

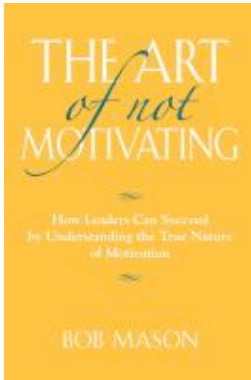
# THE ART *of not* MOTIVATING



How Leaders Can Succeed  
by Understanding the True Nature  
of Motivation



BOB MASON



*Corporate is threatening to close Diane's factory. Panicked by possibly failing, Diane asks leadership expert Kyle Marshall to help motivate her workers. Kyle says he can't. Instead, he helps Diane understand the real meaning of motivation, and how to create a workplace that encourages individual motivation. Diane is a difficult student with many questions and arguments. In this gripping business fable, Bob Mason illustrates how a better understanding of motivation improves the bottom line.*

# **The Art of Not Motivating**

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Bob Mason

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## *Diane*

Kyle Marshall was sitting at the table, sipping his morning coffee as he looked out across the city from the deck of his home. A subtle smell of bacon still hung in the air, and it was quiet except for the slight rustle of the wind in the trees. In the distance he could see three hot air balloons drifting across the west mesa. As he leafed through the Saturday morning paper, he wondered what the emergency was.

Last night, Diane had called in a major panic and asked if she could stop by this morning. Kyle had first met Diane when they served on jury duty a couple of years before and had spoken briefly with her at a few local events since then. She had mentioned something about the factory she managed in town closing. She seemed very distressed so he told her to come by this morning, even though it was Saturday.

The silence was broken by the sound of a car approaching. Putting the paper down, Kyle stood up and moved to the edge of the deck. He saw Diane's tan Toyota Corolla speeding up the driveway, almost skidding to a stop. He leaned over the rail and said, "Good morning. Come on up."

At five foot ten inches, Diane was the same height as Kyle. In her mid- thirties, she wore her straight brunette hair in a simple shoulder length cut. She was dressed informally in a t-shirt, jeans, and orange walking shoes.

She carried herself in a very businesslike, almost stiff, manner, but almost ran up the stairs that led from the driveway to the deck. It was obvious she was in distress. Just as Diane reached the top step, Kyle's wife Kristie, appeared with a cup of coffee and handed it to Diane, "Good morning Diane. It's a beautiful day isn't it?"

Diane accepted the cup with a short, "Thanks," in her usual abrupt manner.

"Well, Diane, what can I do for you?" Kyle asked as he motioned her to a seat.

Diane didn't sit but began pacing back and forth across the deck. "They're going to close my factory!"

"Why?"

"The company isn't doing well and they need to reduce expenses by closing one of the factories."

"Why this one?" Kyle asked.

"I guess we're not productive enough. We aren't behind on orders but I guess they think we should be able to make cabinets faster and cheaper anyway. They're also always harping on quality."

"Is that what they told you?"

"Well, they didn't exactly say they were closing this one; just that one would have to go. But whenever we have meetings with corporate, the other factories always seem to look a little better."

Kyle had seen this before. A company's senior executives threaten to disband or consolidate part of a company then watch what happens. Sometimes the threat causes managers to step up their game. However, usually the threat is real and manager's fears are justified.

Kyle knew he needed to start by calming Diane's nerves a little while learning more about the company and this part of it.

"Why have you come to me?" he asked.

"I need you to tell me how to motivate my people to get them to increase our production and reduce costs. What's your fee? I'll pay."

Diane was still pacing back and forth across the deck. Her words flowed at high speed and her voice was panicky. Kyle knew that nothing he said at this point would get through her anxiety. Besides, he needed more information.

He slowed his own speaking, hoping to calm her at least a little.

Smiling, he said, "Let's not worry about that just yet, but, if you wear a hole in my deck pacing like that, I'll charge you for the repairs. Please, sit down and tell me about the company."

Diane sat but stayed stiffly on the edge of the seat and began to describe the company.

ALDO Manufacturing had been formed by two brothers, Alan and Don Jorgenson; hence the name. The first factory opened in 1927 in Chicago making large steel storage containers. In 1952 a second factory was opened in Nashville, Tennessee, to make lockers used in schools and gyms. In 1989 a third factory was opened in Albuquerque, New Mexico, that manufactured smaller versions of the storage units made in the original Chicago factory. These cabinets were made for the home workshop market. Diane had managed the Albuquerque factory for five years.

Kyle asked if Diane knew why there were three factories so geographically separated, manufacturing such similar products. She said she had been told once that the company had wanted to build a hedge against a downturn in any one part of the country. Kyle figured that was probably a reaction to the depression in the 1930's.

Don and Alan had both passed away and the company was in the hands of Alan's son who had apparently realized the cost of running three similar but widely separated plants.

