

Contents

3	Overview
3	What is motivation?
4	Motivation in today's workplace
4	The key: intrinsic motivation
5	Purpose
5	Mastery
6	Autonomy
6	Demotivators
7	Motivate yourself
7	What is your purpose?
8	What do you want to learn?
8	How much autonomy do you want and need?
8	What external motivators are important to you?
9	Create a personal balanced scorecard
10	Leaders: creating a “thrive” environment
11	Help your staff connect to the larger purpose
12	Become a master developer
14	Become a leader with all the right questions
14	Conclusion
15	Acknowledgements

Overview

The BC Public Service is a large, complex organization. We offer critical services to the citizens of the province. To do that, we must be motivated to perform at our best. Our *Being the Best* corporate human resources plan reflects the importance of creating a work environment where everyone is able to contribute to their fullest. Supporting employees to be their best involves understanding and tapping into the power of human motivation as it can help us all achieve more, have higher engagement, and deliver even better services to the citizens of B.C.

Have you ever thought about what motivates you to perform at your best, or what motivates others to perform at their best? You might be surprised. To truly uncover primary motivators, we have to move past carrots and sticks and understand not only the different factors that can influence motivation, but also the right questions to ask.

In this *MyPerformance Guide to Motivation in the Workplace*, we will examine the factors that drive motivation and learn how to leverage it. This guide is designed to help you understand and harness what you find most motivating, as well as have conversations with your staff or others to engage their motivation more deeply too.

What is motivation?

Simply, motivation is why a person does something. It is what initiates, guides and sustains our goal-oriented behaviours. It gives us the will to act in a certain way. There are two main ways we can be motivated:

1. externally, by outside sources, known as **extrinsic motivation**; and
2. internally, from within ourselves, known as **intrinsic motivation**.

In the workplace, external rewards, or **extrinsic motivators**, include such things as fair pay, working conditions, performance reviews, benefits, job security, organizational values and mission, schedules, deadlines, awards and recognition to name a few. These factors satisfy our basic needs for food, shelter and safety, but research shows that other more intrinsic motivators actually drive our performance even more. On the other hand, internal rewards, or **intrinsic motivators**, include things like enjoyment of the work, achieving goals, praise, empowerment, learning, and a sense of belonging. These motivators have a strong link to personal happiness and combined with ability (education, experience, and training) can also lead to higher job performance. In Daniel Pink's book on motivation, *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, he describes this type of motivation as the "natural, inherent drive to seek out challenges and new possibilities."

We are each motivated by a different combination of factors, which can change over time. Age, gender, culture, organization, geography, and many other factors can shape the particular combination of motives that will enable the best performance of an individual. So while research sheds light on key factors that influence our performance, there are many variations that are as unique as a person's finger print. Understanding these key factors is part of the ongoing journey to fulfillment and performance.

“Motivation is a fire from within. If someone else tries to light that fire under you, chances are it will burn very briefly.” – STEPHEN COVEY

Motivation in today's workplace

In the BC Public Service, many of our employees come to work every day with the desire to do a great job, and MyPerformance statistics demonstrate that to be true as most of our employees are achieving and exceeding expectations. Not only that, but our employee performance rates as a whole are above industry averages. The numbers are part of an important story about how motivation plays a critical role in our organization, and how, if we as employees and leaders develop an even greater understanding of what motivates us, and find ways to tap into that powerful force, the possibilities increase not just for ourselves, but for our employees, our organization and those we serve.

Many of our employees choose to go above and beyond expectations because they want to have a positive impact on the citizens of B.C., and work towards their own and their organization's success. These are the employees who give the organization their **discretionary effort**. Research tells us that human beings are more committed when they can see the benefit of their work for other people. That is one of our greatest advantages as an employer: the BC Public Service exists for the benefit of the citizens of the province. What is called "pro-social motivation" is a powerful motivator that drives many in their public service work.

Each employee's motivators are unique, but their effectiveness is heavily influenced by their supervisor's ability to create a work environment that supports those personal motivations. When motivations meet employees are more likely to be engaged, find better ways to perform a job, produce better quality work, and stay with the organization. They will also be more committed, energized, focussed, creative, resilient, persistent, and have better relationships - the exact qualities needed in today's workplace.

