

**W**e all have a powerful tool that will push us to our highest potential. This tool—which inspires us to do better, take action and follow our dreams—is motivation. It is the strong desire to do and accomplish something that we find important. Motivation is sparked through a need, such as a desire to change the trajectory of our lives. It's easy to think we're motivated enough to plot a course of action, but without giving a name to our need, our motivation can easily miss its mark.

### Defining Direction and Acknowledging Weakness

Let's say your need is to earn the year-end bonus. Once the need is identified, it becomes a goal. Here's where motivational direction plays out. Ask yourself what it will take to get that bonus. After some thoughtful analysis, decide a direction to improve your performance and be more committed to your goals. For some, digging deeper means recognizing that instead of complaining, we need to start doing some heavy lifting to reach successful outcomes. Once direction is defined, connecting introspectively

with our motivation can reveal our weaknesses. By knowing our weaknesses, we can identify what needs to be fixed, improved upon and made stronger. Being aware of weaknesses and knowing how to become patient with limitations helps us to extend kindness to ourselves. We are able to cheer ourselves forward and not make excuses, knowing that as we grow in strength and confidence, we're creating within ourselves someone who is a significant contributor to the team.

### Rising to the Challenge

Consider other leaders who have unintentionally posed a challenge simply through their reputation in excellence and accomplishment. For example, when other pro golfers are matched with Tiger Woods, their game improves. Woods has set a higher bar and his competitors—simply through their competitive nature—are more motivated to do better and stretch to their higher potential.

While seeking a higher level, avoid feeling comfortable and safe where you are. What would you find in comfort and safety? You would face no challenge, no journey and no

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# ASPIRE TO YOUR NEXT LEVEL

The role of motivation

expectations. The ugly result is that you unknowingly begin to settle for less than your potential.

As English poet Geoffrey Chaucer once said, "Nothing ventured, nothing gained!" If you don't step out of your comfort zone and venture onto a new journey, who knows what invaluable experiences you'll miss. And think about this: you won't be the only one missing out. Others in your circle will miss out too. Remember what Tiger Woods has done not only for the game of golf, but its youth as well. You can have an equally powerful impact. I hope you feel yourself being nudged from the blind protection of comfort and safety. Stand tall; be brave enough to feel the winds of challenge pulling you to reach your highest potential. Here are a few more tips to jumpstart your motivation:

### Growth Means Letting Go of What We're Holding Onto

The key to stretching forward to higher heights requires that we do not fall in love with where we're at. Be willing to end things. Aspiring to the next level requires ending something, leaving it behind and moving on. Growth won't happen until we are brave enough to end living as we are. If we don't let go, the unwanted result is that we'll get stuck. We won't become who we were meant to be, stagnating both our talents and abilities.

### Keep Your Eye on the Prize

In our frenzy for immediate growth and reward, we may get discouraged if we don't see the desired growth within us. Remember, Rome wasn't built in a day. Keeping your eye on the prize has to become a habit. Additionally, aspiring to your next level means weighing your values. If spending time doing a piece of work is worthwhile and moves you forward, then you should do it as well as possible. The results are immeasurable and succeeding, achieving, fulfilling and accomplishing shall become the foundation at the threshold of your next growth spurt.

### Decide Your Own Path

In his book, "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People," Stephen R. Covey pointed out that motivation is a fire from within. If someone else tries to light that fire under you, chances are it will burn very briefly. No one else knows you like you do. Therefore, don't let anyone else influence your decisions. Remember that you set your own goals. Finally, think of success like breathing air. Your last breath was important, but it's your next breath that's vital. Goals keep you focused on what's next, and writing them down keeps you on track.

### Choose Things Just Out of Reach

Don't think about what is a "realistic" goal. The problem with realistic thinking is that it is usually based on what others think is possible. They don't know you and your potential. Whenever you start a task with a mind toward the potential outcome, you will limit the actions required to accomplish that goal. Never put your success in a box. You'll suffer from small thinking, small outcomes and small opportunities. Instead, fall in love with your motivation, zest, drive, energy and the fire burning inside.

### When it Comes to Your Team, Never Settle for a Quota

Working to your potential will keep you highly motivated. That level of motivation and commitment can be contagious. Your leadership will motivate other members of your team. Understand that you will not reach your full potential without increasing your knowledge. You must train and invest in yourself to make yourself better. Anything you want to flourish in will require you to put in time and energy. You also can't reach your full potential holding on to where you are. Keep progressing and never give up on yourself.

### In Summary

It is important to not only give your goals a name, but try giving your next level a name. Could it be collaborator? Creative and can-do thinker? Whatever your level's name is, understand the gift of your motivation and how it brings your enthusiasm, eagerness, passion and interest. Recognize how contagious your spark can be to unite your team in a cohesive relationship. Create a team whose very strength and energy is contagious and leaves no team member behind. 🌟



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