Diane's factory in Albuquerque employed 328 people and was the smallest of ALDO's three plants. Closing it would not be a huge impact on the area, but like the rest of the country, Albuquerque was struggling to overcome the effects of the recession that had gripped the nation for more than five years. Diane seemed to have a great capacity for remembering numbers as she began to rattle

off the production rates, costs, ratios, and all the other facts and figures that occupy a factory manager's world.

Kyle stopped her. This was interesting, but he wouldn't remember all these numbers. That Diane knew them was enough. Instead, he asked her to tell him about the people at the factory.

"The people?" She asked; obviously surprised.

"Yes, the people." Kyle said. "After all, those are who you want me to help you motivate."

"Well, I really don't know very much about them individually. I'm so busy with reports and production schedules and teleconferences with the headquarters - - all those management responsibilities. I don't really have a lot of time to get to know the employees. I guess I know a little about the section supervisors. They're all good people. Of course, I know my secretary, Julie."

Kyle was already beginning to see where the problem was. He said, "So, you want me to help you motivate your employees to improve production and efficiency so this factory will remain open. Is that about right?"

"Exactly!" Diane almost shouted. She had stood up and was pacing again. "What should I do first? Oh yea. What will you charge me?"

"Do you have a custodial staff?" Kyle asked.

"Of course," Diane looked a little surprised by the question. "What do the janitors have to do with her problem?"

"Okay. I'll come by your office Monday morning. I want you to do two things. First, give me a complete tour of the factory. Second, tell me three things about one of the people on your custodial staff. After that, we can discuss my fee."

Diane looked skeptical, but she was desperate enough to do what Kyle asked, even if it didn't make any sense.



## ***ALDO***

After a successful career that took him to senior management in several companies, Kyle had hung out his shingle as a leadership trainer. His short hair and the hint of grey at his temples added a distinguished aspect to his ready smile and twinkling eyes. He really enjoyed helping managers become effective leaders. He was excited about this new challenge but wondered if Diane would accept what he would tell her.

It was early Monday morning when Kyle drove to the ALDO factory. The factory was located in a downtown industrial area that had seen better days. The buildings were all in need of attention and some were abandoned. Like all the nearby buildings, the factory needed some paint and there was a rusty old chain link fence surrounding the property that was falling down in some places.

He parked in a spot away from the building and walked inside into a short, dark hallway. He noticed a door to his left, and another at the end of the hall. There were no signs indicating where the doors led, so he took a chance and opened the door on his left. He found himself in an office area where a woman and man were deep in conversation over coffee. The woman was thin and probably in her mid-30's. She had long blond hair that reached the middle of her back. He smiled and said, "You must be Julie."

Julie looked a little surprised and said, "Yes, I am. And you are?"

Kyle introduced himself, then turned to the man who quickly stuck out his hand and said, "Good morning, I'm Jeff. I manage the shipping and receiving section."

Jeff was about the same height and build as Kyle with brown, shoulder length hair and a pair of horned rimmed glasses that seem to be constantly sliding down his nose.

Julie brought Kyle a cup of coffee and the three of them began talking.

"Julie said Diane was bringing in some sort of expert that would save the factory. That must be you." Apparently Jeff didn't mince words. "No offense, but I think it's a lost cause. Those clowns in Chicago barely know we exist. We certainly aren't their favorite people. It's no wonder really. Those guys who run the machines don't care much about anything but themselves. Just last week they finished a large order, late again and on a Friday afternoon, and just dumped the product on us so it looked like we were the ones making the shipment late. Diane was ticked because the packing remnants weren't cleaned up because the clean-up crew wouldn't stay. There's no second or third shift on Friday so everything just sat there until Monday."

Julie chimed in. "You can't really blame the clean-up guys. Most of them have second jobs and can't stay late."

Kyle wasn't surprised to hear of a conflict between the various departments. It was a common symptom of companies that haven't developed a mission and goals that everyone understands. Addressing Julie Kyle said, "As Diane's secretary, you probably have a better overview of the company than anyone else. What's your opinion about how the factory operates?"

Julie was obviously a little uncomfortable about answering the question. Kyle knew that people in her position saw a lot more than they let on and that they liked to protect that position. More than most in any company, secretaries understand that knowledge is power. Kyle pressed a little.

"Where do you see problems?"

"Diane's job is like herding cats. Each section seems to be on their own. Even within the various sections there are people who don't understand what they're doing."

Kyle noticed that Julie's window faced the parking lot. As he looked out he saw Diane stepping out of her car. "Quite a view you have here, Julie."

"At shift change it's like watching a zombie movie."

Just then the door opened as Diane breezed in. Seeing Kyle she quickly said good morning and invited him into her office. He thanked Julie for the coffee, nodded at Jeff, and followed Diane into her office.

