

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

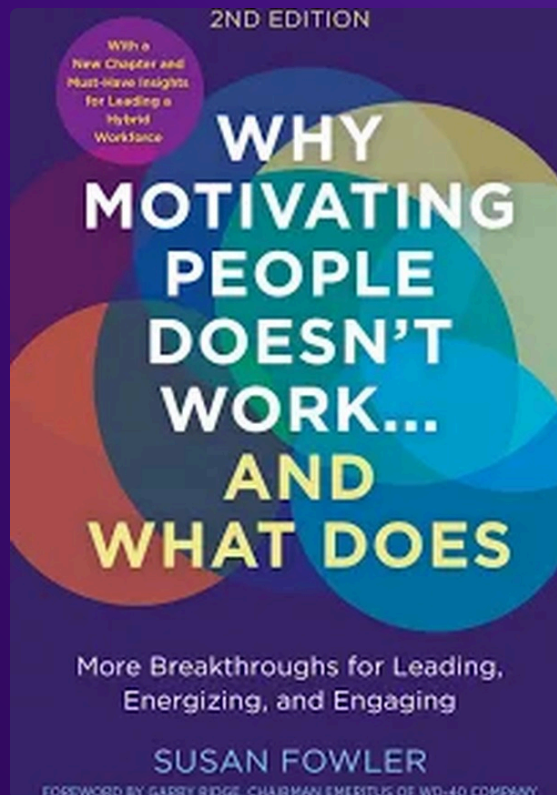
Study & Discussion Guide

More Breakthroughs for Leading, Energizing, and Engaging, by Susan Fowler.

SECOND EDITION

M@J@ MOMENTS®

Because we don't have to choose between
thriving and achieving.



A WORD ABOUT THE BOOK

Why Motivating People Doesn't Work... and What Does is designed to help leaders and coaches guide the people they support toward optimal motivation. The Spectrum of Motivation® model and framework described in this book have been vetted globally with leaders from hundreds of organizations representing dozens of industries. A bestseller translated into fourteen languages, the second edition benefits from years of application and feedback, refinements in language and process, new success stories, and recent research on motivation.

A key language update in this edition: the academic terms Autonomy, Relatedness, and Competence (ARC) are now expressed as Choice, Connection, and Competence, with the blessing of Self-Determination Theory founders Drs. Edward Deci and Richard Ryan.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

FOUR WAYS TO WORK WITH THIS BOOK



Facilitator-led

Use the four-week reading and discussion schedule below. Each session works well in 60–90 minutes. Assign chapters in advance so participants come prepared to discuss.



Participant-led

Assign sections to individuals who prepare answers to questions and share with the group.



Book club discussion

Book club meetings are typically 60–90 minutes. Questions marked with a ► symbol are especially well suited to generating lively conversation.



Self study

These questions aren't meant to test comprehension. They're invitations to explore your own experience with motivation. Choose the questions that spark something in you. The goal is insight, not completion.

WEEK 1

Foreword by Garry Ridge · Introduction: Stop Beating Your People with Carrots · Chapter 1: The Motivation Dilemma · Chapter 2: What Motivates People

Foreword & Introduction, Chapters 1-2

WEEK 2

Chapter 3: Shifting Out of Overdrive · Chapter 4: If Motivating People Doesn't Work... What Does?

Chapters 3-4

WEEK 3

Chapter 5: Rethinking Leadership Now That Everything Else Has Changed · Chapter 6: Leader, Heal Thyself

Chapters 5-6

WEEK 4

Chapter 7: Are Your Beliefs Eroding People's Optimal Motivation? · Chapter 8: The Promise of Optimal Motivation · Afterword by Ken Blanchard

Chapters 7-8 & Afterword



WMP refers to *Why Motivating People Doesn't Work... and What Does* throughout this guide.



Page references point to the paperback edition, not the e-book.



Book club tip: questions marked with ► tend to generate the richest conversations.



Free resources: videos, surveys, and articles at **MojoMoments.com**

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*People are always motivated. The only question is the **quality** of that motivation.*

Foreword

BY GARRY RIDGE, CHAIRMAN EMERITUS OF WD-40 COMPANY

Garry Ridge shares that WD-40's hidden secret to success, beyond its famous lubricant, is an optimally motivated workforce. He describes how the company's culture fulfills employees' needs for choice, connection, and competence.

