



Guides for youth NGOs



HUMAN RESOURCES

When the best leader's work is done the people say, "We did it ourselves". (Lao Tzu)

All youth organisations have one thing in common – they are comprised of people: employees, volunteers, participants of projects. The successful work of any organisation depends on people and very often work in an NGO requires a lot of motivation, dedication and sometimes some compromises. It is very inspiring to see what impact enthusiastic young people can make in an organisation. However, we all know the other side of this topic – especially in youth organisations, very often the demands are high, resources and time are limited, and people leave the organisation without realising their full potential or without sharing their knowledge and experience with their colleagues. In this guide we would like to focus on two important topics connected with “human resources management”: **motivation and leadership**.

Let's find out how to increase the commitment and involvement of people and how it can contribute to the sustainability of your organisation.

HOW TO MOTIVATE PEOPLE

Motivation can be defined as a cause (a longing) for human actions. Depending on what is wanted to be done and how intensely and long-lasting this wish is.

There are **two types of motivation** (1):

- **intrinsic motivation** (people want to do something because they are really passionate about it and they feel joy while doing it);
- **extrinsic motivation** (generally: people do something to receive a reward or to avoid punishment).

(1) Deci, Edward L.; Ryan, Richard M. (1985): Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior. New York: Plenum.

It has always been debated whether extrinsic motivation hinders intrinsic motivation (for example when people only do “good things” because they get a reward for it – or imagine a child who only cleans the dinner table if they get a treat afterwards). But external factors, such as rules can also be accepted as useful and thus internalised, for example: “I don't want to be late for class (because otherwise it's more difficult to understand and follow)”.



Moreover, people show higher and better performance in fields they feel self-confident and competent in, or when their work is recognised and appreciated by others – and they only invest in learning something new, when it is really relevant to them. For example: "I need to learn how a laptop or smartphone is used in order to communicate digitally with people around the world".

In the youth field, it is easy to create tasks that are relevant for young people, when you look at their developmental stage. According to Havighurst (2) so called “**developmental tasks**” are: to settle in a peer group, to think about job and career, to make plans for the future, to develop their own values. If your organisation meets these needs by creating nice and interesting meetings, friendship and team-

building activities, gives them a reference for their CV or even helps them on the job market, young people will stay involved in your organisation because the work and time invested helps them to think about and shape their lives.

What to do if people are not motivated?

Find out more about their **needs and relevance**. Which topics are interesting to them, how do they spend their time? Try to build activities around it that meet their interests and provide a comfortable, welcoming and opening atmosphere (and then, they will join voluntarily). It is also important to communicate to them in “their” language. Tell them, what they need to hear, or think about the way to provide information for them in order to keep them more motivated. This will be explained in more detail in the next chapter (see below).

Another way is to set up a **reward system**:

- give them certificates for their CV,
- give them the opportunity to develop further (gain more self-confidence and competences),
- recognise their work and be thankful,
- openly celebrate successes and their competences.

However, if people are not motivated, there is not much you can do. Probably it is healthier and less time consuming if you start looking for people who really are motivated, instead of running after people who never show up because they simply do not see the relevance of joining your organisation.

(2) Havighurst, Robert J. (1952): Developmental tasks and education. 2nd ed. New York: Longmans, Green.

LEADERSHIP

First of all, leadership can be defined as certain actions that cause other human beings (individuals or teams) to act, in order to achieve certain set aims and objectives.

Leadership is a complex concept because it includes **several interrelated levels**, and leaders and managers need to have an overview about them all:

1. the individual team member (employee, volunteer),
2. the teams and
3. the organisation or company.

The third level is the most abstract one. It includes aspects such as feasibility, external public relations, or the obligation to achieve certain goals (for example, these goals could be: creating and selling a product to a customer, adapting to changes on the market, etc.)

On these levels, resources have to be acquired, distributed fairly, certain aims and objectives need to be identified and, even more important, communicated to the individual workers. The effectiveness of communication equals the effectiveness of the whole organisation and good atmosphere. **Dialogue structures and means of communication increase motivation** and so performance and quality will increase, too.

