

Investigation of different alternatives in order to improve the motivation within a project team ^{1, 2}

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the most important factors that influence motivation within a project team, to link them to international contracts and to find the best recommendation for project managers. Indeed, our research question is “How to motivate people on a project team?”.

In order to achieve that goal, we have analysed the causes of demotivation within a project team. Then, we have established some alternatives and we have evaluated each of them by creating a Multi-Attribute Decision Making. The last step was to make a quantitative analysis of the alternatives using the additive weighting technique.

This methodology led us to the conclusion that the best alternative to increase the motivation in a project team is to implement a personal development plan.

Keywords: Motivation, reward, project team, performance, incentives, recognition, contract, processes.

INTRODUCTION

Motivating is the “process of inducing an individual to work toward achieving an organization’s objectives while also working to achieve personal objectives” ³. Everyone needs motivation in order to achieve something, personal or professional, and sometimes you need to be motivated by someone else, an external source of motivation. For example, it’s often the case in a company. Employees need to have someone who will motivate them to achieve their goals. This person is usually called the manager. We all know that if the motivation of a person or an employee is high, the performance will also be high and on the contrary if at some time the motivation

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³ Wideman Comparative Glossary of Project Management Terms v5.5. (n.d.). Retrieved November 2, 2018, from http://www.maxwideman.com/pmglossary/PMG_M05.htm

decreases, the performance will do the same. In fact, performance is closely linked to motivation. A recent study shows that “72% of the respondents agreed that recognition and appraisal for work done motivates employees to improve their performance”⁴.

The motivation within a project team is also a big challenge that can impact the performance and the results of the project. Unfortunately, there isn’t a “magic potion” to keep motivation high during the whole project. However, project managers can find some ways to keep the motivation of his or her team, especially through a contract.

We have to make the distinction between group work and teamwork. “A group in the workplace is usually made up of three or more people who recognize themselves as a distinct unit or department, but who actually work independently of each other.”⁵

On the contrary, “With a team, individuals recognize the expertise and talents of others needed to achieve the team’s goal. Additionally, teams are often formed for temporary assignments with one specific goal, focus or outcome in mind.”⁶ That’s why it is important to think, before the project begins, about how you will motivate your team: what can you give them? Which techniques can you use when the motivation decreases? How can you manage conflicts? It is a lot easier to manage those things when you’ve thought about it before and you have a defined protocol that every team member is aware of. Obviously, a way to structure it is to formalize it in writing, through a contract.

In order to find an effective way to motivate a project team, it’s important to understand what can cause a decrease in the motivation in the team. You can see below a root-cause analysis that highlights some of the most important factors which cause demotivation within a project team.

⁴ Nurun Nabi, Islam M, Dip TM, Hossain AA (2017) Impact of Motivation on Employee Performances: A Case Study of Karmasangsthan Bank Limited, Bangladesh. Arabian J Bus Manag Review 7: 293, from <https://www.omicsonline.org/open-access/impact-of-motivation-on-employee-performances-a-case-study-of-karmasangsthan-bank-limited-bangladesh-.php?aid=86681>

⁵ Fritz, Robin. "Differences Between Group Work & Team Work." Small Business - Chron.com, <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/differences-between-group-work-team-work-11004.html>. 30 June 2018.

⁶ Fritz, Robin. "Differences Between Group Work & Team Work." Small Business - Chron.com, <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/differences-between-group-work-team-work-11004.html>. 30 June 2018.