MAXIMIZED PERFORMANCE



The key: intrinsic motivation

Daniel Pink's book *Drive* helps us understand the power of tapping into intrinsic motivation in the workplace. He describes it as the "inherent tendency to seek out novelty and challenges, to extend and exercise their capacities, to explore, and to learn", or in other words, our natural drive to do something because it is interesting and challenging. Looking more deeply at the research on intrinsic motivation, there are three key components:

PURPOSE	To be in service to a greater objective and act in harmony with one's self.
MASTERY	To get better and better at something that matters.
AUTONOMY	To be in control of one's own life.

When these needs for purpose, mastery and autonomy are satisfied, we're motivated, engaged, productive and happy. The challenge is that these drivers need to be nurtured and need the right kind of environment to flourish.

PURPOSE is less about what we do and more about why we do it. Pink explains that “people thirst for context, yearning to know what they do contributes to a larger whole.” Simply knowing that the work that you do matches with what is important to you and makes a difference to others can be enough to motivate someone to higher levels of performance. Having conversations with each other to build a greater understanding of how organizational and personal goals relate, and how one can contribute to the successful achievement of those goals can have a big impact on motivation, engagement and effectiveness (there is a lot more great information on integrating the needs of the organization with the needs of the individual in *MyPerformance Guide to Maximizing Results*, so check it out).

One other important aspect of purpose is the characteristic of **relatedness**: the need to interact, connect to, and experience caring for others. It not only speaks to our greater purpose and the desire to be connected to something greater than ourselves, but it also speaks to the need to belong to a community. People want to belong to a working group and understand how the work they are doing connects with that of those around them.

A supervisor who recently graduated from the *Supervisor Development Certificate Program* has a great example of working from a sense of purpose. After receiving a homework assignment to develop a personal leadership mission statement as part of the *Supervisor Essentials* course, he reflected on what really mattered to him. Based on his reflections, he came to define his purpose, which was to “empower my colleagues to learn at their capacity, give them the opportunities to grow, while ensuring I maintain integrity and remain accountable for my actions.” For this leader, the statement is a reflection of what he values most: including others, learning from ourselves, each other, and our mistakes, sharing information, recognition, honesty, trust, and being the best you can be. As part of this he even refers to his team members as “high fliers” as he sees them as highly motivated, intelligent, competent

and caring people who are all contributing in unique and meaningful ways on a daily basis. Looking back, this leader attributes his success to gaining clarity on his own sense of purpose.

MASTERY, another key aspect of performance, focuses on the drive for growth and learning. We naturally want to build our competence and grow our knowledge, skills, and experience along the way. On the road to mastery, another important component is making progress. As described in *The Progress Principle*, we must create the conditions for people to make progress, and we must take the time to recognize it and celebrate it. Each time we hit a milestone our brains produce a small amount of dopamine, while reaching a challenging goal releases a large amount. Dopamine makes us feel good and gives us confidence – good reasons to stop and celebrate!

The magic of growth and development happens best when we are doing a task that we enjoy, that isn't too easy and isn't too difficult, and that pushes us just outside of our comfort zone (just past our current abilities). When this happens we are learning at our best. Describing this state of mind, people often say they lost track of time, were less self-conscious, had a greater understanding of what they wanted to achieve, and had a deep sense of control, or what psychologist Mihaly Csikzenmihalyi calls “flow.”

Even though we have a natural instinct to learn, there are times when we find ourselves holding back from learning and growing. This is true for one employee who lacked confidence in public speaking. For her it was too far out of her comfort zone to even attempt, and so for years she turned down opportunities to give presentations. She wanted to take on new challenges, especially those that would set her up for the next step in her career, but she remained too afraid. That is, until a new supervisor helped her to see her own potential: her ability to talk passionately about her work and her ability to build strong connections with people. Suddenly public speaking moved from being impossible to

being just outside of her comfort zone. With the right kind of training, mentoring and support that employee now delivers presentations frequently and with much conviction and impact.

