

Motivational Gifts:

A Leader's Edge for Building a High Performance Team

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Having an efficient and productive team of employees is important in any organization. But how do you know who in your organization will work best together and what jobs are best suited to those individuals? Knowing people's motivational gifts is a great start. High employee turnover and misunderstanding among employees and administrators can be an organization's downfall. The key to developing and keeping a high performance team is to make sure that each employee is in the job and team that is best suited for them. To do this, today's leaders need an understanding of what intrinsically motivates and satisfies different people.

There are seven motivational gifts found in the Bible that are vital in assisting leaders in motivating their employees. When we talk about "motivational gifts" found in the Book of Romans, chapter 12, we are talking about God-given inherent tendencies or motivations that characterize each person. Since these gifts provide the motivating energy in our lives, they have been called motivational gifts. The seven gifts are perceiving, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, ruling, and showing mercy.

Understanding these gifts opens the door for determining what intrinsically motivates each person. Armed with this information, leaders can understand how each person will react in various situations, how each person will perceive others, and how each person will communicate.

The Perceiver - tells you the right way.

The first motivational gift in Romans 12 is the gift of prophecy or perceiving. The Greek word for this gift is "**propheteia**." In the New Testament we can see specific traits and behaviors of the gift of perceiving. They are: 1) the ability to interpret scripture, 2) to reveal information to others, and 3) an ability to speak the mind of God.

Perceivers have a keen sense of right and wrong. Perhaps this comes from the ability to speak and know the mind of God. This is a form of discernment that we have seen in Christians and non-Christians alike. It is because of this sense of right and wrong that perceivers hold very high standards. They are usually extremely honest people who are extremely detailed. Perceivers can be trusted to keep track of their own hours, enforce company rules and policies, and use the company credit card. They tend to be perfectionists because of their high standards and often they become their own worst critics. In some cases, perceivers do not realize their gift and they can become very critical of other people or situations, which usually emerges as a pessimistic attitude. The primary function of this gift is to reveal information the perceiver has discerned. This information is not always positive and well received. As a result, perceivers sometimes appear blunt or inconsiderate of the feelings of others, when their real motivation was simply to reveal the information to help people!

As a leader, it is important to recognize that perceivers will habitually be too hard on themselves and need encouragement. In addition, they will also need to be encouraged when they do not understand the purpose of their gift so that this motivation can be channeled in a positive direction. Also, it is important that leaders understand the communication style of perceivers so as to help channel their messages to be favorably received. This can be a challenge.

The Server – helps sustain others on the journey.

The second motivational gift is the gift of service. The Greek word for service is "**diakonia**." Throughout the New Testament there are three specific behaviors or traits demonstrated. They are: 1) providing for the physical, material, or spiritual needs of people 2) taking care of the less fortunate in society such as the poor or the widowed and 3) helping in the distribution or collection of food, clothing, etc. to give to those in need.

We can see the same behaviors in a server today. They see a need before anyone else does and they reach out to meet that need. They are very cognizant of their surroundings. Perhaps this comes from their need to provide for others as seen in scripture. They have an extraordinary ability to recognize tasks that need to be done. Servers are the first to lend a hand. Often they work in the background providing services that others will never see. But this doesn't bother a server. Their motivation comes from knowing they helped regardless of whether or not they have been noticed.

What motivates a server is helping someone else. Because servers often take jobs in support roles, they are not usually in the forefront or public eye. A server is most comfortable being out of the public eye, working behind the scenes. They prefer to accomplish their tasks without an audience and therefore, their personalities tend to be more quiet and reserved than the perceiver's personality. Unfortunately, some people interpret the reserved nature of a server and the desire to work behind the scenes as being uninterested. This couldn't be farther from the truth! What others consider "behind the scenes," servers see as essential to making things work on the "front lines." Servers show their loyalty through action instead of words.

It is important that leaders stay informed of things "behind the scenes." Since servers communicate through their actions instead of words, a server can easily feel unappreciated when work goes unnoticed. This is also an opportunity for leaders to build rapport with servers who usually take longer to develop relationships.

The Teacher – tells you the right method.

The third motivational gift in Romans 12 is the gift of teaching. The Greek root word for teaching is "**didaskalia**." The scriptures illustrate how one with the gift of teaching uses sound, rational, and instructive reasoning to convince and help others to learn.

These behaviors are easily identifiable today. People with the gift of teaching are consummate debaters. It is how they convince and help others to learn. It doesn't matter if they are in the office or at home, people with the gift of teaching are constantly thinking on their feet. Teachers need to know the reasoning behind concepts or ideas. They do not take anything at face value. Teachers can appear argumentative while they are simply trying to gain further understanding. They tend to be intuitive and have the ability to synthesize ideas, which result in a constant mental flow of information. Teachers are those who need to carry pocket size tape recorders so they can record their ideas throughout the day. Their mind is always running and is filled with new ideas.

Therefore, it is no surprise that people with the gift of teaching need intellectual stimulation. They easily get bored with routine tasks. Teachers love to learn and keep their minds busy. They usually enjoy research and love the opportunity to share something they have learned.

The leader's challenge is to keep teachers focused. At the same time teachers need to be learning something new to provide the intellectual stimulation they need.

The Encourager – tells you what you've done right.

The fourth motivational gift is the gift of encouraging. The Greek root word for encouraging is "**paraklesis**." The scriptures show that the gift of encouragement will 1) edify and exhort 2) give peace to a troubled mind through speaking a message of encouragement and 3) bring joy and comfort.

Unlike perceivers, encouragers are more process and people oriented than results and task oriented. Encouragers have the ability to call forth the best in others through encouragement and motivation. Thus naturally, people with the gift of encouragement feel comfortable around people and tend to have extraverted personalities.

Anecdotal research shows that encouragers not only encourage others but also like to prescribe practical advice. Encouragers want to see people improve and succeed. They have an ability to bring new life to people who have lost their determination and feel burnt out.

It is important for leaders to have strategically placed encouragers throughout the organization. Encouragers are good with every personality and gift. However, because encouragers are considerate of the feelings of others, they can easily be offended when people are not considerate toward them.

Leaders should keep encouragers well informed. Leaders should also make them aware of certain personalities and attitudes that need to be changed in a positive direction and then strategically place encouragers in those "problem" areas. Encouragers love to "fix" things and make the world a happier place!

The Giver – provides the resources to get there.

The fifth gift is the gift of giving. The Greek root word for giving is "**metadidomi**" meaning to impart. The New Testament scriptures show that giving is characterized by: 1) being charitable or having a charitable attitude 2) giving much out of little 3) specifically contributing to the less fortunate and 4) giving of one's excess or bounty to those who have nothing.

The same behaviors seen in scripture characterize people with the gift of giving today. Income is not the only way to determine whether someone has the gift of giving. Givers also donate their time through volunteer work or helping others in some way. They are characterized by hospitality. Givers are people who love to host and entertain. Perhaps the easiest way to identify a giver is their generous and charitable attitude. Givers are best suited for customer service and hospitality roles. This generous attitude extends to making personal sacrifices of time and self. Givers make wonderful customer service representatives because they enjoy taking care of customer needs often going above and beyond to satisfy a customer. When the patience and generosity of others has run out, the true giver will continue to be gracious.

As a leader, it is important to identify the givers in the organization. People with this gift can be easily frustrated and become bored with their job if they don't have the opportunity to use their gift. They get the most joy out of knowing that what they have done or given has helped someone else. It doesn't matter to the giver whether the recipient knows who, what, or where the gift came from, only that it brought joy or aid to another. Givers receive as much fulfillment out of giving anonymously as when they are recognized.

The Ruler – shows you how to get there.

The sixth gift in Romans 12 is the gift of ruling. The Greek root word for leader is "**proistemi**," which translates "rule." The scriptures illustrate how a ruler will: 1) set good examples 2) provide sound counsel 3) give admonition and warning to the people of dangers they are headed toward 4) reprove for negligence and 5) rule with love versus rigor.

People with the gift of ruling demonstrate the same behaviors today. However, the behaviors of a ruler are similar to behaviors of the other six motivational gifts, which make this gift harder to identify. The difference is in the motivation. The objective of the ruler is to move everyone toward the common goal.

Like the perceiver, the ruler will give admonition and warning of upcoming situations. Like the teacher, a ruler will provide sound counsel and instructive reasoning to convince the people of the common goal. Similarly, the ruler is also intuitive like the teacher. This enables the ruler to look ahead for possibilities and dangers.

What makes the gift of ruling unique is the ability to see the "big picture." The ability to guide people and communicate to them regarding how to develop the "big picture" gives the ruler an assertive, take-charge attitude. This is, after all, what rulers do. According to the Strong's concordance, rulers "preside over and give guidance." So, naturally, rulers can appear bossy to other people.

As a leader, it is important to recognize this gift. Since rulers' intrinsic motivation comes from leading others, a good leader will give them the opportunity to do that. Leaders should find an area or department that lacks leadership and put the person with the gift of ruling in charge. This will not only support the organization's efforts but it will also allow more time for the organization's leader to continue coordinating things on the macro level.

Showing Mercy – picks up those who fall along the way.

The seventh motivational gift is the gift of mercy. The Greek word for mercy is "**eleeo**." In the New Testament, those with the gift of mercy are: 1) compelled to have compassion for people, 2) help people in misery, and 3) pity the ignorant and instruct them.

The same behaviors can be seen today. People gifted with mercy are the first to listen and sympathize when someone is suffering. They feel that sympathizing with others is a valuable use of their time. It is this ability to show compassion and mercy that enables the person with this gift to develop a large amount of patience. They are less likely to become frustrated when people repeatedly come to them with problems unlike those gifted in the other areas.

The gift of mercy will pick up those who fall along the way. Mercy is the only gift that will just listen without concern for why, when, or how. This gift is concerned with the condition of the person who is suffering or in trouble. This is why people with the gift of mercy are usually effective in roles that require compassion, such as physical therapists, social workers, or counselors, or where they can listen to the problems of others, such as human resources where employee concerns are addressed.

If a leader strategically places someone with the gift of mercy in such a position as mentioned above, it is important that this person be empowered with the authority and resources to help others. When someone with the gift of mercy cannot relieve pain or help others, they can become depressed and eventually burn out.

Like encouragers, people gifted with mercy have an ability to empathize with others. When others are not considerate of their feelings they can be easily offended. It is important for leaders to understand this dynamic. For instance, rulers who sometimes appear bossy will often clash with those who have the gift of mercy. Similarly, perceivers who can appear blunt and inconsiderate have the potential to deeply offend someone with the gift of mercy.

Each person brings to the organization at least one of these gifts. And as a leader, it is important to understand each gift as well as the potential of each individual. This understanding is essential and will give you the edge in building productive, high performance teams through positive motivation.