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UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION & MORALE

From “how people feel” to what supervisors and managers can do every day

LEADERSHIP RUNS THROUGH PEOPLE

The goal is not to “make employees happy.”

The goal is to create conditions where people can do meaningful work, feel valued, and perform at their best.

UNDERSTAND
IDENTIFY
LEAD
ACT

Designed for supervisors, managers, team leaders, and HR professionals

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Today's Roadmap

1

Understand

Motivation vs. morale

2

Identify

What really drives people

3

Lead

Supervisor impact

4

Engage

Recognition + voice

5

Diagnose

Morale warning signs

6

Act

A municipal playbook

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UNDERSTAND

Motivation and Morale Are Related—But Not the Same

MOTIVATION

The drive to put forth effort and perform.

It answers: "Why would I invest energy here?"

Think: purpose • achievement • autonomy • growth • recognition

MORALE

The workforce's overall attitude, confidence, enthusiasm, and satisfaction.

It answers: "How does it feel to work here?"

Think: trust • fairness • belonging • optimism • team climate

Together they influence attendance, service quality, teamwork, retention, safety, and performance.

CONNECT PEOPLE TO PERFORMANCE

Why This Matters in Every Workplace

78%

less absenteeism

14%

higher productivity*

63%

fewer safety incidents

10%

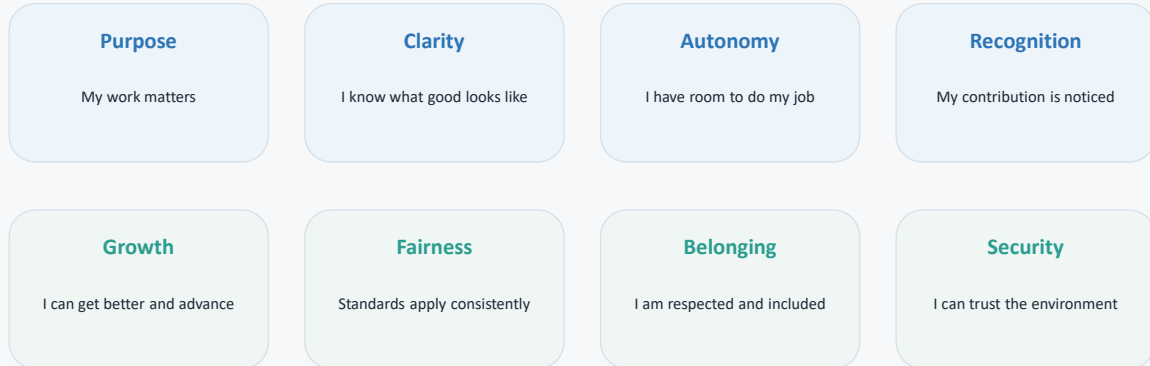
higher customer loyalty /
engagement

Fewer missed shifts • safer teams • better service • stronger continuity • better collaboration
• more discretionary effort

*Gallup 2024 meta-analysis; productivity figure based on production records/evaluations.

IDENTIFY

What Really Motivates Employees?



Compensation matters—but it is not the entire motivation strategy.

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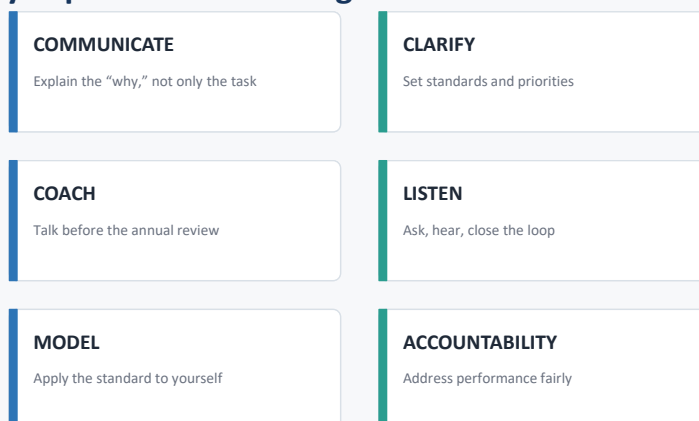
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LEAD

The Supervisor Is the Daily Experience of the Organization

70%

of the variance in team engagement is attributable to the manager, according to Gallup.



Source: Gallup, employee engagement research.

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ENGAGE

Recognition: Make People Seen, Heard, and Valued

**RECOGNITION
LOOP**
NOTICE

Catch the contribution

NAME

Say specifically what mattered

CONNECT

Link it to team/public impact

REPEAT

Make appreciation routine

LEADERSHIP PRACTICE

New Idea #1: The 10-Minute Monthly Pulse

ASK 5 QUESTIONS

1. I know what is expected.
2. I have what I need.
3. My work is recognized.
4. My supervisor listens.
5. I understand how my work contributes to the team and organization.

DISCUSS 1 RESULT

Use 10 minutes in an existing huddle to ask: "What would improve this?"

CLOSE 1 LOOP

Within 30 days, communicate:

- What we heard
- What we can change
- What we cannot change
- What happens next

Measure less. Respond more.

