

## 9 People Motivators

### 1. Personal gain

This is strongest of all motivators—it's the “what's in it for me” factor. Why should I? What will I get out of it? Whether consciously or subconsciously, people ask themselves this question every time they make a decision. Remember this motivator when you pose a bond issue to the community or even ask a teacher to consider serving on a committee. If you aren't able to articulate the benefits of saying yes, how will they?

### 2. Prestige

It's important to everyone to feel important in some way. For many people a prime motivator is feeling valued, powerful and part of something special. Little things we say and do as professionals can help meet this need for those we serve. Addressing people by name, responding to phone or e-mail messages quickly and keeping stakeholders (including staff) informed throughout a multi-step process or decision all help to address people's natural desire to feel important. Remember that children have this same need to feel special and important.

### 3. Pleasure

Do a gut check: What's the climate like in your school improvement team meetings? Are people having fun in the midst of the serious work of discussing the status of student achievement or would they rather be getting a root canal? People put off, ignore or avoid experiences (and other people) that are unpleasant and discount a natural need for fun. In an era where data and accountability rule, the “fun factor” in our profession has taken quite a beating; at times unfairly labeled “fluffy” and without real outcomes. The truth of the matter is that in our quest for substance, we've become...well, a little dull. Fun and productivity are not mutually exclusive and people need to feel enjoyment to stay engaged and satisfied.

### 4. Imitation

Not everyone wants to be out in front in a leadership role; in fact many people are motivated by leaders who they can imitate and model themselves after. According to DeBruyn and DeBruyn in their book *School Promotion, Publicity and Public Relations...Nothing But Benefits*, “managers who strive to show their employees the values of hard work, enthusiasm, curiosity, and a professional appearance tend to develop employees who try to imitate these behaviors.” Gandhi called it “being the world you want to see.” In other words, take seriously your position as a role model for your staff, students and community. Many people are looking to you to set the standard and—perhaps more importantly—are motivated by it.

## 5. Security

The word security in a school setting conjures up thoughts of locked doors and community liaison officers patrolling the building. But security in a motivational sense has more to do with *psychological safety*. As a school leader, if you want people to crawl out of their comfort zone and contribute an idea, try a new approach or play a leadership role in the community, you have to make it safe for them to do so. Establishing “ground rules” for meetings, making it clear that threatening behavior by other team members won’t be tolerated and modeling that it’s okay to make mistakes are all ways that school leaders can tap into people’s need for safety and get them on the team and moving toward the vision.

## 6. Convenience

In a society where we can now drive-up for movie rental, bank online and order virtually anything on the Internet, evidence of our quest for convenience is everywhere. School administrators should be asking questions like: How convenient is it for people unfamiliar with our school district to get information about us? How easy is it for parents to reach teachers when they want to talk? What barriers do we inadvertently set up for community members who want to be a part of our district either by the time or location of our meetings? People are busy—convenience is king. “Make it easy” should be the mantra.

## 7. Desire to avoid fear

Similar to the need for psychological security is the desire to avoid fear—and for some students and parents, school is a fearful place. Fear can be replaced by trust when school administrators make an extra effort to replace negative past experiences with positive, trust-building ones. Ask yourself these questions: Is my leadership style intimidating? Do I motivate people with fear? Do I allow all voices to be heard or just those who tend to agree with me?

Ask a trusted colleague to help you honestly assess how you come across to others. Are you approachable? Do you go out of your way to help people feel comfortable? It’s true what they say, “Know thyself, or know nothing.”

## 8. New experiences

According to DeBruyn and DeBruyn, to many people, change means “good, progressive, modern, and up-to-date.” When we are open to new ideas and ways, we earn a reputation for being easy to work with, open and invigorating to be around. Consider putting a new twist on a traditional community event. Ask for input from others to see if something the district has done for a number of years still works. Ask staff to contribute to an honest discussion about how receptive the culture is to change. Keep it fresh.

### **9. Love/caring**

In a recent poll, appreciation is ranked as the number one reward employees want from their jobs. There is no doubt that this is the motivator upon which student and parent loyalties are built. Simple acts of recognition have the potential to impact motivation in big and small ways alike. Consider whether as a leader you spend much time on this important motivator. Simple acts such as acknowledging birthdays, personal accomplishments or struggles of staff and students can make a noticeable difference.

Source: *School Promotion, Publicity and Public Relations...Nothing But Benefits* by Tracey H. DeBruyn and Robert L. DeBruyn