This story shows the power of mindset and how it can impact our ability to learn, as well as the positive influence leaders can have in helping us find a mindset that works. In the book *Mindset*, Carol Dweck confirms that a great way to overcome negative thoughts is through the development of good learning goals, having the right kind of supports and learning opportunities, and a working environment that encourages stretching and growing (and allows for mistakes along the way). This is where MyPerformance conversations come in: these conversations can help us build a love for challenge, a belief in the effort and our own abilities, and resilience in the face of setbacks. Mastery is a process: an ongoing approach to developing yourself and others. Because of that, we all need to think about what excites us, what matters most to us and what takes us a little outside of our comfort zone.

AUTONOMY, is the third major driving force in today's workforce and is increasingly becoming more important with younger generations entering the workforce, who have higher expectations of autonomy. Daniel Pink describes four types of autonomy:

Task Autonomy	What I do
Technique Autonomy	How I do it
Team Autonomy	Who I do it with
Time Autonomy	When I do it

Daniel Pink, further states that “control leads to compliance, autonomy leads to engagement.” Anyone who has ever been micro-managed in any one of these four types of autonomy knows exactly what he is talking about. Compliance and control management strategies, a

holdover from industrial days, are becoming a thing of the past in favour of work environments that give employees a greater sense of autonomy. In today's workplace we see managers who delegate more, build more capable teams, hire staff in different geographic areas, encourage more movement and flexibility within project teams, grant more freedom employees to design their own work processes, and gain agreement on flexible work arrangements. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to do these autonomous things without competence, goal clarity, good communication and trust (If you are interested in further reading on any of these subjects download the [MyPerformance Guide to Building Workplace Trust](#), the [MyPerformance Guide to Goal Setting](#), and the [MyPerformance Guide to Performance Conversations](#)).

Demotivators

While we are all wired with the drives for purpose, mastery and autonomy, they don't occur automatically. Conditions must be created to allow for individuals' fulfillment of those drives, but even with the best intentions barriers can exist.

You can probably come up with a list of things that have demotivated you in the past. Maybe you were micro-managed, or weren't fully appreciated for your work. Maybe you weren't clear on the expectations or objectives of your role, or didn't fully understand the importance of the work you were doing. Maybe someone took credit for work you did. You might have been given little opportunity to learn new things, or you were given too much too soon. Perhaps at some point, you felt your boss didn't believe in you or gave you too little attention. Take a moment to remember how you felt: On a sliding scale of engagement you were most likely on the low side, or disengaged. The impacts of these demotivators are hard to ignore: an increase in errors, a decrease in productivity, reduced customer satisfaction, a higher number of absences, more long-term illnesses and greater turnover are just a few.

It's important to understand not just what motivates you, but also what doesn't motivate you. Think of a time when your bubble was burst: *What were you doing? Who were you with? What was happening in your organization?*

Your answers will give you clues about what you find demotivating. Spending time reflecting on these important ingredients is time well spent and can be used in any number of ways, such as career exploration and planning, learning and development planning, and MyPerformance conversations. More helpful tips can be found in the [MyPerformance Guide to Performance Conversations](#).

Motivate yourself

Don't wait for your supervisor to motivate you. One of the best things about intrinsic motivation is that each of us can work to build and maintain motivation in the workplace. Answer the questions below that strike a chord with you. Partner with your supervisor, a peer, or a Performance Coach (requested via AskMyHR) to explore your answers and figure out what changes need to be made so that you can be your best, take risks, be more creative, feel more fulfilled and go the extra mile.

What is your purpose?

- ▶ Share a story of when you felt most motivated, or when you gave your best performance. What factors most influenced you? How does this relate to who you are at work and what you need?
- ▶ What I care most about my work is _____.
- ▶ What do you want your team/customers to say about you?
- ▶ What aspects of your organizations vision and goals are you excited about and what are you most wanting to be part of?
- ▶ What goals, including career goals, have you set for your life? Where do you see yourself in __ years?

- ▶ How would you define success?
- ▶ How much time do you spend doing the things that give you the greatest pleasure? How can that be increased?
- ▶ Looking back at the last year, what are you most proud of? What excites you about the year ahead?