- A** Ridge writes that WD-40 Company employees “wake up each day inspired to go to work, feel safe while they are there, and return home fulfilled.” What would it take to create that kind of culture in your organization?
- B** Ridge describes how WD-40 eliminated the fear of failure by reframing mistakes as “learning moments.” How does your organization currently handle failure? What might change if you adopted this approach?
- C** During the Great Resignation, WD-40 maintained 93% employee engagement. What does Ridge attribute this to? What does motivation science say about why people leave organizations? ►

Introduction

STOP BEATING YOUR PEOPLE WITH CARROTS

Susan introduces the Pecking Pigeon Paradigm, the widespread but flawed practice of using external rewards to motivate people, and explains why irrefutable evidence shows this approach undermines the energy, vitality, and well-being people need to thrive. She frames the central insight: people are always motivated. The question is never if, but why.

- A** What is the “Pecking Pigeon Paradigm” and why has it become the dominant approach to motivation in most organizations?

- B** Susan says asking “Are you motivated?” is the wrong question. What is the right question, and why does it matter so much? ►

- C** The introduction describes how motivation that comes from choosing to do something is qualitatively different from motivation that comes from having to do it. How have you experienced this difference in your own work?

- D** Susan writes that “when it comes to motivation, more is not better.” What does she mean? How does this change the way you think about motivating your team?

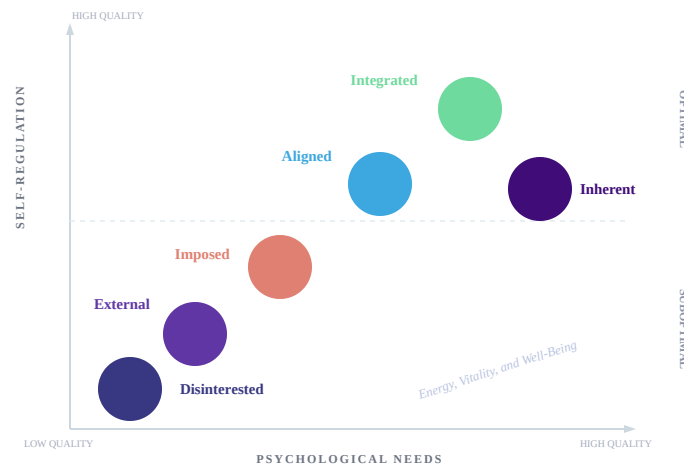
Chapter 1

THE MOTIVATION DILEMMA

Susan introduces the manager's motivation dilemma: leaders are held accountable for motivating people, yet science proves you cannot motivate another person. The Spectrum of Motivation® model is introduced, revealing six motivational outlooks that range from Disinterested to Inherent, and the distinction between suboptimal and optimal motivation.

- A** What is the motivation dilemma? Why does holding leaders accountable for “motivating people” set them up to fail?
- B** The Spectrum of Motivation® includes six outlooks: Disinterested, External, Imposed, Aligned, Integrated, and Inherent. Which outlook most accurately describes your own motivation at work right now? Which best describes someone you lead? ►

Spectrum of Motivation



A different motivational outlook can pop up at any time, that's why they're represented as bubbles in the Spectrum of Motivation model.

The Spectrum of Motivation® model is a registered trademark of Mojo Moments, Inc. 2012 and 2023.

- C** Susan describes “motivational junk food” and “motivational health food.” What distinguishes them? What examples of each do you see in your workplace?

- D** What role does motivation play in the appraisal process that leads either to disengagement or employee work passion?

Chapter 2

WHAT MOTIVATES PEOPLE: THE REAL STORY

The greatest breakthrough in motivation science: every human being has three foundational psychological needs: Choice (formerly Autonomy), Connection (formerly Relatedness), and Competence. When these needs are fulfilled, people thrive and experience optimal motivation. When thwarted, motivation becomes suboptimal. These needs are not earned. They are inherent to human nature.



CHOICE

formerly Autonomy

Susan changed the SDT research terms Autonomy, Relatedness, and Competence to Choice, Connection, and Competence. Why? Does the language change matter to you?



CONNECTION

formerly Relatedness

What does it mean to describe choice, connection, and competence as “foundational psychological needs,” as opposed to preferences or desires?



COMPETENCE

the third nutriment

Think of a time when one of your three psychological needs was thwarted at work. What happened to your motivation and performance? What about a time when all three were fulfilled?

A

How do the three psychological needs show up in the Spectrum of Motivation® model? What is the “ARC Domino Effect”?

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*You cannot drive
someone to optimal
motivation. You can
only create the
conditions for it.*



Chapter 3

SHIFTING OUT OF OVERDRIVE

Instead of driving people for results, this chapter presents alternatives that, ironically, lead to better results. Susan explores the role of self-regulation in motivation, why willpower alone is not sustainable, and how leaders can help people shift from suboptimal to optimal motivation through the MVPs: Mindfulness, Values, and Purpose.