MAKE MISSION VISIBLE

New Idea #2: “Everyday Wins” Recognition

Recognize the behavior—not just the person.

Customer / Stakeholder Impact

Solved a problem or improved an outcome

Teamwork

Helped another person or team succeed

Innovation

Improved a process or saved time

Stewardship

Protected resources, safety, or trust

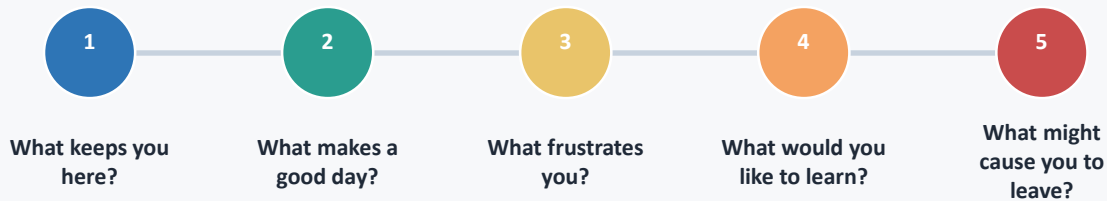
Low-cost format: peer nomination → supervisor validates → monthly 3-minute story → quarterly leadership recognition.

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RETENTION

New Idea #3: Stay Conversations Before Exit Interviews



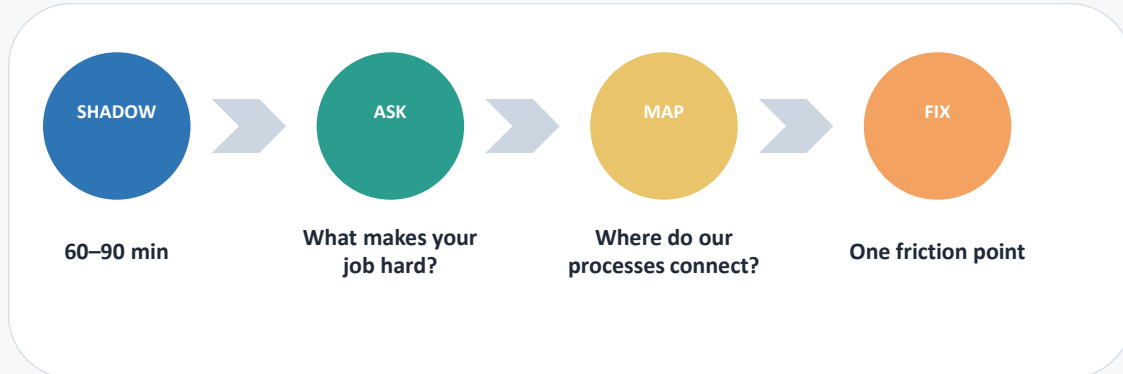
15–20 minutes • twice a year • not tied to discipline or evaluation

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BREAK SILOS

New Idea #4: Cross-Team “Walk in My Shoes”



Outcome: more empathy, fewer “they always...” assumptions, and practical process improvements.

DIAGNOSE

What Damages Morale?



Morale usually erodes through patterns—not one bad day.

Leader question: “What are employees repeatedly experiencing?”

DIAGNOSE BEFORE CRISIS

Watch the Dashboard: Early Warning Signs

ABSENTEEISM

Is unscheduled leave rising?

TURNOVER

Who is leaving—and from where?

COMPLAINTS

Are themes repeating?

SILENCE

Did ideas and questions stop?

NEGATIVITY

Is cynicism becoming normal?

OUTPUT

Are quality or timeliness slipping?

One indicator is a clue. Multiple indicators moving together are a leadership signal.

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INTERACTIVE CASE • 5 MINUTES

Table Talk: Fix the Conditions, Not the Symptoms

CASE

An operations team has rising call-outs, two recent resignations, complaints about favoritism, and employees say new procedures “just show up” without explanation. The supervisor says, “People just don’t want to work anymore.”

Your group has 3 minutes.

1. DIAGNOSE

What might be happening beneath the symptoms?

2. ACT

What are the first two leadership actions?

3. MEASURE

What would tell you conditions are improving?

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ACT

The Leader's Motivation Playbook

WEEKLY	10-minute team huddle	Priorities • obstacles • wins
MONTHLY	Pulse + recognition	Ask • discuss • close loop
QUARTERLY	Development conversation	Skills • goals • opportunities
SEMIANNUAL	Stay conversation	Retention • frustrations • growth
ANNUAL	Team climate review	Trends • action plan • accountability

Consistency beats intensity.

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TAKE ACTION

Your Leadership Commitment

Choose ONE behavior to start in the next 7 days.

- ☐ Explain the “why” behind a decision
- ☐ Recognize one contribution specifically
- ☐ Ask one employee a stay question
- ☐ Close the loop on old feedback
- ☐ Remove one unnecessary friction point

Morale is not built through one-time events. It is created through the everyday employee experience.

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CLOSE

The Takeaway

UNDERSTAND → IDENTIFY → LEAD → ENGAGE → DIAGNOSE → ACT

**Employees do not need leaders to manufacture motivation.
They need leaders to create the conditions where motivation
can survive and grow.**

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8