Suggestions for moving forward with an intrinsically motivated mindset:

- ▶ Set new goals for yourself and aim a bit higher each time.
- ▶ Join or start communities of practice, forums, or learning groups.
- ▶ Share your goals with important people in your life to get their support and encouragement.
- ▶ Evaluate your own performance.
- ▶ Seek constant feedback.
- ▶ Expand your own support system.
- ▶ Create more opportunities to check in with your supervisor.
- ▶ Don't be afraid to talk about your "dislike list" and "like list" with your supervisor in effort to work on things you love the most more often.
- ▶ Break your goals into bite-sized pieces and track progress.
- ▶ Celebrate achievement!
- ▶ If negative self-thoughts are limiting you, give yourself an attitude adjustment.
- ▶ Stay in touch with what you love – create space for it in your life even if there is no place for it at work.
- ▶ Spend time reflecting on what needs to change for you to be truly fulfilled.

What do you want to learn?

- ▶ What are the best practices in your industry/profession?
- ▶ What do you need to learn so your knowledge and skills are current?
- ▶ What do you need to learn to be ready for the next step of your career?
- ▶ What would you like to learn that is just outside of your comfort zone?
- ▶ What learning options are available to you or that you can create yourself?
- ▶ What knowledge and skills do you have that could be useful to others? How can you offer them?
- ▶ What would you like feedback on? From who?
- ▶ Is there anything you've ever wanted to master that you've avoided? What are the barriers to giving it a try? How can you remove those barriers?
- ▶ Look at past or recent failures/mistakes and reflect on what you learned from them. How can you use it as a basis for growth moving forward?
- ▶ What support do you need from your supervisor to achieve your goals?

Self-Reflection ~ Deepen your learning:

Self-reflection is at the very heart of learning and development. Our ability to reflect on what is working and what is not, in real time, is a skill that can be applied to any role, in any profession, in any situation.

You can use these three simple questions to get started:

1. What worked well?
2. What didn't work well?
3. What will I do differently?

Once you answer these questions for yourself, you can take it a step farther and ask others for feedback using the same questions – they can help you identify options that you aren't aware of.

For more self-reflection questions turn to page 10.

How much autonomy do you want and need?

- ▶ As you think about your best work, what part(s) of autonomy has been most important to you: What you do (task), when you do it (time), how you do it (technique), and/or with whom you do it (team)? Why?
- ▶ How much autonomy do you have at work right now? Is that enough? If not, what are your options to get more?
- ▶ What support do you need from your supervisor as you work more autonomously? And, how are you going to check in with each other?
- ▶ Is the level of trust between you and your supervisor getting in the way of your working with more autonomy? If so, how might you build greater trust? For more helpful tips take a look at the [MyPerformance Guide to Building Trust](#).

What external motivators are important to you?

- ▶ What parts of your business plan are most meaningful to you?
- ▶ What role would you like to play in the achievement of that plan?
- ▶ Describe the actions and behaviors of a supervisor that supported you to be your best.
- ▶ What does achieving expectations look like to your supervisor? How about exceeding expectations?
- ▶ What are the milestones for your goals/tasks/projects? Deadlines?
- ▶ How well is your current job meeting your needs for salary, benefits, working conditions, etc.? If it is falling short, what are your options?
- ▶ Describe the work environment in which you are most productive and happy.
- ▶ Do you feel comfortable with your sense of job security? If not, what needs to change so you have a greater sense of security?
- ▶ Do you feel safe in your work environment? Is it respectful? If not, what is within your control to improve the situation? What is the first step you can take that will bring about improvement? (We all have a role in upholding the Standards of Conduct and maintaining a respectful work environment. Visit [MyHR](#) for more information.)

Searching for a job?

Here are some great questions one manager likes to ask prospective new employers in interviews, and loves it even more when applicants ask her the same questions in job competitions she is leading. Should you use them, the answers provided may inform you about whether this new role, supervisor, and team are a good fit with your own motivators:

- ▶ What do you hope to achieve within the next year or two?
- ▶ What are the greatest challenges facing your organization/team?
- ▶ How do you get the best out of your employees?
- ▶ How do you support engagement and high performance in your team?
- ▶ How do you develop your staff?
- ▶ Describe your leadership style.