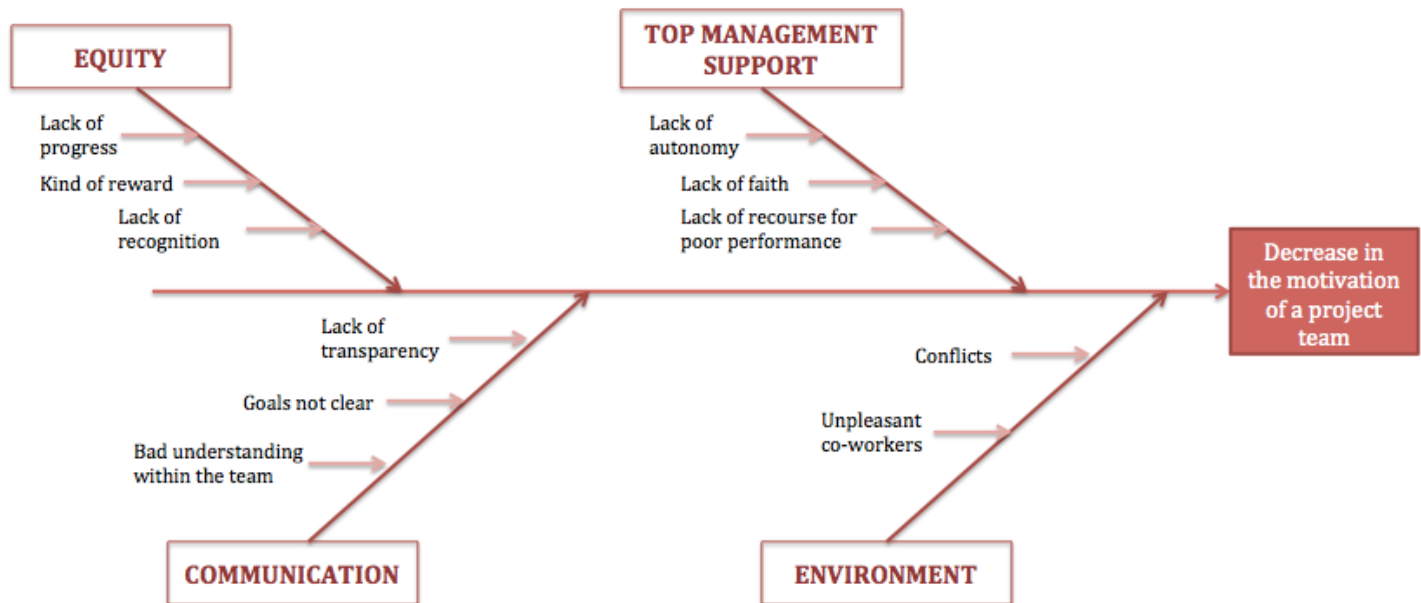


Figure 1: Root-cause analysis⁷

Reasons that can cause demotivation come from different horizons. It can come from people (bad understanding within the team, conflicts); if there isn't a good atmosphere, people in the team won't be happy to go to work and performance will decrease.

It can also come from the management: the kind of reward proposed by the project manager can motivate or demotivate team members. Rewards can be anything, as C. Björklund said, "rewards can be as minor as a smile or as major as recognition".⁸

In addition, if the project manager focuses too much on the group performance and forgets individuals, it can cause demotivation for some of the team members. Finally, the support of the top management is also very important to consider.

Other sources of demotivation could come from the project itself or, to be more precise, the definition of the project (goals not clear, change of project scope). The project has to be well defined and very precisely so that everyone knows what to do and how to do it.

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the most important factors that influence the motivation within a project team and to link them to international contracts, in order to set up effective

⁷ By author

⁸ Björklund, C. (2001). *Work Motivation - Studies of its determinants and outcomes*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234096745_Work_motivation_Studies_of_its_determinants_and_outcomes/citations

processes and structures to increase motivation in a project team and to formalize it in a contract. To summarize, we will determine in this paper:

- The most important factors which influence motivation in a project team
- The most effective processes to increase motivation
- How to formalize it in international contracts

METHODOLOGY

Step 1: Summarize

As we mentioned at the end of the introduction, the goal of this paper is to set up an effective way to formalize in a contract a process to motivate the project team.

By the root cause analysis, we have identified the main factors that can decrease the motivation within a project team. The list is not exhaustive since each person is unique but the factors identified are the major ones. Thanks to that, we have now identified the major themes or the different aspects on which the project manager needs to be careful. Those aspects contain sub-factors and the major ones are listed in the root-cause analysis.

- Communication
- Individual recognition
- Reward
- Conflict management / resolution
- Top management support
- Goals
- Project scope

Now, we need to identify the different processes or structures that can be used by the project manager.

