

Building Motivation: 20-60-20



The Green Zone: Top 20% - High Motivation

- Highly motivated, self-starters
- Consistently exceed expectations
- Take initiative without needing prompting
- Positive, solutions-oriented mindset
- Often serve as informal leaders or role models
- **Caution #1:** *Do not expect everyone to be in the “green zone”!*
- **Caution #2:** *Be careful that you don’t burn these people out!!*

The Mid Zone: Middle 60% - Moderate Motivation

- Generally “meet expectations” - dependable, but vary in consistency
- Some motivation, influenced by leadership, environment, specific task, etc.
- Capable of solid performance with the right guidance
- Range from “fairly good” to “sometimes struggling”
- **Note:** *This majority represents the biggest opportunity for growth!*

The Red Zone: Bottom 20% - Low / No Motivation

- Low / No motivation; minimal effort
- Frequently negative or resistant
- Require high levels of supervision and direction
- Often struggle with accountability, deadlines, or teamwork
- Tend to avoid taking responsibility for performance
- **Caution #1:** *Can drain team morale if not addressed*
- **Caution #2:** *May require formal action - PIP, etc.*

Strategies for Motivation

The Green Zone: Top 20% - High Performers

- Give autonomy - let them own projects, make decisions, and innovate.
- Provide stretch opportunities - special assignments, leadership roles, details, etc.
- Recognize their impact - offer meaningful, specific appreciation (not just more work!)
- Invest in growth - training, conferences, mentorship opportunities, cross-functional work
- Ask for their insight - involve them in exploring options, problem-solving and decisions
- Protect them - help them set healthy boundaries so they don't burn out!
- Empower them - tell them to push back if they're overloaded - and then *listen to them!*
- Offer coaching - involve them in defining their own path forward.

The Mid Zone: Middle 60% - Moderate Performers

- Have realistic expectations - some may not get to the "green zone", *and that's OK!*
- Offer coaching - Ask *them* what could help - *involve them* in their own success.
- Set clear expectations - define what "excellent" looks like, show examples, etc.
- Match tasks to strengths - when work aligns with natural talents, motivation increases.
- Offer opportunities for growth - stretch assignments can be motivating for some.
- Provide frequent feedback - reinforce progress and adjust early when needed.
- Create *positive* accountability - check in as frequently as *they* need to stay on track.
- Celebrate incremental wins - build momentum with 'baby steps' toward success.
- Offer mentoring - but be careful - don't overburden the high-performers.

The Red Zone: Bottom 20% - Low / No Motivation

- Take Action! - do not just assume "things will get better".
- Take the *right* steps - call HR, use a PIP, know the right steps and take them.
- Document *everything* - establish a factual record of issues, actions, responses, etc.
- Get specific - clearly define the gap between acceptable performance and actual behavior.
- Provide structured support - give step-by-step guidance, not broad encouragement.
- Limit latitude - Tighten deadlines, check-ins, and quality controls to stabilize output.
- Explore root causes - consider skill deficits, role misalignment, or attitude / character.
- Set them up to succeed: Set short, measurable goals with quick feedback loops.
- Protect the Team - *do not let the non-performance linger and demotivate others!*
- Know the termination processes - be sure you know what to do if you need to.