Create a personal balanced scorecard

Borrowing from the Corporate Balanced Scorecard approach to business performance (for more on this refer to the *MyPerformance Guide to Maximizing Results*), the *Personal Balanced Scorecard (PBSC)*, is a process that will help you describe your key motivators and guide you in your own personal growth and performance. It will help you think through not only what is important and motivating to you, but also where you are progressing in all the important aspects of your life. From think-differently.org here are the key steps to developing your own PBSC:

1. From the box on page 10, select and define the key areas, values or characteristics of your work life that are important to you. These are the areas that if you were fully living them in your job you would be very satisfied.
2. On a scale of 1-10, where would you rate your current state on each of the areas you identified? Write down the reason for the rating, so you have a snapshot of your current status.
3. Next, review each of the areas from the point of view of where you'd like to be in the future. What would your ideal work life look like in each of these areas? This will shape your vision for the future. Write it down and describe it in the present tense.
4. Set some goals. Looking at the gap between where you are and where you want to be, ask yourself: what do you need to do more of, less of, or stop/start doing all together?
5. Determine your measures. Without knowing what success will look like, it can be hard to know if you are being successful or not. Your measures will be your test that will help you reflect not only on what your goals are, but also if you are, or are not, on the right path. Your measures might be a specific number (i.e. lose 10 lbs. or earn \$10,000 more per year), or reflect a certain quality (i.e. more fulfillment in my job); either way make them as specific as you can.
6. You will likely end up with many items on your list, but pick the key ones you want to focus on now and limit it to no more than 3. Determine what actions you are going to take and put some timelines to it.
7. Measure: Use self-reflection (found on page 10) and feedback from others to find out how you are doing and get ideas about how you can do better. Consider asking for feedback from your supervisor, colleagues, employees, customers, and others.

Which of these items would you consider to be of critical importance in your work life?

Results	Relationships	Learning
Collaboration	Recognition	Leadership
Team Work	Travel	Advancement
Creativity	Research	Problem-Solving
Independence	Challenge	Efficiency
Fairness	Humour	Flexibility
Teaching	Helping Others	Inclusiveness
Pay Increases	Experimentation	Reliability
Trust	Security	Honesty
Pace	Adventure	Diplomacy
Integrity	Innovation	Balance
Resilience	Adaptability	Other_____

Have fun with it. You can put all your answers in a chart or some other form so you can see it all together and track your progress. You can even get creative and develop graphics using fun tools like the customizable *Wheel of Life*, so you can see your key areas in a snap shot, and take notice of what areas need more attention.

More self-reflection questions

- ▶ Is there a match between what I think and what I do?
- ▶ How do my ideals, ambitions, intentions and deepest desires fit my present actions?
- ▶ Do I act in accordance with my personal ambition?
- ▶ In what ways does my behaviour influence my views and my views influence my behaviours?
- ▶ Am I doing the right work and learning the right things to support my career plans?

Leaders: creating a “thrive” environment

High performance is fostered not only by an organization’s ability to address external motives, but also by creating the kind of work culture where internal motivators are understood and tapped into. Employees thrive when they can work independently towards higher purpose and to learn, grow, and measure the impact of their work. The highest performing organizations support this deliberately, and that’s why you see elements of this in *Being the Best*, the BCPS corporate HR plan. However, when it comes to creating the right conditions for each individual employee, it’s supervisors who have the greatest influence.

As a leader, you must start first by **taking care of yourself** as much as you take care of others. Adam Grant, leadership expert and author of *Give and Take*, says that you will be in a much better position to support your team when you take good care of yourself. If you are slipping on this front, take the pause to reflect on what you need and find ways to get yourself back on track. For you, perhaps that means taking breaks, exercising, meditating, getting massages, creating more time for a favorite hobby, or managing the use of your mobile device during personal time. Remember that you are leading by example. What example do you want to set?

Taking care of yourself also includes **exploring your own key motivators**. Think of a time, during your own career, when you were a passionate leader. Exploring what contributed to this will give you deeper insight into performing at your best and how you want to show up as a leader. Your answers will also likely reflect on your purpose. Think about where are you at with your own leadership development. What are your strengths? What do you need to develop? What competencies will help you with your challenges ahead? What support do you need from your own supervisor? Refer back to the previous section, Motivate Yourself, for more ideas on doing this work.

