LEADING GEEKS
How to Manage and Lead People Who Deliver Technology
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11 Ways to Motivate Geeks

1. ***Select Wisely.*** The most important thing a leader can do to encourage intrinsic motivation is to assign work to geeks who have an interest in the work.

2. ***Manage Meaning.*** The second most important thing a leader can do is to give a geek some sense of the larger significance of their work. Without a sense of meaning, motivation suffers and day-to-day decisions become difficult. It is easy for geeks to become mired in the ambiguous world of questions, assumptions, and provisional facts characteristic of technical work.

3. ***Communicate Significance***. It is very important for managers to be explicit about the role a new technology plays in a business otherwise some will misunderstand the centrality of their work and others may develop delusions of grandeur.

4. ***Show Career Path***. Many geeks have only a vague sense that there's more to advancing their careers than just acquiring new technical knowledge. Be specific about what competencies a geek must demonstrate in order to advance their career.

5. ***Projectize.*** Projects help turn work into a game and geeks love games with objectives that delineate both goals and success criteria.

6. ***Encourage Isolation.*** While geeks need free flowing communication within their own work groups, collective seclusion provides fertile soil for motivation, cultivating cohesion and concentration.

7. ***Engender External Competition***. Healthy competition can enhance group cohesion.

8. ***Design Interdependence.*** When a colleague is relying on you to complete your work, it's much easier to put in the extra effort for them than it is just to meet some externally imposed deadline.

9. ***Limit Group Size.*** As group size grows, colleagues become less individuals and more an undistinguished mass of anonymous faces. The larger the workgroup, the less conducive the environment for developing intrinsic motivation.

10. ***Control Resource Availability.*** Whether thinking about money, people, time, or training, there's a delicate balance of resources that will encourage a group's enthusiasm. Too many resources or too few can diminish interest in the work.

11. ***Offer Free Food. . .Intermittently.*** Never underestimate the power of free food. I can't offer any rational explanation, but for geeks, even those making sizeable incomes, free food offers major support to motivation development, far more than an equivalent amount of cash.