Diane said, "I see you've met Julie and Jeff. I think they have something going on."

Kyle had noticed that too but didn't say anything. Instead he said, "I have two days before I fly to Seattle to do some leadership training for a company up there. I'd be glad to offer you some ideas, but only under the two conditions I mentioned Saturday."

"Remind me what those conditions are." Diane seemed a little hesitant.

"First, I want completely free access to the entire factory and all your employees."

Diane wrinkled her nose a little and mentioned that the factory floor could be dangerous and she didn't want him to get injured by any of the machinery. "Besides, I can tell you everything you need to know."

Kyle was pretty sure that wasn't true, but let it go for now. "I have a signed release here that states I understand and accept the risks of an industrial area and will not seek any compensation from you or ALDO in the case of a mishap or injury."

He didn't know how long such a document would last in a law suit, but since he wasn't going to bring a suit, it didn't really matter. It always seemed to allay the fears managers such as Diane usually had.

"Well, okay," she said taking the paper he handed her. "What's the other condition?"

"Do you have a list of everyone who works here?"

"Of course." Diane pulled a stack of pages stapled together from her top drawer and handed it to Kyle. He glanced through it, noticing that it was arranged by section. He quickly found what he was looking for and handed it back.

"The other condition is that by tomorrow, you tell me three things about Manny Gonzalez."

Diane looked puzzled. Kyle was playing a hunch. The list Diane had given him was divided by sections. Each entry also had the date the person started working at the factory. Manny Gonzalez was the last person hired in the custodial department, and Kyle was pretty sure Diane wouldn't know who he was. "And, you can't call him into the office."

"Now just a minute." Diane was clearly not happy with this request. "I didn't ask you here to question my leadership style."

"I'm not questioning your leadership style. You asked for my help. If you want that help, those are the conditions." Kyle smiled. "Don't worry; it will become clear in the next day or two."

Diane was obviously skeptical. But she didn't feel she had much of a choice so she agreed to Kyle's conditions.

Diane went to the door and called to Julie. "Tell Antonio to come up here."

She turned back to Kyle. "You said you'd talk about fees. I need to know that before you get started."

"Normally I've got a pretty good idea of what I'm getting into before I start, so today I just want to observe and listen. I need to get a feel for what's going on here. I'll do that today and we can talk about fees in the morning. If we can't reach an agreement then, I'll leave and you'll owe me nothing."

Diane said, "Okay, but that doesn't sound like a good deal for you."

There was a knock and a man appeared at the door. Diane introduced him.

"Kyle, this is Antonio. He's the manager of the operations section. Antonio, please show Mr. Marshall around the plant. He's to have complete access."

Antonio nodded at Kyle and said, "This way Mr. Marshall."

Kyle said to Diane, "I'll see you back here in the morning then?"

She nodded but had already moved on to the paperwork stacked up on her desk.

Turning to Antonio he held out his hand and said, "Please, it's Kyle."

Antonio was a large man with a swarthy complexion. His jet black hair was cut very short with just a hint of grey at the temples. As they shook hands, Kyle saw that Antonio had the hands of someone who had worked his entire life. The grip was strong and sure. Antonio said, "I need to give you a safety briefing." As they walked, Antonio listed all the hazards in the factory. Kyle listened and watched, noticing Antonio didn't seem too interested in what he was saying.

For the next hour Antonio and Kyle toured the factory. It was a pretty straight forward layout, though the work didn't seem to flow very well. The inside of the factory looked much like the outside. It was an older building and it looked pretty dreary. The walls were a sort of light brown and the uneven color hinted that they had been white at one time. The floors were clean, at least in the areas where people walked, but there was a buildup of dust and grime around the edges. There were parts racks and shelves along the walls that had obviously seen better days.

The workers were divided into sections; Kyle would hesitate to call them teams, and each section seemed to have little or no relationship with the others. They each

seemed to occupy their own space and there wasn't much interaction between them.

The largest was the operations section which consisted of two groups: fabrication and assembly. Fabrication formed plastic and steel into cabinet parts in two separate operations. The assembly group assembled the formed steel and plastic parts into a complete cabinet.

The next largest section was Jeff's shipping and receiving section which was divided into three groups. The first was packaging where finished cabinets were wrapped and packaged for shipment. The shipping group then arranged for transportation from the factory to the final destination. The receiving group was responsible for all the materials that came into the factory. They inspected shipments for damage and completeness, and made sure they were delivered to the correct part of the factory.

The third section was responsible for coatings. Plastic cabinet parts were painted and the steel parts were powder coated. This section received the cabinets from the assembly group and prepared the surface for the coating process but there did not seem to be a division of responsibility here as in the other groups. A woman named Sandy managed this section.

