

Transcription - Case Study: Working With A Demotivated Team

Welcome back, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec. We have a case study for you this week that Fulyana is going to be introducing, it's about being a new manager to an unmotivated team.

So this case study, the new manager is new to the organization as well as to the team. And the person is saying, I am so excited to join this great company and to have an opportunity to lead one of the teams, which is a strong and good team. So positive, reputation wise.

After being in the job for a couple of months, this person has found that the team is unmotivated, it became obvious to him. They're tired with constant change and always being given major challenges, one after the other. He looked into it, he talked to all the team members, he also talked to senior management and other stakeholders. It appears that they've all got good reasons for that, how they're feeling and how they are. The truth is, they've been through a lot. And he's now saying, how do I turn that around? So it's all justified, how do I turn it around and he's looking for some ideas and tips.

Well, I'd like to start by saying congratulations, because getting to this point so quickly and covering the time, finding out what is it rather than think, oh gosh, I thought they're a good team and look at them, something is not right. He has actually done the first step, find out what is it. He knows what it is now, knows that it's across the board. So now it is, how to tackle that. That has to be done based on the organization direction, the organization. So from senior management, what are all these changes and how come these priorities and these people are working crazy hours, they're burning out basically. And we keep changing. So we need to discuss it at senior management level, about our strategy, where we're going and what our priorities are and make them real.

The next thing is, the solution has to come from the team, with the leadership of this person. Bring them together and say, all right then, this is where we're supposed to be going as an organization, so the view, the heart level view. And then this is our part of it to deliver. What do we need and what do we have, what don't we have? And it could be human resources, could be technology, it could be that we don't need full-time resources.

We need some expertise or whatever. That team would know more than anyone, what's needed, because from what he said, they are good people, a good team, being loyal to the organization. So they would have some answers. And as a leader then, it's his job to negotiate for the resources and to do the real pushback. The pushback is, this is where we're going to go, but realistically for the next 12 months, these are the priorities. We do it in stages, stage two, three, whatever and be strong with that. And I think the first reality, if this whole team and everybody agrees, there's a big flight risk and then the organization will achieve nothing. So that's, to me, is that leadership protecting the team, but also firstly work with them about how do we do it and what do we need to do it?

Can I ask whether, now that he's done that investigation, whether he has reported back to the team and back to the senior management and stakeholders about the results of that research?

He has actually done all the communication and everybody knows across the board, the whole full circle, that he's asking and that's the conclusion. It's consistent, the conclusion is consistent, which is good because sometimes it's not that, you know, like that.

So I think then that the approach has to be, what Fulyana outlined, is it's about looking at, looking to the team, for the resolution. But in looking to the team for the resolution, because they are unmotivated, because they're at this low as a result of everything that's happened beforehand, it needs some sort of injection of a paradigm shift in the solutions. So it's not about what we haven't been able to get, what hasn't worked in the past, that the resources, the budgetary resources, the human resources, are restricted, all of those sorts of things. It's looking at, okay, we've done the analysis and these are the things that need to be done. These are the constraints we have, how else can we do it? Who is going to investigate whether there is another way of doing this, another way of resourcing it, however that is? There's so much more available to us these days, just simply in terms of, you know, if I was doing research into something simple, like putting things on eBay, used to be that you would have to go through the search engine, then you would have to look at half a dozen products to see if it was similar to the thing that you were selling so you get a good description of it or all of that sort of thing. And then you had to have some marketing know-how to actually write the words down, to do the copy for that, to make it an interesting ad. Well, these days, of course, you can just go to AI, whichever one you use and you can say, I'm doing an eBay listing for this product. Write me the listing in the style of and pick someone who is a marketing guru. Within seconds, you'll have the words, you can review them, you can adjust them and put them up. So a lot of the time, that's a free resource. And in terms of time, it's going to take a lot less time than having some human resource do that. It's not about replacing people. It's about efficiency and about working within the systems that you've got. But what it also does in that environment is that gives you something new to try out, gives you something that might be a spark of, oh, this is interesting, this is different, haven't tried this before, and whether you're unsure about AI and where it's going or not, it is a way of resourcing that is far more cost efficient than anything else you can think of at this point in time.

Yes, you do still have to review it. And that's a good thing, because you're learning as you're reviewing it. You're thinking about how you would, in terms of the prompts, you know, it's the question that you asked the AI to get the answer. You're thinking about your communication. So there's all sorts of bonuses in that scenario. I know if I talk about floral art again, I'm using AI at the moment to do some analysis of designs. And I use the word analysis very specifically because in the physical floral art world, we will talk about design assessment. When I went to AI and said, please assess this design, this image, based on the principles and elements of design, it couldn't do it. It just simply said, I can't do it. When I looked at it and did a few more prompts, it was the word "assess" that it couldn't understand, that it couldn't relate to what I was asking it to do. So it makes you think about what you're actually asking. It's education, in and of itself, for your communication. And you know, I've been communicating for a long, long time. If I'm still learning, then you can too.

My feeling with this whole case study is about taking the paradigm shift. You've done all of the work. You know what all the elements are that are creating this situation. Take a step away, do something completely different to address it, because all of the usual ways of managing it

are not going to improve the situation. You've tried that. You know that that's the case. You know that there's all these other influences that are holding you back from moving the team forward. So you've got to do something that's completely outside of the usual management system.

One of the things too, in addition to all of that, is one big step, is now you are the immediate leader. You asked, you listened, and you're coming up with a new way with them and you're working with senior management. So there's an acknowledgement of the fact that yes, they have been working hard. Yes, they are burning out. Yes, now we're doing something about it. I think what would be also helpful, is if that is also recognized publicly to the team by the manager's manager. And that's saying now we hear yes, I know you've been through a lot in this situation. We all know why, because of X, Y and Z. But right now we appreciate what you've been through. We acknowledge it and we're working now to do it with you right and to do it differently.

Even if it is that the senior management and the stakeholders meet with the team and throw themselves, you know, make themselves vulnerable, say yes, we acknowledge that all of these constraints and all of these issues have brought you to a point where we're really struggling. We need your help to bring it around. And yes, you've always helped us in the past and you've always met everything we've asked you to do, you've done. That's why we trust you to come up with a solution that will work for you and tell us what that is. And if it means that we have to change what we're doing, well, yeah. So it's where to say that we are committed to whatever solution you think is going to work for this team. They actually get that physical, you know, it's about yes, human to human interaction. (Exactly) About knowing that it's, you know, it's not just third hand, I'll talk to senior management and they said yes. They have to see it, see it and hear it and feel it in the room and it doesn't have to be a long meeting, it doesn't have to be confrontational, but it certainly has to be an opportunity for the senior management to start to put their hands up and say, we acknowledge that you've been brought to this, you've been brought to this point and we want it resolved because we value you as a team. (Yes.) We've always appreciated what you've done for us as a team and so we know that it has to be addressed. It's an important issue. It can't be swept away. We have to fix it together. We have to fix it and talk about that together and be genuine about it.

Yes.

All right, well, there we have our views on turning this situation around with our unmotivated team. I hope that that has helped you think about some ways that you can address it if that's your situation as well. For now, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec.