

# 7 Steps to Successfully Motivating Project Teams

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Research and experience has taught us that when people feel a sense of personal commitment, responsibility and accountability to a project (or task) they are much more likely to be motivated to work hard. Further, when people are motivated they not only work hard but they are more likely to help and voluntarily assist their coworkers.

Most people feel this sense of commitment when they have actively participated in planning and decision making for the project. Also, people who have concrete goals tend to be more motivated to work harder and longer than people who just told to do their best.

Try these seven steps for planning and decision making to get the most from people:

1. Hold a planning meeting. When you are developing the overall plans for the project, but before you have made any firm decisions, hold a meeting with all the major team members.

Talk to your team and let them know about the project goals, general constraints, which aspects of the project have already been decided, and the decisions that have yet to be made.

Ask for suggestions, opinions, comments, and ideas about the remaining decisions. Be honest about requesting advice; people are quick to recognize token requests. Take notes on their suggestions and ideas. Later, try to incorporate as many as possible into the final project.

2. When you are delegating work assignments, instead of assigning the goals and deadlines, explain the general plans and then ask all team members to develop goals and deadlines for themselves.

Have them submit these for your approval. If you think some goals or deadline unrealistic or is too easy, meet with the person to revise it; continue to ensure that the new



goals/deadlines are arrived at jointly. People are much more likely to accept and feel committed to achieving goals that have set for themselves than goals have set for them.

3. Make sure that all goals and deadlines are clearly specified. Goals should be concrete and specific enough so that there is no doubt as to whether they have reached.
4. Throughout the project, whenever you must make a decision that will affect the work of several members, hold an informal meeting with people that are involved.

Tell them about the issues and problems and ask them for their opinion as to the best decisions. Do not present your own opinion until everyone else has expressed theirs or you bias their opinion.

Try to reach a group consensus. If consensus is not possible, try to incorporate as many of their ideas as possible in your final decision. Remember, participative decision making generates more motivation than autocratic.

5. Toward the end of the project, meet the other team members to discuss their reactions to the participative decision making and the concrete, participative goals setting.

Ask them whether, indeed, they did feel more motivated and work harder than they have when the previous situation was different.

Ask them what you might have done differently to increase their motivation further. Take note of their comments and suggestions.

6. After the project is completed, meet with your boss to discuss your successfulness in following a participative decision making style and in setting concrete, specific goals for the team members.

Discuss the team members' reactions to your efforts: the ones you observed and the ones they brought up in your meeting with them. Share your observations about how they were effective in collaborating with their coworkers.

7. After the meeting with your manager, write up a set of guidelines for yourself to follow the next time you are responsible for leading a project. These guidelines should be to what I have suggested here however, modified for your workplace, to reflect the suggestions of your coworkers, management, and tailored to your specific individual situation and needs. When the next project is assigned, before you begin leading, revisit the guidelines with your manager and negotiate with them to continue meeting periodically to discuss your progress.



If you consistently and effectively use these leadership practices you will find that your team members are becoming noticeably more responsible and will work hard to meet project goals. People will display a spirit of responsibility and accept accountability and be more involved in the work they produce.