

The Yin and Yang of OUR Motivation

Working in schools can be stressful!

Key points

Key drivers of motivation are AUTONOMY, MASTERY and PURPOSE

Our work in schools is well aligned to these drivers

However the three motivators also bring tension and stress

Autonomy comes with Accountability

Mastery requires Change

Purpose comes with Responsibility

Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does.

William James

Daniel Pink is the guru on Motivation. Through researching thousands of people across many industries, Pink concludes that our satisfaction comes from three key drivers. The most powerful motivators for people are AUTONOMY, MASTERY and PURPOSE. These motivators will resonate with many people who work in schools.

Autonomy

We like to have a sense of autonomy. We don't like being micro-managed by being dictated to about what we do, when and how we do it. Whether it is the teacher choosing how they present a learning experience for their students or office staff deciding which priority they need to address first, we like the autonomy to make some choices about our work.

Mastery

Almost all staff who work in schools are committed to continuous improvement. We are constantly on the look-out for how we can improve things. We like to MASTER activities and are constantly striving to improve.

Purpose

Doing important work and making a difference for the families we work with is an important motivator for most staff working in schools. Few could argue that our work in schools has a PURPOSE. We don't make 'widgets' in a factory. Whatever role we play in school;- teacher, aide, cleaner, office, support staff or leader, we contribute to making the best possible learning environment for our students. We make a difference to other people and our work has a PURPOSE.

In other words, we are motivated by the human desire to be in control of our own lives, to keep learning and to excel at something, and to feel that we are working towards something that is important and worthwhile.

However the three motivators also bring with them tension and stress. Whilst we have a degree of AUTONOMY, it comes with ACCOUNTABILITY. We are empowered to make some choices but we are in turn held accountable for the choices we make and the outcomes we achieve.

Striving for MASTERY inevitably requires a commitment to continuous improvement and constant CHANGE. Whether it is tinkering at the fringe to refine our practice or radical changes required to meet the needs of an ever-changing community, MASTERY requires constant CHANGE.

Undertaking work that has a PURPOSE is very satisfying but with it comes a lot of RESPONSIBILITY. Each day staff who work in schools have an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of our students and their families. However this opportunity comes with expectations and all of the challenges that life can throw at us. Undertaking work that is important and worthwhile will also be demanding and frustrating. If it was easy, everyone would be doing it!

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