



Motivating Course Participants to Learn

Overview

This fact sheet briefly discusses methods for motivating learners to successfully integrate learning objectives into their knowledge, skills and/or attitudes.

Becoming an Effective Motivational Instructor

Effective instructors are able to identify learners' external and internal motivators. External motivators are easily identified as they are tangible and often explicitly and organizationally stated in the form of positive and/or negative consequences. Examples of external motivators include increases or decreases in pay or position, awards or disciplinary actions and praise from others. Internal motivators include the desire to gain knowledge for the sake of knowing, a desire for intellectual stimulation and a sense of personal accomplishment.

Effective instructors adeptly weave together external and internal motivators into the course design, and capitalize on the dynamics of interpersonal interaction to motivate learners. Although both motivator types are important, research shows that external motivators enhance short-term motivation while internal motivators are the most powerful for sustaining learner motivation over the long term. Instructors who exhibit genuine enthusiasm inspire and excite their learners about the subject matter, thereby developing strong rapport and easing interactions with learners (which is inherently motivating). By exercising genuine curiosity about the reasons learners take a course, instructors communicate care about learner needs and better understand how to help learners set and attain goals. Motivational instructors carefully construct course content, design and delivery methods to maintain learner interest, which increases instructor enthusiasm and improves learner/instructor rapport. The following table offers tips to identify external and internal motivators, how to combine and capitalize on these catalysts and tips for enhancing internal motivation.

Tips for Identifying External and Internal Motivators

- Determine military-centric external motivators (e.g., time-off rewards (72 hr passes); letters of appreciation for promotion points; military awards; proficiency pay; reenlistment bonuses; Post 9-11 GI Bill; and promotion [AMEDD Commissioning Program, or Green to Gold])
- Determine military-centric internal motivators (e.g., love of country; the warrior ethos; and privilege to care for Warriors)
- Ask learners to provide input to or direct course content and activities (e.g., provide options for topics on papers or essay questions on tests)
- Determine individual learning styles (e.g., predominantly visual, auditory or tactile)

Tips for Combining and Capitalizing on Motivators

- Ask learners what they seek or are committed to learn through this course and how it will help them achieve their work or life goals
- Plan lesson content to be foundational at the beginning with more challenging concepts, assignments and activities to follow
- Employ multimedia that stimulates various senses and appeal to the targeted audience
- Use lecture, small group discussions, demonstrations, videos, guest speakers, blogs, etc. to capture and maintain learner curiosity
- Return assignments promptly with comments as to what was done well and offer opportunities for further development

Tips for Using Interpersonal Motivation

- Compliment learners when they have met or exceeded expectations to encourage them to continue to strive
- Use theories of motivation to support learning activities (e.g., Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Classical Conditioning; Erikson or Piaget, etc.)
- Use of contests or competitions can stimulate learners to keep up with classmates (e.g., honor roll, group/team goal-based activities)
- Encourage learner collaboration to catalyze group efforts (e.g., a triage scenario that challenges learners to work as an interdisciplinary team to effectively organize patient care)
- Encourage commitment to another person or a mission that the learner is obligated or desires to perform (e.g., Military healthcare personnel are dedicated to learn the latest health care information based on evidence based practice so that they can provide the best clinical care for Warriors.)

Summary: Why Motivational Methods Matter

Optimal learning occurs when instructors effectively motivate learners to improve, change or expand knowledge, skills, or attitudes. Instructors contribute to this process by applying proven practices. Learners are the beneficiaries as they fulfill their learning objectives and advance in their program of study.

About the DCoE Training & Education (T&E) Directorate

The Training & Education (T&E) Directorate's mission is to assess training and educational needs in order to identify and promote effective instructional material for stakeholders resulting in improved knowledge and practice of PH and TBI care.