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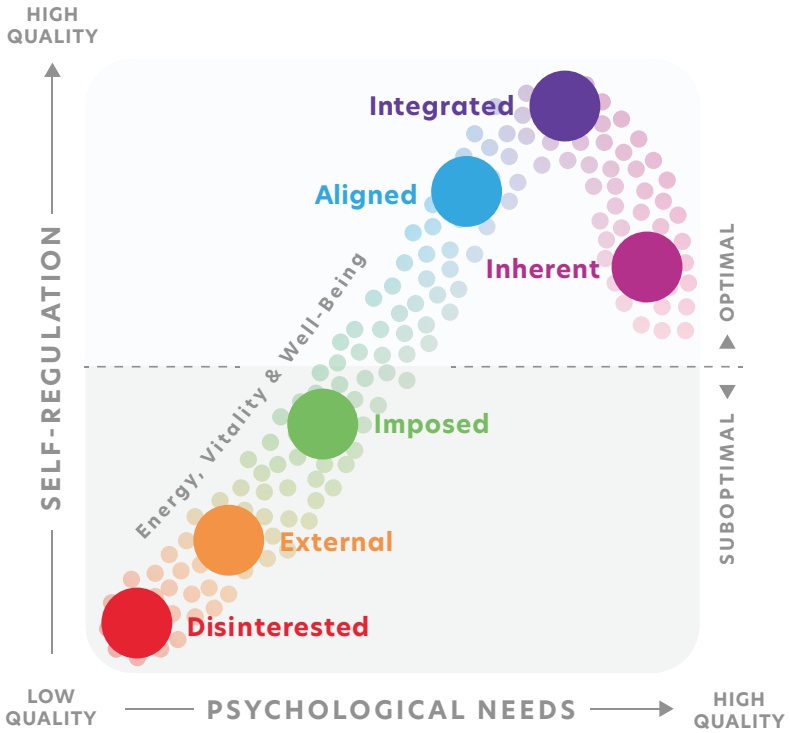
**WHY  
MOTIVATING  
PEOPLE  
DOESN'T  
WORK...  
AND  
WHAT DOES**

More Breakthroughs for Leading,  
Energizing, and Engaging

**SUSAN FOWLER**

FOREWORD BY GARRY RIDGE, CHAIRMAN EMERITUS OF WD-40 COMPANY

# Spectrum of Motivation®



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SECOND EDITION

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# Foreword

*by Garry Ridge*

**W**hen I stepped down as CEO after twenty-five years, I handed over the secret formula to WD-40's Multi-Use Product to a new era of leadership. During that time, our water-displacement lubricant in the blue and yellow cans with the little red top called WD-40 emerged as one of the most recognizable household items in the world. Warren Buffet regards it as a brand with one of the best competitive moats on the planet.<sup>1</sup>

Most people assume that WD-40's success is its secret formula. And they are right. But I believe it's our other secret formula that guided us to a market cap that's grown from \$300 million to \$2.5 billion and exceeded the performance of the Russell 2000 and S&P by a long shot, delivering a shareholder return of 1,369 percent without laying off a single person in hard economic times or during the COVID-19 pandemic. What is the other secret formula? WD-40 is fueled by an optimally motivated workforce demonstrated through our people's spirit, morale, inspiration, commitment, and desire to use their discretionary effort on behalf of our company.

It seems impossible that there is anyone left in the world who still needs convincing that a people-first culture is essential to the long-term success of any company. In the good years and the not-so-good years, it is the spirit of our people that makes us great. But we animated our hidden secret by building an inclusive and diverse, learning and teaching, and purposeful organization where our people succeed together while excelling as individuals. Some see human capital as an expense. We see our people, our tribe, as the essence of our organization. Our success comes from nurturing people's optimal motivation and engagement.

That's where Susan's work comes in. I first met Susan in 2001 when I decided to earn my master of science in executive leadership from the University of San Diego. She and her husband, Dr. Drea Zigarmi, taught the first week of the twenty-two-month program. Susan's research on motivation science was in its early stages. For the past twenty years, she has refined her approach and the Spectrum of Motivation® model with thousands of leaders from organizations in over forty countries.