“Help employees see the bigger picture: how they fit in a role and how the work that they do, on a daily basis, contributes to the success of the organization – MANAGER”

One of the other powerful things you can do as a leader to create an environment for others to thrive is **adopt a strong growth mindset**: see everyone as talented and make efforts to bring out the best in them. Turning back to the work of Carol Dweck in *Mindset*, developing a strong belief that anyone can develop talent will help you see every encounter as an opportunity to help them improve, as well as identify things that get in the way of that growth. When you think this way you are more likely to support employees' development as well as your own. You will be more likely to coach your employees, more likely to notice improvements in their performance and more encouraging of two-way feedback. Trust your employees' judgement and believe in their commitment and competence. And, perhaps most difficult of all, create an environment where it is ok to take risks and make mistakes.

A great example of someone who follows this approach is renowned conductor and music teacher Benjamin Zander. In his book *The Art of Possibility* he shares how he uses a growth mindset with musicians he conducts and music students he teaches. You can also catch him on YouTube in [How to give an A](#), where Zander tells the compelling story of how he expects the best from his students and helps them to do more than they believe is even possible. At the beginning of the school year, he starts each of them off with an A. The catch is that each one of them has to write a letter, dated to the end of the year that will tell the story of how they achieved the top grade, giving them the autonomy to set their course. The assignment helps them see who they are, who they want to be, and what it will take to get there. The rest of the semester the students work towards those goals, and have meetings with their teacher to celebrate their successes and help with problems.

This shows, whether you are the teacher, student, supervisor, or employee, if you start with believing in someone's ability to learn you will help them find success. Your focus will be on learning and improving, not on mistakes, failing and assessments. Create conditions for people to do their best work: put your trust in them, have high expectations for them, support them in their learning and development, and encourage and offer feedback.

Moving past these basic leadership principles, below are some ideas on how you can explore and help others tap into internal motivators. Remember, these conversations are a two way street. Let employees take the lead; they know their own skills, talents and dreams far better than anyone, including you.

Connect to the larger purpose

Purpose is the foundation for mastery and autonomy. How you do that will depend on your employees and the work you do. There are so many ways and here are a few ideas: Start by helping your team connect to a larger purpose, such as the vision and goals for your ministry or organization. Work with your team to develop team mission statements, values and goals (bring in a Team Coach via AskMyHR for help with this if you want). Help your team understand the impact of their services by sharing feedback from clients.

“Tapping into employee’s passions, figuring out what drives them, and learning what inspires them to succeed are all critical aspects of being a supervisor. – SUPERVISOR”

A highly rated supervisor in government (according to the biannual Work Environment Survey) does a great job of helping her team connect with the larger purpose. When she recognizes her employees, she talks to them about the work that they’re doing and the difference that their work is having on the organization. She is constantly helping her employees connect to their jobs and the organization: as a result, she has one of the most engaged teams in the BC Public Service.

Other suggestions for helping employees connect to a larger purpose are:

- ▶ Structure work and processes to help staff tap into their strengths, values and interests.
- ▶ Connect employees who share similar interests.
- ▶ Embrace diversity of experiences, values and opinions in your team conversations to generate a rich variety of perspectives and ideas.
- ▶ While hiring, ask your candidates why they applied and explain why they might like to work for you.
- ▶ Find creative ways to find out what their likes and dislikes are.
- ▶ Find out if anything is overwhelming them. What is the right balance of work for them?
- ▶ Are they working on the kind of assignments that interest them, and that will help them use and develop their strengths?

For more on the power of purpose, watch Simon Sinek’s TED Talk, [*How Great Leaders Inspire Action*](#).

