increase motivation among top-performing talent:

### 1. Give regular feedback

Top performers are engaged in continuous learning, constantly looking for ways to sharpen their abilities, expand their skill sets and take on new responsibilities. If top talent have to wait around until their annual performance review to hear feedback, they're going to feel that their professional development is being stymied. Conversely, regular communication helps top-performing employees feel that their managers are invested in helping them succeed.

### 2. Practice career pathing

A major reason top performers leave their jobs is because they feel like there's no room for them to grow. However, helping them develop, and then follow a road map to where they want to be in the company can quell this frustration and unleash their motivation level: This is career pathing in a nutshell. By

working together to help a top-performer advance, employees feel greater ownership over their careers and managers can align the individual's professional goals with the strategic goals of the company, thereby simultaneously boosting employee engagement levels and improving succession planning.



### 3. Encourage mentoring

Mentoring goes along with career pathing, as it is an effective way to develop top-performers for upper-level roles. A study by the American Society for Training & Development found that 71 percent of Fortune 500 companies use internal mentoring programs to train top performers with high potential. Mentors share valuable insights with mentees, not only on

business knowledge, but also on important soft skills like how to effectively communicate with a range of stakeholders or efficiently manage teams. These relationships help top performers develop a more robust understanding of their company, its workforce and its industry. Mentorship motivates top-performers by demonstrating that the company is committed to their success.

### 4. Don't micromanage

Most employees don't want to be micromanaged, but top performers are especially sensitive to it as they consistently show that they not only excel in their job duties but also regularly go above and beyond what's expected of them. Instead of interfering with top talent's day-to-day work, take a step back and learn from them, advises Jeff Miller in a blog for HR services company Insperty. Top performers often have created novel workflows and unique processes that save time, increase output or improve performance. Smart managers are open to change and feel excited, not threatened by, ambitious employees with new ideas. They're genuinely curious about how top performers work and are eager to have conversations with them about how to adopt their ideas on a larger scale. This recognition makes top performers feel appreciated and motivates them to continue innovating.

"Top-performing employees are vital to your company's success, and managers play a big role in influencing whether they'll want to stick around," concluded Hayden. "With these tips, supervisors can help top talent flourish, instead of holding them back."