Dozens of WD-40 Company executives have participated in the master's program, learning to master motivation for themselves and others. WD-40 Company's special formula for success aligns with what motivation science proves: the optimal motivation required for people to thrive and produce quality results comes from fulfilling people's three psychological needs.

### **WD-40 Company's Special Formula for Success**

Our job as leaders is to make sure we create an environment where our tribe members wake up each day inspired to go to

work, feel safe while they are there, and return home at the end of the day fulfilled by the work that they do, feeling that they have learned something new and contributed to something bigger than themselves. At WD-40 Company, we do that in three ways:

*We encourage choice.* We promote autonomy by helping people move from fear to freedom. We eliminated one of the greatest fears—the fear of failure. People do not fail at WD-40 Company; they have learning moments. We define a learning moment as a positive or negative outcome of any situation that needs to be openly and freely shared among the tribe. We celebrate learning moments.

*We deepen connection.* I'm convinced that the heart of our success is built on a culture of belonging. Our culture reflects a self-sustaining and interdependent tribe where members share common attributes such as values, knowledge, celebration, ceremony, and a strong sense of belonging. Belonging is not all “kumbaya.” It is a balance between being tough-minded and tenderhearted—where people feel safe and able to do their best work.

When other companies were experiencing the Great Resignation starting in 2020 (I really think it was the Great Escape from toxic cultures), our employee engagement average remained at 93 percent, including 98 percent reporting excitement about the company's future. If we had employee engagement like most companies have, we would need twice as many people to do the same job, which means that we would not have the financial results we have today.



*We build competence.* Our company focuses on learning moments, encouraging tribe members to try something new, ask for help, and learn from their experiences. But we also proactively build people's competence through peer coaching. Every leader is also a coach, responsible for promoting people's growth.

We know motivating people doesn't work, but we've figured out what does. I've witnessed firsthand how Susan's work, captured in this book, teaches you how to create a space where your tribe members will flourish. It takes dedication to create that safe playing field where people experience choice by moving from fear to freedom, connection through relationships protected by values and inspired by vision, and competence gained from learning moments. But it also takes skill based on a framework capturing the truth about human motivation and proven strategies leaders can apply daily so people can be the next version of their best selves.

*Garry Ridge currently serves as chairman emeritus of WD-40 Company and coaches executives on how to lead a culture focused on people, purpose, passion, and product through his company, the Learning Moment.*

## INTRODUCTION

# Stop Beating Your People with Carrots

**A** funny thing happened on the way to understanding human motivation. Psychologists decided to study animals. For example, you can watch Harvard psychology professor B. F. Skinner on YouTube showing how he motivates a conditioned pigeon to do a 360-degree turn by rewarding its behavior with pellets. It is fascinating to watch as he rewards the bird for doing what he wants it to do—he can get it to do almost anything. Behaviorists reasoned that this method could motivate people in the workplace the same way: reward people for doing what you want them to do, and you can get them to do almost anything. And guess what? It worked—or seemed to. I call it the Pecking Pigeon Paradigm.

Using metaphorical pellets as incentives to motivate people to do tasks they don't necessarily want to do has become common practice. A massive industry exists to sell and support complex schemes for motivating workers with compensation systems, rewards, contests, tokens, badges, prizes, and formal recognition programs. Pellets and more pellets.

Irrefutable evidence demonstrates the futility of the Pecking Pigeon Paradigm. In thousands of experiments worldwide, the results are the same: even though people will take the money or rewards you offer, the only correlation between those incentives and performance is a negative one. In other words, external rewards produce a disturbing undermining effect on the energy, vitality, and sense of positive well-being people need to achieve goals, attain excellence, and sustain effort.<sup>1</sup>

Traditional forms of motivation may appear to work in some types of jobs or industries. For example, if you promise people more pellets, they may produce more on the assembly line in the short term. However, it is unwise to confuse productivity with thriving and flourishing. Without thriving and flourishing, short-term gains tend to turn into long-term opportunity losses. The Pecking Pigeon Paradigm never worked the way we thought it would—no matter the type of job or industry. The simple fact is, people are not pigeons.

This book offers plenty of proof that motivating people doesn't work. But the benefit for you—and my primary focus—is an empirically based and globally field-tested approach to developing your leadership capacity so you can take advantage of good science.

