



## Motivation - the 3C's



## About this guide

If you've read guides on motivation and performance already, you'll know that motivation is closely linked to performance – in fact, it's the glue that holds performance together.

If we are high in motivation, chances are we'll be performing well on whatever it is we're motivated to do! But what determines and dictates motivation? Well, there are plenty of things – what we're doing, how we're feeling, how physically rested and ready we are. But fundamentally, there are three factors that underpin motivation – control, confidence and connectedness. They're at the heart of the performance pie – the 3C's in the core.

Reading this guide will help you understand more about motivation and what underpins it, and get you thinking about what you can do to increase motivation.

## Self-Determination Theory

One of the most widely researched – and accepted – theories of motivation was put forward by a couple of guys called Edward Deci and Richard Ryan in the 1980s. They said that for someone's behaviour to be highly self-motivated and self-determined (to have high intrinsic motivation), that person needs to feel like they're in control, confident and connected (they used slightly different words in their theory, but we adapted them to the 3C's, as we like stuff that's simple and easy to remember). Control relates to how much choice and influence you feel you have over stuff that concerns you (for example, tasks you have to do in your role). Confidence relates to whether you feel you have the ability to perform a task successfully in a specific setting. Connectedness relates to the quality of relationships you have with people that matter, and how aligned and in tune you feel to the purpose and meaning of what you're doing (or the values of an organisation).



Deci and Ryan said that as human beings, we have a fundamental need to feel in control over what we're doing, confident in our abilities, and connected to others and a higher purpose. It's such a strong urge that we'll naturally gravitate to doing things where we feel those things. Think about how you make your choices about what you do – in work, or in your downtime – and see if the 3C's are a factor in how you made those choices if you want to get a personal handle on that. Most people see that 3C's really do drive them in what they choose to do! Deci and Ryan also said that the more we feel in control, confident and connected, the more motivated (internally) we feel, and as a consequence, mental and physical health improves and performance levels are more consistent, intense and sustained. We're pretty happy with Deci and Ryan's theory – there's been literally thousands of research studies on it over the past 30 years, which have shown good universal support for it.

## **Let's have a deeper dive now into each of these 3C's:**

### **Control**

We find that people easily misunderstand the meaning of control. Control isn't about 'being a control freak', being independent, detached or selfish. It's not related to having control of others or the environment in which we work, live or play. Control is about choice and choices - choosing what we do and how we do it. The more sense of choice we have the higher levels of interest, excitement and confidence we are likely to feel. We tend to perform at our best when we have choice over every aspect of a task, i.e. choice over what will be done and how it will be done. It is often the case that we can't choose what we do, but we can choose how we do it. Even when told what we must do, when to do it and how to do it, we can still have a sense of choice in terms of our mental approach to that situation – i.e. to choose to be positive or negative. So remember, we always have a choice in how we interpret a situation. There's a great book which really illustrates that. It's by Viktor Frankl, and it's called 'Man's Search for Meaning'. Frankl was incarcerated in Nazi concentration camps during the second world war. His compelling story illustrates how, despite having virtually no control over what he had to do, he still retained full autonomy over his response and his attitude in that hopeless situation. There's a great phrase in elite sport which is 'control the controllable'. It involves putting time and energy into things that you can control, and reducing the energy you spend on stuff you can't. Understanding what events we can control and those we can't is vital to elite performance. A sense of choice tends to mobilize our energies, while demands and constraints tend to sap them. So maximising and exercising our sense of control is important.

### **Confidence**

The research tells us that the more confident people are, the better their quality of motivation and the better they are likely to function and perform as a consequence. The reverse applies equally – low confidence is likely to result in half hearted, unsustainable and inconsistent effort at best – in some cases it results in the complete absence of effort. At the highest level of performance, confidence can determine outcome i.e. success or failure. Self-confidence is to expect success when we perform. It is important to note that global confidence is a general sense of confidence across different tasks and environments – this is not as relevant to our

coaching work as situational confidence to performance. Your confidence on a specific task is closely related to how you've performed on that task before (and how you think you're performed); how ready you feel (is your pie full?!); the encouragement and persuasion of others; and seeing role models achieve success (other people we think we're similar to). Our emotions and feelings – and particularly how apprehensive or nervous we feel – will also be related to confidence.

## **Connectedness**

Connectedness is perhaps the most obvious of our basic needs and it is therefore ironic that it is perhaps the one most overlooked. It reflects the sense of unity with others and relationships not based on achievement of outcomes but on mutual trust, support and understanding. When we feel connected to others – when we have relationships that are characterised by high trust, mutual support and understanding – we are likely to feel more motivated and engaged. We sometimes think that the images we're often surrounded by in business of individuals whose strength is characterised by a sense of independence, selfishness and ruthlessness are really unhelpful in delivering that message that connectedness is vital for motivation and performance! Connectedness also refers to how aligned we feel to someone or someone else's values and purpose. So, for example, if you work for an organisation whose values, principles and goals (and strategy to achieve those goals) are closely matched to yours and your ideas, you'll feel more connected to it, and hence more motivated to perform.

## **So what?**

So – what does all this mean for you? Well, on one level, if you can maximise the sense of control you have, how confident you feel, and how connected you are to others and the higher purpose, you'll feel more motivated, perform better, and enjoy some benefits to your physical and mental health. Knowing this stuff might also help you check in to how you feel about doing certain things, and to be able to understand better when you feel like you're not motivated, not performing, or not enjoying something. In turn, that might help you decide what you're going to do about it (whether you're going to keep doing that thing, do it a different way, or look to fuel one or more of the 3C's). It also helps illustrate that your motivation is largely in your hands. It's not a 'given' or static phenomenon – it's changeable, and by knowing what underpins it, you can take control of your own motivation and do some things to fuel it (which are actually fairly easy and straightforward). For more information, dip into the 'maximising your motivation' content.

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