The final section was custodial and repair which Kyle thought was an interesting combination. A large man named Gerry managed this section. The repair group was responsible for fixing the machines and included set-up technicians. The custodial group did all the clean-up for the entire factory.

The tour complete, Antonio began to escort Kyle back to the office door. Kyle stopped and said, "Thank you for taking the time to show me around. I'll be talking to a lot of people today. I'll be back to your section a little later. I don't want to keep you so I'll find my way around."

Antonio looked a little uncertain, but Diane had said to give him full access. "Okay, Kyle. I guess I'll see you later."

Kyle was anxious to get started talking to individual people in the factory; it was the part of evaluating a new client that he really enjoyed. People tended to be suspicious of him since they didn't know him and weren't sure what he was up to, so he had to quickly establish trust. When he accomplished this, the real situation would quickly emerge. Kyle had noticed something in the coatings group that had intrigued him so he decided to start there.

Kyle found Sandy, the coatings group manager, in her cubicle at the front of her section's area. A woman of average height, she had captured a pile of black hair on her head that probably fell well past her shoulders when she set it free. Her eyes matched her hair and they sparkled with a hint of mischief.

"Good morning again, Mr. Marshall."

"Please, call me Kyle."

"Okay, good morning again, Kyle."

The sign on her small desk identified her as Maria Antonella Sandoval.

"Sandy, please don't take offense, but where did you pick up the name Sandy?"

"Doesn't fit, does it?"

"Well, no. Not really."

Sandy chuckled. "Before Diane we had a plant manager who thought he was something of a comedian. For some reason he thought it was funny to shorten Sandoval to Sandy. Though I thought it was stupid, I didn't want to give him the satisfaction of getting upset about it. After a while I got used to it and now it sort of separates my identity between work and out there." She gestured towards the parking lot.

"How long have you worked for ALDO?"

"Been here just over ten years. I started out in the packaging group, then moved to assembly, then coatings and have been here ever since. I became the manager about five years ago."

"Sandy, my job is to help Diane find some ways to make the plant more productive and efficient." He didn't mention Diane's actual comment about finding ways to motivate people.

"I know that probably sounds like a threat of someone losing their job, but that isn't what I'm thinking. Instead, what I want to do is give Diane some ideas about how to help you and the other managers get the best from your people. Anything you say to me is completely confidential. "

"She thinks that will keep us from being closed down?"

Sandy didn't beat around the bush and Kyle appreciated that straight forward approach.

"That's basically it. But, that will take a long-term change in the way the plant operates. Doing something that only results in a short-term improvement and then reverts back later won't help."

"Well, I've got a few ideas."

"Great! Have you made any suggestions to Diane?"

"Diane asks for ideas but she doesn't really listen, and she always seems too busy to actually work on implementing anything. Don't get me wrong. I like Diane and she's definitely a big improvement over the last manager we had. It's just that she doesn't seem to place much trust in her leadership team. It's a little frustrating."

"I think we can work on that. Sandy, I really appreciate your time and honest comments. I'd like to watch your section work and talk to some of your people."

"Okay. Look around all you want."

The coatings section was divided by process. Parts first went through a preparation process where they were cleaned and if necessary, primed. Then the coating process



applied paint or powder coating. From there the metal components went into large ovens for curing. Plastic parts were hung on drying racks. It seemed like a fairly efficient flow arrangement.

Other than the constant hum of large exhaust fans, it was pretty quiet and there was not a lot of conversation as the workers went about their jobs. After just observing for about ten minutes, Kyle began to talk to the workers. He found them pleasant but not very talkative. He was talking to a young woman who was spraying paint on some plastic parts when suddenly everything stopped and the workers headed for the break room. Kyle followed and found they were much more talkative when they weren't working. They had heard of the potential for closing and were naturally concerned. Everyone seemed pretty sure the company would not move them to one of the other factories.

Kyle asked them what the factory's mission was and what they did to make that mission happen. He loved the question and sometimes asked it in stores and restaurants. It drove his wife, Kristie, crazy, but he found it very enlightening. Whenever he consulted or coached business owners and leaders he asked them to pose that question to their employees. The results were usually predictable. Too often leaders expect workers to be engaged in the company without making it clear what that really means. Once he suggested a group of small business owners ask their employees that question. One of the business owners thought for a minute and said she wasn't really sure she could answer the question herself.

The coatings section workers gave him the normal answer he was expecting, saying the mission was to make cabinets and that they made the cabinets look better. They also had the normal reaction, trying to be polite but sure it was a pretty dumb question.

The break period was over so Kyle thanked them for talking with him. As they went back to work, he headed to the operations section. He found Antonio in a cubicle much like Sandy's. He was sitting at an old metal desk examining what looked like production schedules.

"Antonio, do you have a few minutes?"

"Sure, come on in."