### **We Have Learned How to Put the Science to Work**

Valid scientific and academic research requires four to six decades to make it into mainstream awareness. In the 1960s, the early appearances of the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) proposed by Dr. Edward Deci and Dr. Richard Ryan

were considered provocative. Now you find nearly universal support for SDT, thanks to Deci and Ryan's dedication to a layered and thoughtful methodology, groundbreaking research supported by thousands of dedicated researchers around the world, and bestselling books by Alfie Kohn, Daniel Pink, and yours truly.<sup>2</sup> This elegant and complex theory is now firmly established at the perimeter of mainstream consciousness.<sup>3</sup>

My aim for the past twenty years has been to understand, translate, and apply the best motivation science to improve the quality of our lives, personally and professionally. Oliver Wendell Holmes allegedly said he didn't give a fig for the simplicity that lies on this side of complexity. So I've strived for the simplicity that lies on the other side of complexity.

We've come a long way toward gaining that higher level of simplicity since the original 2014 version of *Why Motivating People Doesn't Work . . . and What Does* became a bestseller and was translated into fourteen languages.

This second edition benefits from years of application and feedback, a refinement of language and processes, and new success stories. I have had the privilege of traveling around the world refining the Spectrum of Motivation model, testing the skill of motivation, and developing the three leadership capacities that encourage choice, deepen connection, and build competence. I started Mojo Moments®, a company with dozens of global partners dedicated to teaching the skill of motivation to leaders at all levels in the organization. This edition also benefits from recent research revealing what we learned about motivation during the COVID-19 pandemic years.

If you read the original book, you'll notice a change in language and the introduction of new terms. For example, the

academic terms for the three basic psychological needs, *autonomy*, *relatedness*, and *competence* (affectionately referred to as ARC) are now *choice*, *connection*, and *competence* (with the blessing of Deci and Ryan, by the way).

### **You Still Need to Ask the Right Question**

Are you motivated to read this book? You might find this a strange question given that you have already read this far. I agree it is silly but perhaps for a different reason.

Asking if you are motivated raises more questions than answers. What criteria do you use to determine whether you are motivated? If I asked you to decide whether a colleague of yours is motivated to read this book, how would you reach your conclusion? How do you evaluate another person's motivation? What does *motivation* even mean?

For many years, my go-to definition of motivation was simply "the energy to act." It turns out my definition has the same fatal flaw as the other 102 definitions you can find for motivation.<sup>4</sup> Thinking of being motivated as having the energy or impetus to act fails to convey the essential nature of human motivation. It does nothing to help you understand the reasons behind the action.

Asking if you are motivated to read this book is simply the wrong question. What if I asked instead, *Why* are you motivated to read this book? I might discover that you are reading this because you take being a leader seriously and you are struggling with the motivation of a staff member. You are hoping this book might shed light on your motivation dilemma.

Or I might discover that you are reading it because the head of your department told you to read it and you're afraid of what might happen if you don't. These two very different reasons for being motivated generate different qualities of energy. Instead of asking if you are motivated, I need to ask a different question to reveal your *reasons* for acting.

An important truth emerges when you explore the nature of motivation: people are always motivated. The question is not *if* but *why* they are motivated.

The motivation—or energy and impetus—a person brings to any action can be *qualitatively* different. Some reasons people are motivated tend to promote well-being for others and themselves—and unfortunately, some reasons don't:

- Motivation that comes from *choosing* to do something is different from motivation that comes from *having* to do it.
- Motivation generated from values, purpose, love, joy, or compassion is different from motivation generated from ego, power, status, or a desire for external rewards.
- Motivation to compete because of a desire to excel (where the score serves as feedback on how successfully you are growing, learning, and executing) is different from the motivation to compete to best someone else, impress, or gain favors.