Moreover, leadership bears a great responsibility. According to scientific studies, the **leadership style has consequences on health and well-being of employees and volunteers**. One core aspect of successful leadership is therefore team-building and making a group of individuals work as a team (or dissolving or rearranging teams). Additionally, different teams have to

cooperate and work together. This can be a challenge because these teams might differ in terms of habits, their “corporate identity”, etc.

Furthermore, there are studies stating that not only employers, managers or team leaders have leadership skills - but that **all people have certain leadership skills**. This is interesting to know because mostly, only a few people in companies and organisations are given the responsibility and task to lead while the others should suppress their skills and just “follow”. Hence, the potential of the followers is often not considered and can be seized more, if you know about it! Below you can find out more about your own type of leadership.



COMMUNICATING CHANGE

Especially when it comes to changes and restructuring, **human beings tend not to like change**, as it can be perceived as a threat. So, when you have to talk to employees or volunteers about change, make them understand it as a motivating challenge.

According to Higgins “**Regulatory focus theory**” there are **two types of workers** (with distinct motivational orientations, work strategies, aims and ways to deal with change):

- **promoters**
- **preventers**

However, the way people react depends on context and situation, so both types can co-exist in one person.

Promoters are focused on success and gain, strive for growth and need progress. They are good at developing new ideas. For them, it is important why a certain objective needs to be met. This person can be motivated by positive feedback about milestone-successes.

Preventers have a need for security and focus more on potential loss or failures. They are good at finding mistakes or weak points. For their understanding it is more important how certain objectives should be met and preventers can be motivated if a leader points out mistakes or aims that are not yet met.

Leaders should be aware of these two types and always try to create a regulatory fit (that means that the task, situation and individual/team match perfectly fine). It can also mean that the same “change” that has to be made needs to be communicated to the different types individually (in reflection groups or team-meetings).

Here you and your team can make a test about your Regulatory Focus yourself:
www.sjdm.org/dmidi/files/Higgins%20et%20al.%20%282001%29%20RFQ.doc

Here is another test that you can try out with your team – and reflect upon the results afterwards:
www.midss.org/sites/default/files/rfocus_induction.pdf



LEADERSHIP STYLES

There are many different leadership styles. When learning more about your style, strengths and weaknesses, you can become more aware about why you lead the way you lead, and why some things work and others do not. Knowledge about leadership styles (of yourself and of other people in your team) might help you to better understand their intentions and deeds.

For example, you can be focused either more on the **people** working in your organisation/ company, or more focused on the **tasks**. Another level is about **participation**: is it more a democratic or authoritarian style?

Furthermore, there are certain attributes like **social competences, empathy, support, cooperation**.

On the one hand, your style can be **consistent**, on the other hand, it can vary and be **flexible** according to each situation.

Mindful leadership

There is evidence from health sciences that mindfulness has positive effects on concentrated and focused work, increased performance, dealing with stress and recovering (faster) from illness. Mindfulness is the **ability to focus** and can be learned, for example, in sensory awareness seminars. It is done by **noticing and observing carefully without interpreting** or letting stereotypes or emotions limit perception (distinguish between what is information and what is judgement/evaluation). Mindfulness helps with **active listening** (and really being interested in the employees). Rather be a role model than a supervising/controlling authority.

Leadership Compass

Another way to connect your group and improve team work is to find out about the **team members' strengths**. You can do this by making an easy **self-assessment** with your team, for example, you can use the Leadership Compass. You can find the instructions and the assessment sheet here:

<https://evans.uw.edu/sites/default/files/public/Leadership-compass-self-assessment.pdf>

It is recommended to show the results to each other by standing in a room (in four corners) and discuss how you work confidently, share

examples and try to understand others and their styles. When forming teams for future projects, try out mixed or homogenous groups and make use of all the skills and styles.

We hope that we could provide you with useful tools and new knowledge about motivation and leadership, and thus enable you to communicate even more successfully with staff and volunteers in your organisation. Hopefully, you are now more motivated to discover new ways to work sustainably together!

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