As Kyle walked in the door the phone rang. Antonio mouthed the words, "Just a minute," to Kyle as he picked up the phone. The conversation was obviously not about anything having to do with the factory, but Kyle noticed that Antonio was very animated and seemed to be deeply interested. In fact, he was much more involved in the phone conversation than he had been showing Kyle around the factory.

The phone conversation continued for almost five minutes. Antonio jotted a few notes on the papers he had in front of him, then looked up at Kyle.

"I'm the feeding chairman for Nuevo Comienzo. That means new beginnings and our mission is to put people back on their feet who have suffered hard times. We provide food, a bed, and basic job skills training. We even have some facilities for families. Collecting enough food to keep the kitchen going is a major job and takes a lot of my time. I don't mind though because it's such a great cause."

Antonio indicated the papers spread across his desk. "I'm laying out an entirely new process to keep that food flowing. That's what all this is."

Kyle was familiar with the Nuevo Comienzo organization and knew they were doing good work in the community. It seemed that Antonio's work with them was taking the place of his job responsibilities. He asked Antonio how he felt about the potential factory closing and how it was impacting his workers performance.

"It's sad that the company doesn't realize how great these people are. I doubt if we can save it though. My wife has a good job and so we'll survive." He smiled and motioned to the papers on his desk. "I would have more time for this. I don't really know how the rest of them feel."

As a consultant, Kyle tried to stay detached from the client and not let any personal feelings cloud his overall analysis of the situation. Antonio was making that very difficult. He hoped his feelings about Antonio's complete lack of concern for others in the company didn't show. He decided it would be best to end this conversation and move on.

"Antonio, I'd like to talk to some of your people now." Before he could say more, the phone rang again.

Antonio said, "Sure," then picked up the phone.

Kyle had read once that one of the management training techniques used at Toyota requires the new manager to stand in one place and watch an operation for several hours or even an entire day. While Kyle didn't have that much time, he found a place that gave him a good view of the entire operation and watched for about 20 minutes.

New material, either steel or plastic, was brought in at one end of the floor. It went through a fabrication process that created the various parts of a cabinet. From there the pieces were moved into the coatings section. Other pieces appeared from the coatings section and were moved to the assembly area where a cabinet began to take shape. Once the cabinet was completely assembled, it was moved to the shipping department.

Kyle observed that each member of the two groups, fabrication and assembly, seemed to work independently. He noticed a tall man with long blond hair tied back in a pony tail moving around the machines. He seemed to be checking on the work. He had a metal clipboard with what

looked like work orders. Each time a new piece of material entered the fabrication area, he would check something on one of those papers. Then as the completed pieces went into coating he would make another check.

Kyle left his observation position and walked over to the tall man. He stuck out his hand, saying, "Hi, I'm Kyle."

The tall man shook his hand, though not with a lot of enthusiasm and said, "Hi, I'm Tim. So you're the efficiency expert. I figured they'd send someone like you."

Kyle chuckled. "No, I'm not an efficiency expert." He then explained what Diane had asked him to do, again leaving out the part about finding ways to motivate people.

Tim thought a minute then said, "I doubt if you can save us, but good luck."

Once again it was suddenly break time. Kyle walked with Tim towards the break room. He noticed it was different from the break room the coatings group used.

Kyle asked Tim about his job.

"I'm supposed to be a machine operator, but we needed someone to keep the work orders straight. Since Antonio is always busy with his homeless shelter, someone had to step up. We started by taking turns managing the flow, but no one else really wants to do it anymore; so it's become a sorta permanent job for me. I don't think Antonio even realizes I'm doing it."

Kyle then began the same conversation he had started with the coatings section. They too were concerned about their futures but didn't see much they could do about the situation. In the break room, Kyle noticed that members of this group didn't seem to interact much. They would answer his questions, but there was no group discussion as often happened in this type of setting. It could be that they were just suspicious of him, but their body language made him think it was more than that.

After the break, Kyle more closely observed the assembled group as they built a set of cabinets that had just been moved from the coatings area. He noted that the assembly process was slow and the workers seemed a little lethargic. A young woman who introduced herself as Martha smiled and greeted him. He asked her how long she had worked there.

"About 6 years." She had stopped tightening the screws that she had been inserting in a cabinet.

Not wanting to be responsible for slowing down the line Kyle said, "Don't let me stop what you're doing."

"Oh, it's okay. If we don't get this one done today, we'll get it done tomorrow. It doesn't really matter. When I first started working here I could see there were ways to do this job more quickly, but no one seemed to care. We get done what we get done. When someone is out sick or on vacation things slow down even more. I was out last year for six weeks. I have cancer ya know. That chemo and radiation were rough, but they say I'm in remission. Ya probably noticed I don't have much hair. It's coming back though. I don't think anyone even knew I was gone. I'm not even sure how many people are supposed to be on this team."