Step 2: Identify the feasible alternatives solutions

During this step, we will identify feasible alternatives processes or structures that can be used in international contracts and define the attributes to measure, assess or evaluate each alternative.

- **Feasible alternatives solutions**
 - Implementation of a compensation plan⁹

⁹ Calinog, C. (n.d.). Team-Based Rewards Structures and Their Impact on Team Trust Northwestern University | School of Education & Social Policy. Retrieved October 30, 2018, from <https://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/masters-learning-and-organizational-change/knowledge-lens/stories/2011/team-based-rewards.html>

“Compensation plan is the complete plan to award individuals for their efforts and to ensure that your employees stay with you and are satisfied over a longer period of time.”¹⁰ To implement a compensation plan, we must consider several elements such as the company’s strategy and business objective to help setting targets, the performance measures, the payout formula and the governance.

- Writing a team charter / team contract

“A team contract entails developing a written agreement to formalize how a team intends to organize and manage its processes and tasks. Although teams vary in purpose, what follows are some general guidelines, which can be adapted to a wide variety of situations.”¹¹ Developing a team contract will allow the project team to formally sets roles and responsibilities, a timeline, methods for managing information, strategies to communicate with stakeholders, a reward system...

- Monthly award program¹²

This kind of program is a way to set up individual recognition by electing the “team member who displayed the best work, ethic, grit, or attitude for the previous month” (Murphy, 2018).

- Implement individual development plans⁸

“Nothing saps an employee’s motivation like the feeling that she’s stuck in a dead-end job.” (Murphy, 2018). It is the same in a project, especially for long-term projects: if a team member can’t see its own evolution or development through the project, it can decrease its motivation. By implementing this kind of program, a team member will feel considered as an individual and will probably want to achieve its personal and professional goals for its development.

- **Attributes to measure assess or evaluate each alternative.**

In order to define the attributes that will help us to choose the best alternative, I analysed an article from PMI, which tells us on which criteria a Project Manager should focus in order to increase the motivation in its team.¹³

From this article, I choose four attributes to measure:

¹⁰ MBA Skool. (n.d.). Compensation Plan Definition | Marketing Dictionary. Retrieved November 5, 2018, from <https://www.mbaskool.com/business-concepts/marketing-and-strategy-terms/14861-compensation-plan.html>

¹¹ Dr. Tyran, K. L. (n.d.). Developing a Team Contract. Retrieved November 6, 2018, from <http://faculty.wvu.edu/tyrank/MGMT313/TeamContract313.htm>

¹² Murphy, J. (2018, November 3). 21 Simple and Effective Strategies to Help You Motivate Employees. Retrieved November 6, 2018, from <https://www.snacknation.com/blog/how-to-motivate-employees/>

¹³ Peterson, T. M. (2007). Motivation: how to increase project team performance. Paper presented at PMI® Global Congress 2007—North America, Atlanta, GA. Newtown Square, PA: Project Management Institute.

- Consider individuals: “To foster motivation within each team member on a project, the project manager must take the time to understand how every individual is motivated” (Peterson, 2007)
- Alignment of rewards to personal preferences
- Involvement of team members in the process: “Project team members will feel greater ownership and acceptance of the project efforts” (Peterson, 2007)
- Performance measurement

In addition to those four criterions, I am adding two more that are also important to consider:

- Impact on relationships
- Equity between team members

Those attributes are a part of the “three key goals of people at work”¹⁴ so it’s important to consider them in our analysis.

Step 3: Development of feasible alternatives

The goal of this step is to rank our different solutions from the best to the worst. To achieve that, we will use the Multi-Attribute Decision Making (MADM) method. This method will help us rank the solutions by quantifying them.

Firstly, we need to give to each attribute defined in step 2 a “weight”. 1 will be the less important attribute and 6 the most important.

Each attribute has also possible marks that are weighted between 1; 0.5 and 0.

