

Building the Team of the Future: Do Employees Need a Purpose to Work For?

By [Natalia Fridrikova](#)

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Natalia Fridrikova
General Manager
Beagle Recruitment Company

Currently HR professionals in many companies face the challenge of improving employee efficiency, and one of the recent trends is enhancing employee commitment not only to results but to the process as well. We all know that professionals who are passionate about their work generate the highest profit for a company since they are engaged in corporate life and do care about their performance results. But are modern-day employees willing to work for a purpose and be purpose-driven? Or is that left in the Soviet past, and nowadays is money the only motivation for employees to go to work? In March 2012, we carried out a federal study that revealed that modern-day employees feel zest for work, but they want fair compensation for the work they do.

To begin with, we should specify what employees mean by "work for a purpose." More than a half of the respondents define it as love for their job; for 20 percent it means putting more effort in attaining better job performance, for 7 percent it is love for the company. While only 8 percent consider it to be irrational fanaticism, and just as little as 6 percent define it as a low-paid job. The respondents dispel the myth that work for a purpose is an equivalent to a low-paid job: It turns out that good compensation does not discourage enthusiastic approach to job performance, and it is true for most cases. 60 percent admit that they work for a purpose, yet they are paid a good salary. 22 percent are motivated by financial compensation and do not care about commitment to purpose: They work just for money. And only 18 percent work for a purpose while their salary is low, thus supporting the fact that nowadays a purpose may be still more precious than money. In addition, women care about the purpose they work for more than men do: Women find more enjoyment in their work and concentrate less on well-being.

Different regions of Russia also evidence an interesting trend: the North-Western Federal District turns out to be the most "money-oriented" since it is the region that has the largest

number of employees who are not willing to work for a purpose at all. Surprisingly, most of the employees who are purpose-motivated and, at the same time, low-paid, reside in the Central Federal District, while the majority of employees who are both purpose-motivated and well-paid live in Tatarstan.

Besides the geographical factors the employees' age also affects their willingness to work for a purpose. In spite of "ideological tempering" of the Soviet times, the 40 to 50 years age group has the lowest number of purpose-motivated employees: apparently, having lived through perestroika few people still believe in such ephemeral things. And specialists under the age of 25 show the largest number of purpose-motivated employees: young people are easier to get involved, and they are ready to lower their salary expectations in order to gain experience and be engaged in challenging projects.

For sure, modern business wants these people: They are committed to their job and to the company, they are self-motivated and deeply involved in the process. But they need continuous encouragement, and this responsibility falls on both HR department and the general manager along with the immediate supervisor, who create a team environment. According to employees, it is a line manager who encourages most of them.

The least contribution of HR specialists to this motivation process is seen by employees in Tatarstan and the Central Federal District, while the most is in the Northwest Federal District. And there employees feel the lowest purpose-driven motivation. It is interesting that more than half of the respondents believe that the companies they work for do not care about purpose-driven motivation at all. To make the purpose-driven motivation program effective, managers should prove it with their own examples, and also choose appropriate motivation tools. The major factor that encourages employees to work for a purpose is formed by challenging goals and projects which are particularly required to "drive enthusiasm" of Y-generation employees: They do need an "idea-driven" team as well as a creative and pleasant working environment. Middle-aged people note that they are highly motivated by a good salary: It is not until they are well-paid that they are willing to work for a purpose.

In order to build an "idea-driven" team, it is very important to identify such employees as early as at the stage of recruitment and competently "sell" a company and its ideas to a would-be employee. Obviously, when having and developing idea-driven employees in the team, one should keep in mind the related risks — ideas change, for example, and it may be difficult for an idea-driven person to adopt new ones. But competent management may control and raise efficiency, and idea-driven motivation may become a real lifesaver for a company during tough economic times.

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