

Motivational Interviewing

Helping People Change

January 2023

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Introduction

Motivational Interviewing is most often used in business when a co-worker or mentee is hesitant to embrace a new idea. Whether it's changing to a new procedure at work or sticking to a diet, you can't force anyone to change. You can give logical arguments and talk until you are blue in the face, but more often than not, you will walk away exhausted without any real change being affected. The problem isn't understanding your message, but it is an issue of motivation.

The reason why most people don't want to be told what to do is because they want to make their own choices and *feel* like they are in control. All you can do is influence someone's willingness to make a change on their own. You can do this by asking questions to open up possibilities they will want to achieve on their own. This is called motivational interviewing, an evidence-based change-management approach that has recently been making its way into the business management world.

How-To

Motivational Interviewing helps refine an idea or problem by having the person clarify it. When they do this, they also define the steps, bring light to possible obstacles, and make change feel more obtainable.

1. Ask your friend or co-worker to meet one-on-one in an open and familiar environment.
2. Your meeting shouldn't follow an agenda, but you should have end-point you want to reach in conversation
3. Start the conversation by asking open-ended questions or by asking your friend to reflect on the area you want to see changed. While you are listening, it is important to express empathy and build rapport.
4. Identify discrepancies between what you hear the person say their goals are and the behaviors they say they need to reach those goals. If your co-worker/friend/mentee's goals do not match their behavior, repeat the discrepancy back to them in their own words.
5. You shouldn't argue or be too pushy, instead, be curious and accepting. Resistance is part of the change process, and you should roll with it.



6. Be sure to validate their skills and build their confidence based on past projects and current attitudes. Change is hard, however small it may be. Always be supportive of any willingness to try a new approach.

Motivational interviewing allows you to affect positive change by seeding ideas and allowing a person to grow and mature on their own. It is the process of affecting change that allows the individual you're attempting to influence feel agency and ownership over their evolving ideas. Rather than telling, you are leading people to change instead of forcing it on them.

Tips

- Motivational Interviewing is best done one-on-one
- Don't be judgmental
- Don't argue
- Ask open-ended questions, not "yes" or "no" questions
- Use reflective listening by repeating in your own words what the person said to make sure you understand what they mean
- Be honest and genuine rather than trying to push forward your own personal agenda.

Conclusion

You cannot change people because it is ultimately their choice to change. As much as you may want the person to change, they will not change until they find the motivation on their own. This may eventually mean making an adjustment in your team or cutting ties with a friend.

Real change comes from the inside out. Motivational Interviewing is one tool you can use to help friends, co-workers, and mentees find the motivation to make the changes they know they need to make.