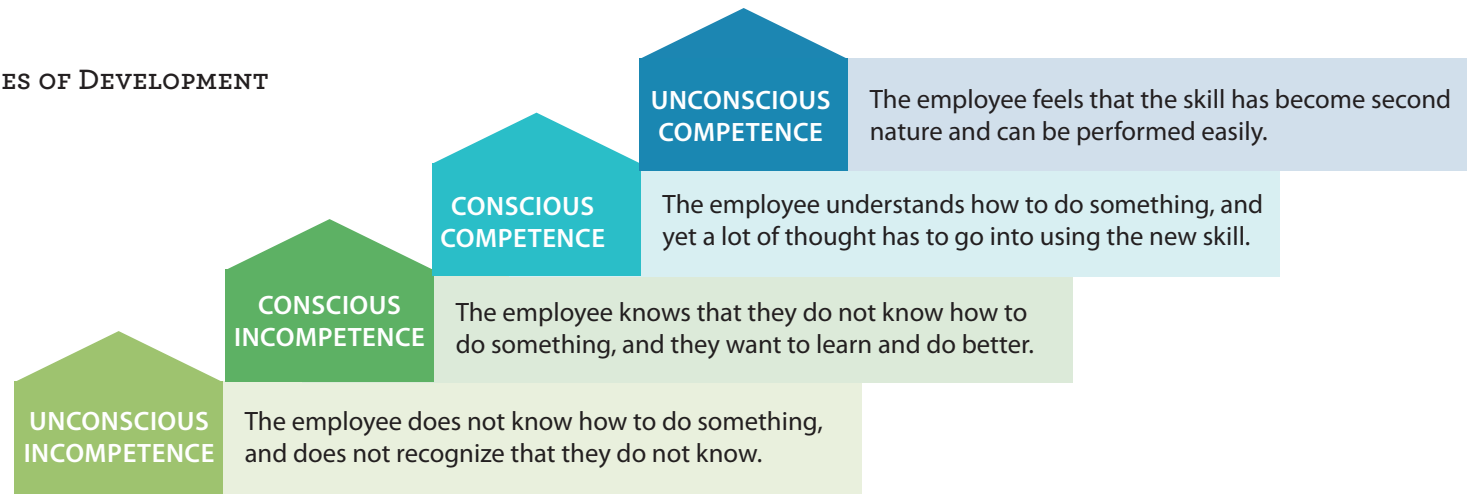
Another supervisor in the BC public service has a creative way to get to know her employees. She sends each team member a form that asks things like how they prefer to celebrate their birthdays at work, what holidays they celebrate, and other tidbits like favorite color, music, food, beverage, candy, and book. She then uses this information to plan personalized celebrations, acknowledgements, or little pick-me-ups.

Become a master developer

Make the most of everyday interactions to promote reflection and learning: Touch base with your staff to find out what is going well, what is challenging them, and what changes need to be made to keep on track. Create a team environment that supports feedback: peer-to-peer, supervisor-to-employee, and employee-to-supervisor. Set learning goals along with work goals and discuss what success will look like, as well as how you can best support them along the way. Encourage them to generate lots of ideas for how they might like to grow and the strategies that might bridge the gap between where they are and where they want to be. Brainstorm on how learning can be captured and shared with others. Ask them what they need to stop doing to create time for learning and figure out ways to protect that learning time. Measure, acknowledge and celebrate progress.

As a master developer it can be helpful to consider what stage the employee is at in their development. Noel Burch developed *Four Stages of Learning*, a model that helps leaders not only understand employees thoughts and emotions during the sometimes challenging and frustrating learning process, but also adjust their approach to help these learners:

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT



An employee who is **unconsciously incompetent** may be someone who is making errors in their work, but isn't aware of it. It could also be someone who is not behaving in a manner expected of an employee of the public service and is unknowingly having a negative impact on others. Denial and disagreement could be present at this stage. A leader with employees at this stage may need to help them know what they don't know: see their blind spots and build self-awareness. Provide one or two concrete examples of what has occurred that needs to change. Help them be clear on the work and learning goals, as well as what achieving expectations would look like from your perspective. They may also need more support in understanding how their learning goals align with the bigger picture. Continued support, check-ins and feedback will be critical. Be aware that, as they move towards greater consciousness, it is possible that these employees may be uncomfortable or even struggle with the new found awareness of their performance challenges. To help, in addition to getting support from their supervisor, both **counselling** and **Performance Coaching** are good options that an employee can take advantage of as they start building their competency. This can also be a very difficult stage for supervisors to navigate, and through **MyHR** there are also a number of supports available that can help, including Human Resource Advisors and Performance Coaching to name a few.