One of the primary reasons motivating people doesn't work is our naïve assumption that motivation is something a person has or doesn't have. This leads to the erroneous

conclusion that the more motivation a person has, the more likely she will achieve her goals and be successful. When it comes to motivation, assuming that more is better is too simplistic and even unwise. Motivation is similar to friendship: it doesn't matter how many friends you have but rather the quality and types of friendships.<sup>5</sup>

Imagine you are a sales manager. You wonder if your sales reps are motivated. You look at the midquarter sales reports for your two highest-selling reps and conclude, yes, they are both highly motivated. What you might fail to notice is that they are motivated differently. The reason one rep works hard is to win the sales contest, be seen as number one, and make the promised bonus. The reason the other rep works hard is that he values your products and services, his efforts are connected to a noble purpose, and he enjoys problem-solving with his clients. The science of motivation provides compelling evidence that the reps' different types of motivation have major implications. The quality of their energy affects short-term results and long-term stamina.<sup>6</sup>

Traditional motivation prompts the wrong questions: Is this person motivated? How much motivation does this person have? These questions reduce your answers to simplistic black-and-white, yes-or-no responses that fail to provide much-needed insight into the nature of the motivation.

But asking why a person is motivated leads to six empirically proven motivational possibilities. Appreciating these possibilities and the implications behind each of them enables you to take advantage of the Spectrum of Motivation model and guide your people to optimal and high-quality motivation.

## From Theory to Practice

Motivating people doesn't work, but this book provides you with a framework, model, and powerful course of action that does.

Chapter 1, "The Motivation Dilemma," explains why you likely feel frustrated trying to motivate people. You've been held accountable for attempting the impossible: to motivate the people you lead. You will discover the Spectrum of Motivation model, which captures the chasm between outdated approaches that depend on motivational junk food and empirically proven alternatives that offer motivational health food.

Chapter 2, "What Motivates People: The Real Story," reveals the greatest breakthrough in motivation science—the psychological needs required for human thriving. You will learn the true nature of human motivation, the benefits of tapping into it, and the hidden costs of continuing to ignore it.

Chapter 3, "Shifting Out of Overdrive," presents alternatives to driving for results that, ironically, lead to better results. You'll learn the significance of self-regulation in people's motivation—and your role in helping them experience high-quality self-regulation.

Chapter 4, "If Motivating People Doesn't Work . . . What Does?," introduces a fresh and much-needed new vocabulary and set of skills for motivational leadership. Instead of outdated leadership competencies that are focused on driving for results or incentivizing behavior, you'll learn three new leadership capacities that encourage choice, deepen connection, and



build competence to generate productivity without compromising vitality and well-being for the people you lead.

Chapter 5, “Rethinking Leadership Now That Everything Else Has Changed,” applies leadership capacities to thorny issues such as managing a hybrid workforce. You also learn a new concept called *psychological sense* and how your leadership can improve people’s ability to experience optimal motivation.

Chapter 6, “Leader, Heal Thyself,” shares the stories of exemplary leaders who realized that mastering their own motivation provided a breakthrough for applying their leadership capacities to effectively lead others.

Chapter 7, “Are Your Beliefs Eroding People’s Optimal Motivation?” challenges you to reconsider your own beliefs about motivation. For example, can you complete these common sayings?

- It’s not personal; it’s just \_\_\_\_\_.
- The purpose of business is to \_\_\_\_\_.
- Leaders are in a position of \_\_\_\_\_.
- The only thing that really matters is \_\_\_\_\_.
- If you cannot measure it, it \_\_\_\_\_.

These beliefs are so embedded in our collective psyche that you probably don’t even need to check your answers. (But if you are curious, you can take a peek at chapter 7, which is dedicated to exploring these beliefs, where they come from, and if they still serve you, your people, and your outcomes.)

Chapter 8, “The Promise of Optimal Motivation,” examines the potential of this fresh approach to motivation from

three perspectives: the organization, the people you lead, and yourself.

Admitting that many traditional approaches to motivation have been counterproductive—or worse, destructive—frees us up for new ways of looking at motivation. We need to realize that applying pressure to achieve results has undermined the outcomes we were seeking. We need to consider that promoting contests and competitions for the sake of winning is not the best way to encourage and sustain performance. We need to appreciate that—despite the practical need for money and people’s incessant requests for more—the focus on monetary rewards has obscured what truly satisfies people in their jobs. It appears motivating people doesn’t work to generate the type of results we need. Leaders need alternatives that do. It is time to stop beating our people with carrots and sticks and embrace different, more effective leadership strategies.

When it comes to motivation, we have underestimated ourselves—and perhaps even cheated ourselves of something richer and much more meaningful than pellets, carrots, and sticks. By falling prey to the Pecking Pigeon Paradigm, we convinced ourselves that this was the nature of motivation, and we bypassed the more human reasons we work.