- A** How are psychological needs the opposite of biological drives? What does that distinction mean in practice for leaders?
- B** Susan argues that willpower and discipline are themselves forms of suboptimal motivation. Do you agree? How has relying on willpower worked (or not worked) for you or your team? ►
- C** What is self-regulation? How do Mindfulness, Values, and Purpose (the MVPs) support high-quality self-regulation, and how can leaders promote them?
- D** What are the leadership alternatives to “shifting out of overdrive”? How might those alternatives generate better results than traditional drive-for-results approaches?

Chapter 4

IF MOTIVATING PEOPLE DOESN'T WORK... WHAT DOES?

Susan introduces three leadership capacities that replace outdated motivational competencies: Encouraging Choice, Deepening Connection, and Building Competence. These capacities give leaders a practical, science-based vocabulary and skill set for facilitating optimal motivation, without manipulating or pressuring people.



ENCOURAGING CHOICE

What choices have they already made? What choices can they still make going forward?



DEEPENING CONNECTION

How does this goal connect to their values, purpose, or something they care about?



BUILDING COMPETENCE

What skills or insights are they gaining, or could they gain, through this?

- A** What are the three leadership capacities? How do they differ from traditional leadership competencies focused on driving results or incentivizing behavior?
- B** Dr. Edward Deci expressed concern about leaders learning to facilitate someone else's motivation. What was his concern, and how does Susan address it? ►
- C** Think of a current challenge with someone you lead. Which leadership capacity (encouraging choice, deepening connection, or building competence) seems most needed in that situation? What would applying it look like?
- D** Activity: Consider a goal or situation where your own motivation could shift from suboptimal to optimal. Reflect on choice, connection, and competence for that goal: what choices have you made and could still make, how it connects to your values or purpose, and what skills or experience you bring or might gain.

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*Leadership starts
with the **person** in
the mirror.*



Chapter 5

RETHINKING LEADERSHIP NOW THAT EVERYTHING ELSE HAS CHANGED

An entirely new chapter for the second edition. Susan applies the three leadership capacities to the most pressing challenges leaders face today: managing a hybrid workforce, setting high-quality goals, delivering feedback effectively, rethinking tokens and gamification, and managing trust. The unifying concept is psychological sense: a person's emotional and cognitive ability to fulfill psychological needs and experience optimal motivation, thriving, and sustained high performance.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SENSE & HYBRID WORK

- A** Susan defines “psychological sense” as a person’s ability to fulfill their psychological needs and experience optimal motivation. How does developing psychological sense help people navigate change and hybrid work environments?
- B** Susan compares several CEO approaches to hybrid work. Which of these leaders best encourages choice, deepens connection, and builds competence? What would you do differently in your organization? ►

GOAL SETTING

A What is the difference between a high-quality goal and a low-quality goal? Why does motivation science say that even achieving a low-quality goal often fails to produce well-being or sustained performance?

B Susan changed the “M” in SMART goals from “measurable” to “motivating.” What does this change require of leaders? How does it apply to goals you are currently setting with your team? ►

C Susan writes that “suboptimal motivation plus optimal motivation still equals suboptimal motivation.” What does this mean for goal setting in competitive environments?

FEEDBACK

A What is the difference between personalized feedback and pure informational feedback? Why can even positive praise undermine a person’s psychological needs?

B Susan advocates for “flipping the feedback,” having people solicit input rather than waiting for it to be delivered. What would it take to implement this in your team? ►

TOKENS, GAMIFICATION & REWARDS

A Susan describes three poor reasons leaders turn to tokens: fear, laziness, and misunderstanding. Which of these have you observed in your organization? What are the costs?

B When, if ever, might rewards be appropriate? What are Susan’s three caveats, and what conditions would need to be met?

TRUST

A How does motivation affect a leader’s propensity to trust? How does psychological need fulfillment affect a follower’s propensity to trust their leader?

- B** Susan identifies a “dark side” where thwarted psychological needs make trust impossible. What does this look like in toxic workplaces, and what can leaders do differently?

Chapter 6

LEADER, HEAL THYSELF

Dr. Edward Deci’s caveat to Susan: leaders must understand how to shift their own motivation before they can hope to guide others. This chapter profiles four leaders who looked inward before working outward, and what they discovered.

Amber Barnes: on vulnerability as essential to connection, with herself and with others.

Dr. Beth Scalone: on using pure informational questions with patients, and finding the same technique works with her staff.

Brock Weatherup: on an MS diagnosis that forced him to let go of control and trust his team.

Karen Adams: on overcoming fear of change by publicly admitting her own fear of needles, then giving blood alongside her team.

- A** Why did Dr. Deci pause before endorsing the idea of teaching leaders to facilitate others’ motivation? What was his concern, and how does it apply to you?