Someone who is aware that they have a lot to learn is **consciously incompetent**. This is common for those who are new to a job, or learning a new skill, or working on a project that has greater challenges than they've dealt with in the past. At this point they often have a low sense of confidence and compare themselves to others. Coupled with the fact that learning can be difficult and frustrating this can be a taxing time. Some of the best things a leader can offer are a clear training plan with milestones and lots of positive encouragement. Remind them of their progress and their strengths, and offer feedback along the way especially if errors are made – as mistakes can be our greatest teachers.

As an employee reaches **conscious competence** they have built an understanding of their work, the business, the interrelationships with other areas, the policies, and the processes, and so on. They continue to put a lot of thought and effort into their decisions and so the pace of the work may not be fast. They typically are feeling a lot more confident, operate more independently and seek help from others less frequently. As their leader, you can continue to help them practice and stretch their skills with new opportunities: Give them new projects and support their continued learning and mastery. Check in with them to ask what kind of support they now need from you. And continue to help them understand the context behind the work, shape their goals and determine the priorities.

People who have reached a level of **unconscious competence** are likely very seasoned in their roles. They have a wealth of knowledge and experience. Like an elite athlete, they have honed their practice to the point where carrying out the work unfolds naturally and without a lot of thought or evaluation. At this stage in their development, a person is less likely to let irrelevant or distracting thoughts interfere with their performance. They work independently, the quality of their work is high, and they can typically complete tasks quickly. However, a danger that can exist at this stage is complacency. If you have employees who you would characterize as unconsciously competent your role as their supervisor will be to ensure they continue to challenge their mastery: For some it will mean continuing to deepen their learning and for others it might mean teaching and/or mentoring others. Focus their MyPerformance conversations around what projects they'd most like to work on, what they'd like their next two years to look like, and what would give them the greatest satisfaction at work.

Become a leader with all the right questions

The BC Public Service is a hierarchical organization, and within it supervisors are accountable to deliver the services they oversee. Those in this role often are challenged with finding the right balance between being in control and giving employees more autonomy and flexibility to achieve their goals. A big part of that balance is shifting from an expert leader, with all the right answers, to being a coach leader, with all the right questions.

If you would like to become a coach leader, give your employees opportunities that not only are of personal interest, but also stretch or test their skills. Provide ample choice over what your employees do and how they do it: Give them increasing freedom to develop the time lines and methods, and work with teams they desire wherever possible. Adopt an open door policy where your schedule is clear and allow them to come in and talk to you about what is on their mind. Offer

suggestions and use powerful questions that will help them discover the answers for themselves. If you need to offer advice or suggestions, use phrases such as “think about” or “consider”, and give your employees the freedom to accept the idea, reject it or make it their own. Make feedback an essential part of the conversation (see page 10 for more details).

With that being said, not every employee is ready to work on more challenging projects or to work autonomously. Think of someone who is new to a role, or learning a new skill, or someone who is competent, but not confident. The choice of leadership style, from directive to coaching, may depend on the employee's stage of development (see previous chart). Looking at the different stages of competence think about how you would adjust your leadership approach for someone at one end of the spectrum versus the other. Ask yourself, how ready is your staff member to be autonomous based on their stage of competence? And, how ready are you to support them to do so? This may require you to focus on your own leadership development. If this is something you want to learn more about take a look at the *Coaching Approach to Conversations* and *Fierce Conversations* in the [Learning Centre](#) to build skills of listening, inquiry, feedback, goal setting, delegation, and issue resolution.

Exploring autonomy as a supervisor means challenging your assumptions about what, how, with who, and when work is done, and giving your employees the freedom to make decisions when possible – employees who are connected to the purpose will make decisions in the best interests of the clients and the organization.

Conclusion

In this guide, you learned how purpose, mastery and autonomy are key factors in motivation. As you read through this guide, what did you learn about your own motivation? What stands out for you about how you can motivate others? It's time to turn that motivation into action. What can you do right now?

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