

Out of the Box Coaching Newsletter

Ama et fac quod vis, by Clarence Thomson

Begin with the assumption, or at least the assertion that no one can motivate anyone else. If managers and coaches would act on this insight, we could save a lot of time and effort and avoid a lot of creative manipulation.

Brian Carney and Isaac Getz have a fun, fine book, *Freedom, Inc.*, with the subtitle *Free Your Employees and Let Them Lead Your Business to Higher Productivity, Profits and Growth*. They tell glowing stories of how companies switch from telling employees "how" to do their jobs to telling them "why" they work. The unifying theme is that if you create an environment of freedom, people will use their collective and individual creativity to be more productive than if you create a "command and control" environment.

Since the beginning of the industrial age, the model for corporations and schools has been that of the machine. Standardization, thinking at the top and working at the bottom of a hierarchy has been pervasive. This model, tweaked and peaked by the manufacturing sector, has made industrial nations wealthy.

But the problem of motivation has always been lurking. How do you get a human being to "be motivated" to do repetitious or boring or meaningless tasks? It begins in school. Parents don't just want their children to study, they want them to *want* to study! Managers have to "motivate" employees and the usual technique, although attacked on many sides, has been carrot and stick. Carney and Getz are the latest to attack the approach.

Schools, long in a symbiotic relationship with corporate America, begin the approach. Grades, standardized tests, classes and the crucial role of discipline all prepare students for life in the corporation. Four years ago I coached my 8th grade grandson. I told him schools require only three things: show up on time, bring all your stuff and follow instructions. Now that he's graduated from high school, I have to coach him how to get a life.

An Enneagram coach has to have a heart-to-heart talk about motivation. I recently wrote here to use better language, "What do you like?" instead of "What motivates you?" That's a good start.

The Enneagram is so helpful because we know what motivates each style. All Enneagram styles are constellated around what motivates them. A subtle problem is that the motivational style is often not clean nor understood by your client. Style Nines will describe things they like to do and what they describe will be real. But you have to keep probing until you find the common denominator – style Nines like peace and harmony, and the activities and people and environments they describe all have this desire in common.

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Ama et fac quod vis (continued)

At least half the Nines I've coached start with the request to find out what they really want to do. What they do will be important, but even more important will be whether they can do it in harmony and without conflict. Their Enneagram tag of *inertia* is really about not wanting to do anything that disturbs the peace – theirs or anyone else's. It's more complicated than that, but when you focus on motivating, that's what you have to keep in mind.

The rugged individualism of America blinds us to the importance of environment. I find it most helpful, when discussing motivation, to ask what kind of environment clients want. They usually present some form of the garden of Eden, or they're vague with arbitrary requirements, often stated in the negative: "I want a job in which the authorities don't..." or "I want a job where I'm not tied to a desk."

This again is where the Enneagram is helpful. A style One will like a job in which the rules are clear and expectations explicit. Then they can follow the rules and know when they've done a perfect job. They like clarity, structure and accountability. Suggest that environment to a Four or a Seven and watch panic set in. I'm coaching several coaches who are helping entrepreneurs and they're puzzled to get so many Sevens. Well, if the rules are absent, structure is not in place yet and there's no legal accountability, you can expect Sevens to show up with big plans and smiles.

While on the relationship between environment and motivation, coaches must constantly be aware of the style Three environment of the United States and, to some extent, all the industrial countries: motivation is assumed to be extrinsic, not intrinsic. It shows up in many political ways. People on welfare are assumed to not want to work. If extrinsic motivation is absent (they get paid without working), then they won't work. A good coach knows this is terribly wrong. If people can find an environment suitable for their Enneagram style, they will love to work. Yes, love. But when the cultural assumption is opposite, you'll have to ask a lot of questions to find out what your client likes – or in the stiff and misleading language of MBA jargon, what motivates your client. Note that when you phrase it "what motivates your client," you have the client passive and the energy coming from without. That's how subtle and powerful the destructive school/corporate message is.

When St. Augustine, the most influential theologian in the Christian tradition for 800 years (400 to 1200) wrote "*Ama et fac quod vis*" ("Love and do what you will"), he acknowledged, in the field of moral and spiritual development, that if you're in love with your life, you can trust that your behavior is moral. I'll add that it will also be productive in some way. Doing what you want to do is a personal triumph, not a violation of authority.

So whether you're interested in personal development or professional productivity, there is no substitute for knowing what you want and doing it. If you're murky in your vision or intermittent in your pursuit, we recommend you study your Enneagram style and, in a word from your sponsor, talk to a coach. The Enneagram is just information. A coach can help you with the layers of self deception for which our race is noted.

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