- B** Amber Barnes says vulnerability is essential to experiencing connection, and that the more connection she has with herself, the more connection she can create with others. How does this challenge or confirm your own leadership approach? ►

- C** Beth Scalone describes using pure informational questions with patients who aren't following their treatment plan, and finding the same technique works with her staff. How might this approach apply in your leadership conversations?
- D** Brock Weatherup's MS diagnosis forced him to let go of control and trust his team, and he called the experience a remarkable return on his investment in people. What prevented him from fully trusting his team earlier? What holds you back from a similar level of trust? ►
- E** Karen Adams overcame fear of change by publicly admitting her own fear of needles, and then giving blood alongside her team. What does this story reveal about the relationship between a leader's vulnerability and an organization's capacity for change?
- F** Of the four leaders profiled, whose story most resonates with you? What would it look like to "heal yourself" as a leader in the way they did? ►

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*When beliefs shift, so
does **everything** built
on top of them.*



Chapter 7

ARE YOUR BELIEFS ERODING PEOPLE'S OPTIMAL MOTIVATION?

Five deeply embedded leadership beliefs undermine the psychological needs of the people leaders are trying to motivate. Susan challenges each belief and offers optimal motivation alternatives grounded in the science of thriving.

THE FIVE ERODING BELIEFS

- 1 It's not personal; it's just business.**
- 2 The purpose of business is to make money.**
- 3 Leaders are in a position of power.**
- 4 The only thing that really matters is results.**
- 5 If you cannot measure it, it doesn't matter.**

- A** Why are these five beliefs particularly dangerous? What makes them so resistant to examination?
- B** Select one of the five beliefs that most resonates with your own experience, either as something you've held or observed. How has it shaped leadership behavior? What is the cost to people's motivation? ►
- C** Susan proposes five alternative optimal motivation beliefs. Which of the alternatives feels most difficult to adopt in your organization's current culture? What would need to change?
- D** Research shows that even types of power a leader uses with good intentions (referent power, expert power, legitimate power) can result in suboptimal motivation for followers. Were you surprised by this? How does it change the way you think about your leadership influence? ►

- E Susan writes that “not all beliefs are values, but all values are beliefs.” What is the connection between your unexplored beliefs and your leadership values? How might examining your beliefs shift the way you lead?

Chapter 8

THE PROMISE OF OPTIMAL MOTIVATION

Susan examines the potential of this framework from three perspectives: for your organization, for the people you lead, and for yourself. She closes with the story of Drea and Alexa’s interaction after a volleyball victory, a moment that captures the essence of what optimal motivation looks like when activated by someone who truly cares.

- A Susan asks leaders two questions: “What do you want from your people?” and “What do you want for your people?” How are your answers different? What does the gap reveal about your leadership approach?
- B What does Susan mean by “opportunity gains” versus “opportunity losses” when it comes to motivation in organizations? What would your organization look like if leaders developed the skill of motivation?
- C In the story of Drea and Alexa, Drea chooses to ask a question instead of celebrating his own excitement. How does this moment illustrate the difference between activating another person’s optimal motivation and undermining it, even with good intentions? ►
- D Susan writes that what works is embracing your leadership capacity to encourage choice, deepen connection, and build competence. What does this mean for how you think about your role as a leader going forward? ►

- E** What is your personal promise of optimal motivation, as a leader, for your team, and for your organization?

Afterword

BY KEN BLANCHARD

- A** Ken Blanchard connects optimal motivation to servant leadership. Do you see that connection? How does the science of motivation reinforce or challenge your understanding of what servant leadership means? ►

RESOURCES & NEXT STEPS

Visit [MojoMoments.com](https://mojomoments.com) for free resources, including the MojoThriving™ eBook series, articles, videos, podcasts, webinars, and white papers.

Articles

Blogs

Podcasts

Videos

Webinars

White papers

EXPLORE FURTHER

- *Master Your Motivation: Three Scientific Truths for Achieving Your Goals:* Susan's companion book for individuals applying the Spectrum of Motivation® to their own goals.
- Mastering Your Motivation™: virtual or in-person training course for individuals.
- Mastering Motivation with Others™: virtual or in-person training course for leaders and coaches.
- Spark Your Motivation: an online experience teaching individuals the skill of motivation.
- MojoCoach™ Certification: a hybrid course for experienced coaches integrating Susan's motivation framework into their coaching protocols.

Book a keynote

Invite Susan to speak at your next leadership event.

info@mojomoments.com

Join a virtual book club

Have Susan join your team's virtual book club discussion.

info@mojomoments.com



ABOUT

Susan Fowler

Founder & CEO of Mojo Moments, a global company dedicated to teaching the skill of motivation to leaders at every level, and creator of the MojoThriving™ methodology.

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“Great leaders don’t motivate people. They embrace their leadership capacity to encourage choice, deepen connection, and build competence so people experience optimal motivation.”

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