"I'm glad you're doing better, Martha. I know the treatments can be very difficult." Kyle spoke with Martha for a few more minutes, then said goodbye and moved on to the shipping and receiving area. He saw Jeff talking to one of the workers there and waved. Jeff finished his conversation and walked over.

"Hello again. Let me give you a little more detailed tour of shipping and receiving. Nothing happens in this factory without us you know."

Shipping and receiving were actually at different ends of the factory which made sense. They started in the shipping area where Jeff introduced Kyle to everyone they

met. He seemed to know a little something about each of his workers.

In the packing area, Kyle noticed a collection of various size cabinets neatly stacked against one wall. He asked Jeff about them.

"Those are cabinets that we didn't ship because they have defects. We used to send them back to the operations folks but they didn't want them. They just regenerate the work order in the system and make a new one."

Kyle was stunned. He hadn't looked at the numbers, but guessed that the pile of cabinets represented a significant impact to the factory's costs. What he heard next made his head spin.

"Every few months we crush them with a forklift and sell them to a local scrap dealer. We use the money to buy supplies for the section."

Jeff could see Kyle's expression of disbelief. "That's just the way things work here. I don't like it either, but Antonio doesn't care and thinks it's easier to do it this way."

At this point Kyle was ready to tell Diane that the best thing ALDO could do was close this factory. But, he had promised to see this through so he continued to walk around with Jeff. The packing section seemed to be pretty efficient. In fact, they seemed to spend a lot of time sitting around because they could prepare a shipment much faster than the cabinets were being manufactured.

When Kyle and Jeff walked over to the packing section, there were seven workers lounging on empty pallets. A couple of them were perched on a forklift. Jeff introduced Kyle and then said, "I'm going to go get a golf cart so we can go down to receiving. I'll be back shortly."

Kyle took the opportunity to chat with these workers, who were more than willing to talk. In fact, he got an earful. They didn't like being idle so much. They were bored and wanted more orders so they would have more to

do. One of them, a young man named Jeremy mentioned that he had suggested that the packing function be moved to the assembly area. He thought it would be more efficient.

Kyle had not heard Jeff drive up in the golf cart while they were talking. When Jeremy explained his idea, Jeff chuckled.

"Tell them what you learned, Jeremy."

Jeremy almost spat the words as he said, "Those boneheads in Assembly are about as slow as snails. They could do at least twice as much as they do now without breaking a sweat. They're just lazy." The whole group was nodding in agreement and Kyle had not heard the word lazy spoken with such contempt.

Jeff broke the silence that followed. "Come on. Let's go over to receiving."

Kyle thanked the group for their time and climbed into the golf cart. On the way, Jeff commented about Jeremy and his idea.

"He's a good kid but I doubt he'll be with us much longer. As soon as he finds somewhere that welcomes new ideas and gives him an opportunity to take on real challenges, he'll be gone. We won't be able to pay him enough."

Kyle didn't say anything. He was thinking about another company he had worked with. The company's owner was a man in his late 50's. He had several employees who were much younger. They were energetic and were always trying to learn new parts of the operation while constantly looking for new ways to improve the process. They learned and adapted much faster than the older owner, and that drove him crazy. He saw the same situation here with Jeremy, but he also saw hints of the same problem in other sections he had visited.

When they arrived in the receiving area Jeff again began addressing everyone by name. This time he didn't give Kyle a tour of the area. Instead he called over a young woman who he introduced as Casey.

"Kyle, Casey has only been with us for about 18 months, but I think she's already learned everything there is to know about receiving. Casey, why don't you show Kyle around."

Casey beamed at Jeff's comment and said, "Sure." Casey appeared to be no more than 19 or 20 years old. She had short brunette hair and penetrating blue eyes. She was only about five and a half feet tall, but what she lacked in height she made up for in enthusiasm. To Kyle's eye though, she would have been more attractive without the stud piercing her lower lip. Casey almost bounced as she showed Kyle around, pointing out the various parts of the receiving operation. Jeff was right; she was very knowledgeable about everything in receiving.

She directed Kyle's attention to the far wall that was covered with a large row of shelves, each with a label and bar code. The shelves held various boxes and containers.

Casey proudly explained. "It used to be that when all the smaller parts arrived we just left them on the pallets. Then when the fabrication or assembly section needed something we'd have to sort through the pallets to find it. This way, everything is logged into a database that Luis designed."

Luis, a tall, thin young man, who was also probably no more than 20 years old, had joined them. He began to explain how the system worked.

"So, it's really just a simple database. Manufacturers put a bar code on everything, so we just have to read that code in order to put the item in our system. Each section can totally see how much of a particular item we have. When they need something they just place the requirement



in the tablet at their workstation and it sounds a chime here." Luis pointed to a computer sitting next to the shelves. "The system tells us what they need and where it is. We pull it, scan it, and deliver it. I built the system to interface with all our suppliers so it automatically reorders at the right time."