The new science of motivation is full of promise. There are alternatives to the Pecking Pigeon Paradigm and the constant grind to provide more and better pellets to get people to do what you want them to do. It shouldn’t surprise you that people don’t find those pigeon pellets satisfying.

This book is for leaders with the strength to question traditional beliefs and common practices. It is for leaders who

recognize that outdated approaches to motivation compromise people's energy, creativity, well-being, and health—both mental and physical. This book is for leaders who want to cultivate a workplace where people flourish.

This book is for you if you yearn for a practical yet honorable way to achieve and sustain results that also brings out the best in—and for—people.

## About the Author



**S**usan Fowler is the founder and CEO of Mojo Moments, an international organization represented by channel partners and strategic alliances who recognize that motivation is at the heart of everything people do—and everything they don't do but wish they did.

Susan is on a quest to help leaders at all levels flourish as they succeed. Widely known as one of the foremost experts on motivation and personal empowerment, she gained her knowledge through extensive experience in business, advertising, sales, production, marketing, executive and lifestyle coaching, and leadership training in all fifty states and over forty foreign countries. Susan has worked with clients as diverse as AkzoNobel, Apple, Bayer, Bloomberg, Google, Harley-Davidson, Inspire Software, Merrill Lynch, Moody's, National Basketball Association, Pfizer, TJ Maxx, and Wavetronix.

The first edition of *Why Motivating People Doesn't Work . . . and What Does* became a bestseller translated into fourteen languages. Susan's *Master Your Motivation* is a companion

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

book teaching individuals the skill of motivation. She is the lead developer of the Ken Blanchard Companies' Self Leadership program and coauthor of three books with Ken Blanchard: *Self Leadership and the One Minute Manager*, *Leading at a Higher Level*, and *Empowerment*. Susan has produced the audio programs *Overcoming Procrastination* and *Mentoring* and coauthored *Achieve Leadership Genius* with Drea Zigarmi. She was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award for instructional design by the North American Simulation and Gaming Association.

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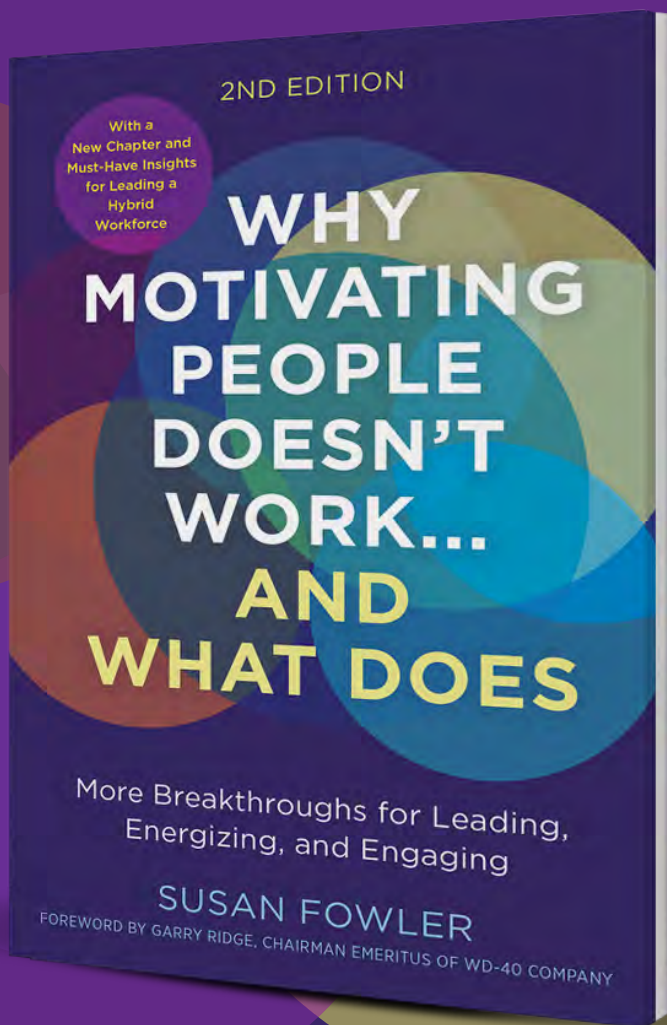
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