

## **Going Beyond Motivation to The Power of Volition**

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Motivation is the desire to do something. Volition is the absolute commitment to achieving something. Motivating managers with carrot and stick is overly simplistic. People commit to action for more subtle reasons.

Volition, implies deep personal attachment to an intention. Volitional managers have a powerful need to produce results and are not driven by rewards or even enjoyment. Willpower lets managers execute disciplined action even when they lack desire, expect not to enjoy the work, or feel tempted by alternative opportunities.

Volitional managers do not wait for further information or external stimuli to get started. They focus attention and energy on information supporting their goals and block out contradictory information. They are not tempted by other opportunities or distracted by disruptions.

Motivation often crumbles at negative feedback, resistance from colleagues or lack of executive interest. Volition, however, is inspired by obstacles.

Three phases define the process of creating and leveraging volition: intention formation, the resolution to cross over to willpower, and intention protection.

When there's no choice -- in reality or in perception -- there can be no free will, no volition. Also essential is acceptance of personal responsibility. The decision to commit comes with the resolve to bear full responsibility. Companies are full of distractions that take attention and energy away from purposive action. Wilful managers modify their environment so as to be impervious to these distractions. For example, deliberately creating social pressures (public commitments, challenging deadlines or having relevant stakeholders monitor a manager's activities) can increase the cost of abandoning the goal.

When goals are simple, the necessary actions relatively routine and unexpected difficulties rare, motivation can lead to action. Managerial jobs, however, are rarely routine. Managers have multiple and often conflicting goals, many of which require persistent, long-term action. Their work context is fragmented, with high levels of uncertainty and opposition. Engaging willpower is a personal, almost intimate, process that cannot be triggered

merely through rewards.

People need a vivid picture of the goal in order to activate their emotions and protect their intention through the action-taking phase. Vivid pictures help simplify long-term goals and make them tangible. Later, if doubts arise, the pictures stimulate perseverance. Senior executives can help managers create such pictures.

Instead of encouraging questions like "What's in it for me? Is it reasonable?" executives seeking true commitment must push people to ask, "What's the downside? Does it feel right? Do I really want it?" That way, managers engage their emotions, lead to deeper commitment.

When enlisting people for assignments, most executives paint rosy pictures, downplaying obstacles and highlighting benefits. Those who foster deep commitment often do the opposite. They point out the difficulties involved. This prevents superficial commitment.

The best way to build effective organizational commitment is to build it bottom-up, on the foundation of personal ownership of and commitment to specific initiatives and goals. In the world of mobile employees, frontline entrepreneurship and constant, unavoidable organizational restructuring, it is that kind of commitment that corporate leaders must develop if they want to build a bias for action in their companies.