¹⁴ Sirota, D., Mischkind, L., & Irwin Meltzer, M. (2006, October 4). Why Your Employees Are Losing Motivation. Retrieved November 19, 2018, from <https://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/why-your-employees-are-losing-motivation>

Ranking of the attributes	Possible marks			
	Yes	Quite	No	
Consider individuals = 6	Yes	Quite	No	
Involvement of team members in the process = 4	High	Medium	Low	
Alignment of rewards to personal preferences = 3	Yes	Probably	No	Unknown
Impact on relationships = 5	High	Medium	Low	
Equity between team members = 2	Yes	Unapplicable	No	
Performance measurement = 1	Good	Quite good	Bad	
Weight	1	0,5	0	0

Figure 2: Ranking of the attributes¹⁵

Now, we have to score each alternative according to the six attributes: we will give six marks to the alternatives, one for each attribute.

Attributes	Alternatives			
	Compensation plan	Team contract	Monthly award program	Individual development plan
Consider Individuals	No	Quite	Yes	Yes
Involvement of team members in the process	Medium	High	Low	High
Alignment of rewards to personal preferences	No	No	Probably	Yes
Impact on relationships	Low	Medium	Medium	Low
Equity between team members	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Performance measurement	Good	Good	Good	Good

Figure 3: Qualitative assessment of the alternatives¹⁶

To calculate the score of the alternatives, we will use this formula:
 (weight of the attribute) x (weight of the mark)

¹⁵ By author

¹⁶ By author

Attributes	Alternatives			
	Compensation plan	Team contract	Monthly award program	Individual development plan
Consider Individuals	6x0 = 0	6x0,5 = 3	6x1 = 6	6x1 = 6
Involvement of team members in the process	4x0,5 = 2	4x1 = 4	4x0 = 0	4x1 = 4
Alignment of rewards to personal preferences	3x0 = 0	3x0 = 0	3x0,5 = 1,5	3x1 = 3
Impact on relationships	5x0 = 0	5x0,5 = 2,5	5x0,5 = 2,5	5x0 = 0
Equity between team members	2x1 = 2	2x1 = 2	2x0 = 0	2x1 = 2
Performance measurement	1x1 = 1	1x1 = 1	1x1 = 1	1x1 = 1
Total	5	12,5	11	16

Figure 4: Weight Adjusted Scoring of the Alternatives¹⁷

Step 4: Selection of the criteria

As we saw before, if we want a project team to be motivated, each individual in the team must be motivated. To do that, it's very important to consider each person independently.

Moreover, Mihaly Nagy defined seven critical characters for a performing team¹⁸:

- Feel valued and appreciated
- Open and foster transparency
- Engage in Proactive feedback
- Highly motivated
- Manage differences
- Take ownership
- Be conflict free

Some of those characters are linked to the attributes we defined in step 2 such as: "Feel valued and appreciated" and "managed differences". These characters are linked to the attribute "consider individuals". This attribute is definitely the most important that we must take into account in our alternatives.

If the team members feel that they are valued, useful and considered as a human and not a number, this will definitely increase their motivation.

¹⁷ By author

¹⁸ Nagy, M. (2014, May 15). The 7 Criteria of high performing teams. Retrieved November 7, 2018, from <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20140515140819-10731091-the-7-criteria-of-high-performing-teams/>

According to this criterion, there is one of the alternatives that we can eliminate before going further.

The compensation plan does not take into consideration the team members as individuals. The plan is constructed for the whole team and is not personalized for each member.

We now have three alternatives remaining that we will analyse in the next part “Findings”:

- Team contract
- Monthly award program
- Individual development plan

FINDINGS

Step 5: Summarize

In order to find out which of the feasible alternatives is the best one to implement in a project team, we have first made a Multi-Attribute Decision Making analysis to compare the alternatives.

We have then identified which criteria is the most important to take into account when evaluating the alternatives. This attribute is “consider individuals”. Thanks to that, we were able to delete one of the feasible alternatives.

We have now three alternatives that we need to evaluate:

- Team contract
- Monthly Award Program
- Individual development plan

Here is a summary of the ranking order of our alternatives at the end of step 4:



Figure 4: Ranking of the alternatives¹⁹

We can see that one of the alternatives seems to be better than the two others, which have almost an equal score.

