

AMP Up Your People

Unleash the power of discretionary effort by using the three key motivational levers that drive people to go the extra mile: Autonomy, Mastery, and Purpose (AMP). **BY TONY O'DRISCOLL**



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For the last quarter century, people have been touted as the key source of capital in driving sustainable growth for organizations seeking to escape the curse of creative destruction.

While it is true that organizations are nothing without people, it is also true that the key to driving sustainable competitive advantage lies in tapping into a particularly powerful energy source that lies largely dormant within the human capital stocks of enterprise today: discretionary effort.

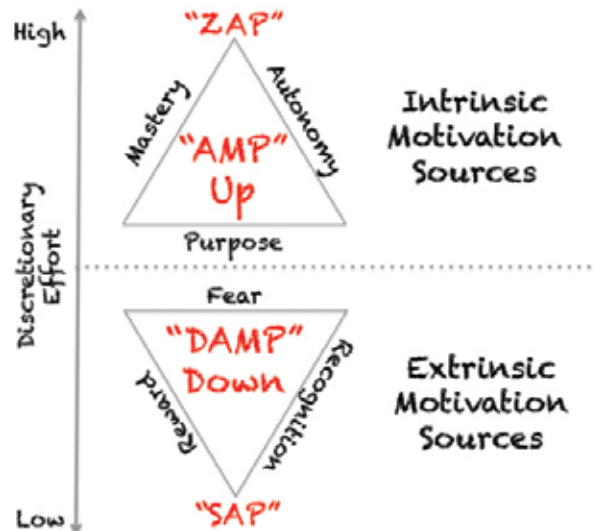
Discretionary effort is a source of energy that holds virtually unlimited potential to take an organization to the next level. Sadly, this power source often is unconsciously rendered impotent through a series of well-intended but ineffective set of motivational practices.

My friend and colleague, Jake Breeden, says it best: "Some people walk into a room and light it up. Other people walk out of a room and light it up."

ZAP VS. SAP

Leaders have the ability to "zap" people with energy that motivates them to go the extra mile or to "sap" them of that same energy. The traditional "carrot and stick" approaches most organizations embrace today undermine their ability to tap into employees' discretionary effort. Motivating effort through fear only leads to learned helplessness. Motivating by reward reaches a threshold where financial compensation no longer motivates effort. Motivating by recognition—while initially beneficial—often becomes overused and, therefore, ultimately is undervalued. Taken together, the extrinsic motivational levers of fear, reward, and recognition ultimately dampen employees' intrinsic motivation to make that extraordinary effort.

As such, leaders must learn to leverage a more sophisticated set of levers to unlock the energy of discretionary effort within the organization. My



colleague, Dan Pink, has, in his own inimitable way, succinctly decoded the three key motivational levers that drive people to go the extra mile: Autonomy, Mastery, and Purpose (AMP).

Leaders must create an environment of Autonomy as a more sophisticated complement to mere recognition. In addition, leaders must provide an opportunity for employees to develop personal Mastery as a more sophisticated alternative to mere financial compensation. Finally, leaders must tap into their employees' aspirational sense of Purpose as a more sophisticated alternative to motivating others by leveraging position and coercive power to instill fear.

"AMPing" people up is the key to unlocking the potential of discretionary effort. From an external perspective, profitable growth is the reward your organization receives for consistently delighting your customers, partners, suppliers, shareholders, and the communities within which you operate. From an internal perspective, if your employees are intrinsically motivated, they will go above and beyond to delight your stakeholders. And that will go a long way toward maintaining the viability and vibrancy of your business. **T**