



Amy Stern

Managing Director,  
Research and Strategy  
BI WORLDWIDE

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Sunday nights used to be rough. They were filled with dread of what Monday morning would bring. That last day of the weekend was a whirlwind of relaxation and trepidation. But suddenly, a few years into my career, something amazing happened: I didn't really mind Mondays anymore. Sometimes, I even looked forward to them.

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I had the same coworkers as before, worked at the same desk, had the same boss and was in the same role. However, I got to do more of the work I loved. I got to try new things. I liked helping my clients and was starting to get noticed for delivering great work. And, I was getting better at it. I was growing in ways that were personally exciting. Taken together, it was a far more inspiring experience.

**Inspiration is what drives us to innovate, go the extra mile and fully commit to our work.**

In fact, our research at BI WORLDWIDE shows those who are inspired are **twice as likely to stay** for the next 12 months. Although inspired employees aren't working longer hours, they do report working harder. And they are referring family and friends to come work with them 44% more often.

What exactly inspires each individual person can vary. We asked people to **describe a time they felt inspired at work** and the responses ranged from helping a COVID-19 patient get home to their family to having an opportunity to think bigger. We will share some of these direct quotes below. Despite these idiosyncrasies, we have found through our New Rules of Engagement® research that there are clear things employers can do to increase inspiration. Inspired employees are more likely to feel a sense of belonging, empowerment and purpose and that they have the ability to learn and develop at their organizations.

### Foster belonging

Belonging falls in three dimensions: belonging with your work, your team and your organization. To foster a sense of belonging, encourage managers to talk to employees about what they love – and don't love – about their current jobs. Managers can also be instrumental in creating a cohesive team and bringing concerns about organizational belonging to leadership. Leaders can ensure that they are creating an inclusive workplace and taking action where inequities exist.

**Inspiration  
in action**

Describe a time  
you felt inspired at work.

“ My first year, I loved the clients and what I did. ”

“ During this year it has been encouraged to talk to our team about difficult issues and offer support to get them through . ”



### Let them lead

True empowerment is not just having a place to voice ideas but having those ideas seriously considered. It's not just being told to take a risk but being supported when the risk does not go as planned.

When possible, organizations should encourage employees to share and pursue new ideas. Take risks. Those allowed to pursue new ideas had **13.7 times greater odds of being inspired** than those who were not allowed to do so.

#### Inspiration in action

Describe a time you felt inspired at work.

“New challenges teaching from home brought on necessary creative energy and innovation.”

The communication should also go both ways. It's important that leaders communicate directly to employees, which is associated with a **12% gap in inspiration** over those who did not get direct leadership communication. But it's even more critical that leaders listen. **Inspiration was 23% higher** among employees who had a leader listen to them recently.

#### Inspiration in action

Describe a time you felt inspired at work.

“When my sales executives listen to my ideas and take my recommendations.”  
 “I requested a meeting with the Director and Deputy Director at my agency in January 2020. I felt that COVID-19 was going to have a huge effect on us. They allowed me to learn and train staff on how to have virtual meetings. I had total control and I was inspired to keep learning and teaching.”

### Give it meaning

Meaning is a natural motivator. Leaders should be sure the organization has a clear mission and one that is relevant to today. Then, it's important to show each individual employee how their job connects back to the mission.

#### Inspiration in action

Describe a time you felt inspired at work.

“I felt inspired when a child told us how much they loved the meals we prepared for them. It helps to know that what you do makes a difference in the life of a child.”  
 “When I told my managers I wasn't feeling fulfilled and told them what kind of work I enjoy. They listened and shifted my work around.”

Next, they need to recognize that employee for their impact, reminding them that their job matters. This can be done by providing recognition in writing, something that makes it **two times more likely** that someone will feel inspired. When possible, employers can also offer exciting incentives. Those who felt their organization's incentives were exciting were **eight times more likely** to find work inspiring.

What makes an “exciting incentive”? We looked at what incentives people had earned in the past year and compared that to whether they felt inspired at work. What we found is rewards like experiences and travel were the most associated with feeling inspired.

Received in the past year	Percent feeling inspired
An experience	75%
Travel	75%
Event tickets	62%
Merchandise	58%
Cash	56%
Gift card	51%



**Inspiration in action**

Describe a time you felt inspired at work.

“ I felt inspired after being rewarded with a trip after a good sale year.”  
“ Working on a logistical problem and being recognized for a success with a bonus, a gift and award for outstanding contributions .”

We can kickstart the process of achievement by creating competition. Those who compete for individual and team incentives are **4.8 times more likely** to find work inspiring than those who do not.

**Inspiration in action**

Describe a time you felt inspired at work.

“ While having a sales competition, I thought of new ways to promote our services that helped both my client and my company.”  
“ When I was challenged to compete for the most sales and I won.”

**Realize their potential**

In addition to getting recognized for meaningful contributions, employees want to grow personally.

To facilitate this, employers should set challenging (but not unobtainable) goals. Nearly two-thirds of employees who had challenging goals set for them felt inspired versus just one in five of those who did not have such goals.

**Inspiration in action**

Describe a time you felt inspired at work.

“ [I felt inspired by] the new challenges to bring an application to multiple groups, not just one group.”

Employees need to be set up for growth, which requires providing the training they need to do their jobs well. Those who received such training were twice as likely to feel inspired. However, not all training is created equal. Those who received training that was NOT useful were actually twice as likely to NOT be inspired. It's important to bring effective training that is relevant to not only the person's position, but also to their individual ambitions for growth.

**Inspiration in action**

Describe a time you felt inspired at work.

“ When I learn something new in Excel I am able to apply it to what I am working on.”  
“ I felt inspired when my manager came to ask me if I was interested in learning new things on my job .”

Inspiration can feel like an impossible pursuit. It is emotion we are trying to elicit from another person. And this year has been difficult. Some organizations have had to close. Others have had to reduce their workforce or pay. All organizations, even those that are thriving, have had to fundamentally change the way they work. However, there is something inspiring about resilience and adaptation. Despite the hurdles we have had to jump, we can still create a workforce where people belong, are empowered, have a purpose, feel they matter and are able to grow. Where Mondays don't seem so bad anymore.

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