The next step is to use the additive weighting technique to be more precise, produce a ratio and then tell how much better or worse each alternative is compared to the others.

Step 6: Selection of the preferred alternative

As we saw in step 5, two alternatives have almost the same score: the team contract and monthly award program. In order to rank them, we need to make another analysis, using the additive weighting technique.

¹⁹ By author

Attributes	Step 1	Step 2			Team contract		Monthly Award program		Individual development plan	
	Relative Rank	Normalized Weight (A)			(B)	(A) x (B)	(C)	(A) x (C)	(D)	(A) x (D)
Consider individuals	6	6 / 21	=	0,286	3	0,857	6	1,714	6	1,714
Involvement of team members in the process	4	4 / 21	=	0,190	4	0,762	0	0,000	4	0,762
Alignment of rewards to personal preferences	3	3 / 21	=	0,143	0	0,000	1,5	0,214	3	0,429
Impact on relationships	5	5 / 21	=	0,238	2,5	0,595	2,5	0,595	0	0,000
Equity between team members	2	2 / 21	=	0,095	2	0,190	0	0,000	2	0,190
Performance measurement	1	1 / 21	=	0,048	1	0,048	1	0,048	1	0,048
SUM	21		SUM	1	SUM	2,452	SUM	2,571	SUM	3,143

Figure 5: Additive weighting technique²⁰

Thanks to this method, we now have a different score for each alternative and we can now compare them by defining how much better which alternative is to the others.

This is summarized in the table below:

Comparison	Team contract	Monthly Award program	Individual development plan
Team contract		$2,571/2,452 = 1,048 = 104,8\%$	$3,143/2,452 = 1,28 = 128\%$
Monthly Award program			$3,143/2,571 = 1,22 = 122\%$
Individual development plan			

Figure 6: quantitative comparison²¹

We are now able to tell that the Individual development plan is the best alternative.

If the project manager wants to increase the motivation within its team, he first needs to increase the individual motivation of each team member and the best way to do it, it's to implement the "individual development plan".

²⁰ by author

²¹ By author

According to Amber Rolfe, there are five benefits of personal development²²:

- Figure what you want to do
- Make clear goals
- Be motivated
- Get a better work-life balance
- Improve career prospects

This is in accordance with all we have demonstrated before.

Step 7: Follow up

One of the best ways to measure if the Individual development plan is a good method to increase the motivation within a project team is to measure the performance of the team.

The motivation is not something that we can measure precisely but we know that it has an influence on the performance of the team. On the contrary, the performance is a metric that can be easily measured. That is why we will use this metric to evaluate if the solution implemented in the organization has the expected effect or not.

There are several components in the performance. We will here use 5 metrics to measure the performance of the team²³:

- Attendance
- Helpfulness
- Efficiency
- Initiative
- Quality

An effective way to measure the evolution of those components and so to evaluate the motivation of the team before and after the implementation of the personal development plan is to conduct a Pareto analysis.

The Pareto analysis “enables the project control practitioner to identify the “significant few” from the “insignificant many” and use that information to prioritize which problems should be addressed.”²⁴

²² 14. Rolfe, A. (2018, January 26). Five benefits of personal development. Retrieved November 14, 2018, from <https://www.reed.co.uk/career-advice/five-benefits-of-personal-development/>

²³ Rise Staff. (2018, July 4). 5 Effective Metrics for Measuring Team Member Performance. Retrieved November 16, 2018, from <https://risepeople.com/blog/5-metrics-team-member-performance/>

²⁴ GUILD OF PROJECT CONTROLS COMPENDIUM and REFERENCE (CaR) | Project Controls - planning, scheduling, cost management and forensic analysis (Planning Planet). (n.d.). Retrieved November 17, 2018, from <http://www.planningplanet.com/guild/gpccar/risk-opportunity-monitoring-and-control>

