



BEST PRACTICE

Motivation, Mentoring and Recognition

An important aspect of a supervisor's job is to motivate, mentor, and recognize the testers in his or her organization.

Motivation

Motivation has sometimes been defined as getting individuals to do work tasks they do not want to do or to perform those work tasks in a more efficient or effective manner.

Experience has shown that the motivation approach that works best is positive motivation. In other words don't attempt to motivate by fear or threats such as "no raises" or "termination."

Different people are motivated by different things. IBM at one time had a policy of supervisors asking their subordinates how they would like to be rewarded for a successful project. It is important to recognize that what motivates people is highly individualized.

The four most common motivators are:

- Personal challenge – A job task which will challenge the individual's competency and capabilities.
- Respect – Treating the individual as a professional.
- Rewards – Some tangible thing that an individual will receive if they meet specific goals/objectives.
- Recognition – Publicizing among peers and management the value contributed by the individual.

Mentoring

Mentoring is helping or supporting an individual in a non-supervisory capacity. Mentors can be peers, subordinates, or superiors. What is important is that the mentor does not have a managerial relationship to perform the task of mentoring.

Mentoring can occur in any of the following three areas:



- Career counseling – Discussing career opportunities and assisting individuals in accomplishing their career objectives.
- Work tasks – Helping individuals achieve work tasks by either imparting the necessary skills or working with an individual in completing a job task.
- Professional advancement – Helping an individual achieve professional goals such as becoming a certified software tester (CSTE).

The only benefit a mentor receives for becoming a mentor is the satisfaction of helping another person succeed.

Recognition

Employees are recognized at the end of each pay period by being given a paycheck. However, motivation of employees can be increased by other recognition means. People like to be recognized for the contribution they make to a project.

The only key concept in this part of supervision is that recognition is important. However, recognition should not be a significant monetary value because obtaining that recognition may cause individuals to circumvent controls and good practices.

Some of the recognitions that have been used successfully within software testing are:

- Recognition by an IT manager at a formal IT meeting.
- Group luncheons/group celebrations.
- Tokens of appreciation such as a coupon for dinner out or a movie.
- Time off if completing a task involved an excess of work hours.
- Lunch with the boss.

References

Guide – CSTE Common Body Of Knowledge, V6.1