Kyle was impressed but a little confused. Such inventory management systems were readily available from many sources. That these two young people were able to design and build a system this complex in such a short period of time was certainly noteworthy, but why didn't they just use a system that was already available.

As if he was reading Kyle's mind, Jeff said, "I know what you're thinking. Yes, there are plenty of systems like this available."

Luis interrupted, "They're too complex. We had a system like that before but it was old and was always crashing. Nobody wanted to use it. It only took me about six months to design this system. The hardest part was getting suppliers to let me interface with their systems."

Luis went on to explain how he had built the system and began talking in a language Kyle didn't begin to understand. Jeff mercifully stepped in to rescue him.

"Luis sometimes reverts to that computer language the rest of us don't understand" Luis just shrugged his shoulders and stopped talking. He and Casey both smiled though when Kyle congratulated them on their work.

As they boarded the golf cart again Jeff sighed and said, "I guess you have a lot to talk to Diane about."

Kyle didn't fall for Jeff's fishing expedition. "I still have to talk to the Gerry in the custodial and repair group. After that I'll have some ideas for her."

Jeff's expression suddenly became very serious. "Can you save the factory?"

"I'm not here to save the factory. Only you people here can save the factory." He made a sweeping gesture indicating everyone.

"I'm just here to observe and provide Diane with some ideas about how she can help you take action to save the factory yourselves."

Jeff didn't look convinced. Obviously, he was hoping for some magic formula or action that would prevent the plant from closing. He stopped the cart in front of a door that said "Maintenance."

"Kyle, we've got some good people here. I hope you can give Diane some ideas that will help. I know what you're saying, but you've probably already seen that she isn't really aware of what's going on out here."

Jeff stopped talking for a minute and looked a little sullen. "I guess I shouldn't say that. Gerry's right in there."

Gerry's maintenance and custodial section was in the corner of the factory. It was a small room, Kyle estimated 300 square feet, that seemed even smaller because of the tool boxes and cleaning supplies piled up everywhere. The strong odor of some sort of cleaning solution filled the space. Gerry was alone and sat at an old desk in the corner of the room.

Kyle estimated Gerry was at least six foot six and he seemed almost as wide. He walked with a sort of waddle and seemed to be constantly out of breath. There wasn't a strand of hair on his head which made him look even more out of proportion.

Kyle stuck out his hand. "Hello again. Do you have a few minutes to chat?"

"Sure." Gerry motioned to a tool box. "Sorry, we don't have a lot of furniture in here."

"That's okay. Tell me some more about your section and what you do."

As Gerry began to speak it was obvious he didn't have a lot of enthusiasm for his job. His section was responsible for two seemingly unrelated functions. They provided all the maintenance for the factory and their responsibilities included any repair that didn't involve a skill as he put it. That included maintenance on the fabrication machines, handling equipment, and the building itself.

"That's a big responsibility, Gerry. How many people do you have for that function?"

"There are 10 repair people. Four are on the second shift and three are on the third shift. Things don't just break in the daytime."

"I'm curious about something you said earlier. You said they did any repair that didn't require a skill. What did you mean by that?"

"We don't have any licensed plumbers or electricians so we aren't really supposed to do those kinds of jobs."

Kyle thought it sounded like they did those jobs anyway but didn't see any point in pursuing the issue. Instead he asked, "Why don't you have any plumbers or electricians?"

Gerry chuckled. "Are you kidding? We don't pay nearly well enough to attract those people. If we need something done that is beyond our capability we have to bring someone in. That requires me to send a detailed description of what we need to the front office. I have to say whether the problem is routine, urgent, or an emergency. Then, someone shows up. It's never the same person or the same company that comes out."

"How often do you have to call someone in?"

"Lately it's been every few weeks."

"How long have your repair people worked here?"

Gerry thought for a minute. "I guess they average about two years."

Kyle wasn't surprised. "That's a pretty high turnover rate."

"Yea, but I don't think the rest of the factory realizes it. As long as someone shows up to fix what they've broken they're satisfied."

"How about the custodial part of the section?"

"I have 10 people for that. Well actually 9 right now since Jamal quit." Most of them are on the third shift since there's a lot less work and it's easier to clean." Now you want to talk about turnover, we usually have a completely new cleaning crew every 9 or 10 months."

That surprised Kyle. He expected there would be a high turnover, but that was beyond his worst prediction. He noticed that the factory didn't seem well maintained and this could certainly explain why.

Kyle was pretty sure he knew the answer to his next question but he decided to ask it anyway.

"Do you know why there is such a high turnover?"