The Project Manager can make a Pareto analysis before the implementation of the personal development plan, and another one a few months after the implementation of the solution. This will enable him to evaluate the impact of the solution on the attendance, the efficiency, the quality, the initiative and the helpfulness of his team members in order to have an overall idea of the evolution of the motivation of his team before and after the implementation of the solution. As an example, you can see below a Pareto analysis:

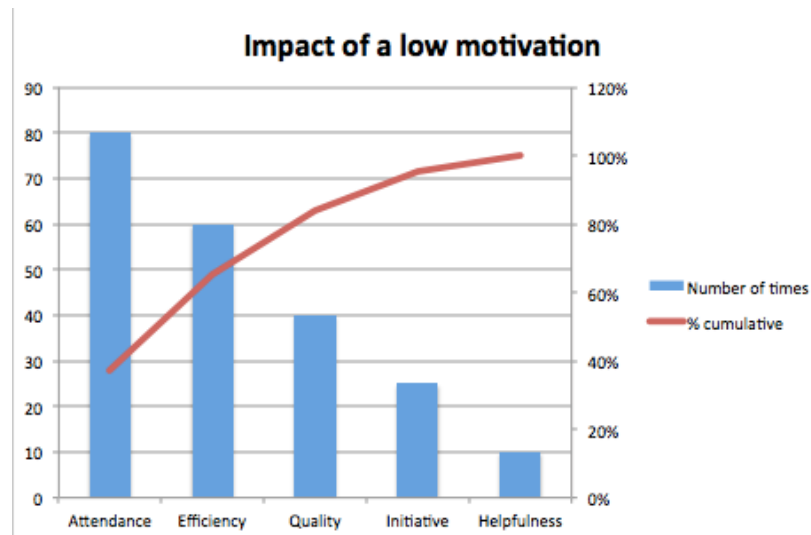


Figure 7: Pareto analysis before implementation of the solution²⁵

In this analysis, before the implementation of the Personal development plan, we can see that a low motivation within a project team had a high impact on the attendance and the efficiency of the team members.

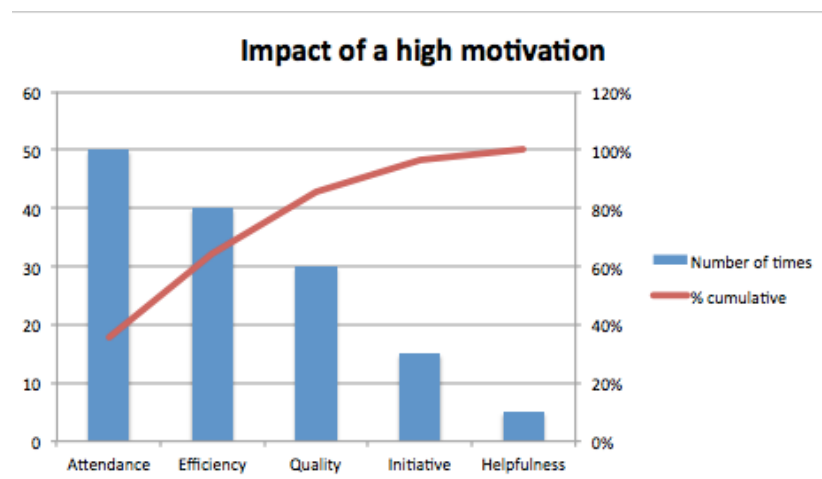


Figure 8: Pareto analysis after implementation of the solution²⁶

²⁵ By author

²⁶ By author

On the contrary, after the implementation of the solution, if the motivation of the team is higher, it has a less negative impact on the attendance and efficiency.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was to answer a question that every project manager asks himself or herself: How to motivate people on a project team?

A project team is built for a finite period of time so that it's not always easy for the project manager to create cohesion in his team and to motivate the team members.

After analysing what factors can cause a decrease in motivation in a team, we have found some solutions that a project manager could use. Thanks to an MADM analysis and the additive weighting technique, we were able to evaluate and rank the alternatives in order to recommend the best solution, which is to implement a personal development plan.

Finally, we have presented the Pareto analysis, which can help the project manager to control the benefits of the implementation of the solution.

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