"We don't pay these guys very well. Most of them have a second job just to make ends meet. Here in the factory, sometimes it seems like we don't even exist. Most of the others in the factory treat these guys like their personal servants, when they even acknowledge their presence. Just yesterday, one of my guys cut himself pretty good trying to clean up around one of the bending machines. The machine's operator yelled at him for bleeding on the machine. They'll let trash pile up when they stock parts, especially in the assembly area, and expect it to magically disappear. I try to keep that sort of thing down, but they never tell us when it happens. We're just supposed to know." Like I said, it's almost like we don't really exist as humans. Last month one of my guys was killed in a car accident. I don't think anyone else in the factory even knew. He left a wife and two young kids. We did what we could but got no help from the other sections."

Obviously, Gerry had a lot of pent up anger about how his section was seen by the rest of the plant. This wasn't uncommon, but it was a real problem since they were actually a lot more important to the operation than most people realized.

Gerry wasn't finished. "I didn't think Diane even knew we existed until this morning. Out of the blue she called me to ask about Manny Gonzalez. Manny's one of the custodial staff on the third shift. He's only worked here a couple of months. Diane wanted me to tell her a couple of things about him. I asked why but she wouldn't say."

Kyle changed the subject. "How do your people feel about the possible closing?"

"I told you about our turnover. I don't think anyone really cares. These guys don't see this as a long term career. Most of 'em are looking for other jobs anyway."

Kyle was about to say goodbye to Gerry when two men and a woman walked in. They didn't say a word as they set down tools and equipment, grabbed coats off a rack and walked out.

"Shift change," Gerry explained.

Kyle hadn't realized he had been there so long. He needed to catch Julie before she left.

"Gerry, I really appreciate you talking with me. I've learned a lot."

"Thanks for stopping by. We don't get many visitors here, so it was nice to have a chance to talk to someone."

Julie was still at her desk when Kyle walked back into the front office.

"Diane is gone for the day. She had a Chamber of Commerce event, which will last until at least 6:00 tonight, so I don't expect her back."

"That's okay." Kyle was going to need tonight to go over his notes and develop suggestions for Diane. Normally, he would want to at least spend a little time with the other

shifts, but Diane needed to take some immediate action that couldn't wait.

"Julie, what does Diane's calendar look like tomorrow?"

"She asked me to clear her schedule in the morning for you."

"Great, but I think we're going to need more than that."

"I thought so too, so I moved a meeting that was tomorrow afternoon."

"Thank you. You're terrific."

Julie just smiled. Like all good secretaries, she knew a lot more than she was going to let on.

Kyle looked out the window behind Julie's desk. It was shift change, and he could see what she meant earlier. The workers really did look like zombies as they shuffled in. Most of them walked slowly with their heads down. Maybe the news of possible closing of the factory was causing the low morale he had witnessed and that was displayed in the parking lot, but he doubted it.

As Kyle approached his car, his phone rang. It was his wife, Kristie. She had been in Santa Fe all day with two other women and was calling to say that there had been an accident on I-25 and traffic was backed up. She would probably be about 30 minutes late for their dinner date.

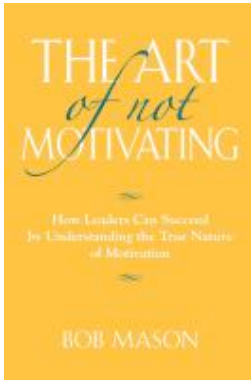
Every week they tried to make time to have dinner together at one of the area's restaurants. They both had busy schedules but felt it was important to make time for themselves. Since she would be late, he would have a little time to go over his notes and make an important phone call. As he reviewed all he had learned that day it became clear that Diane was a manager who hadn't been given any training in how to be a leader. Her initial request certainly demonstrated a lack of understanding of people and the basic truths about motivation and employee engagement.

Kyle looked up and saw the last of the day shift workers moving towards their cars. A few of the ones he

had talked to gave him a half-hearted wave. After they had all driven off, he pulled out of the parking lot and headed north. There was a long line of stopped cars a block ahead, which he noticed just in time to take a detour. The traffic problem ahead was caused by a film crew shooting another movie. The city had become a popular place for filming movies and TV shows. Kyle always marveled at how people would get so upset about traffic problems that were caused by normal issues like construction or accidents but didn't seem to mind too much when film crews seemed to have the authority to close down any part of town they wanted at any time and for as long as they wanted. Sometimes the incident would be in the news, always with emphasis on the big star that was involved in this particular shoot.

It was an interesting look at human nature. The production company was trying to make money and the city and state governments were making some money on the fees and taxes they charged. The people who were actually inconvenienced received nothing but the headache of having to change their plans and yet most did that cheerfully. It was a good example of what people will endure to feel a part of something. Even though they have absolutely nothing to do with the production of the movie that was being filmed a block ahead, those drivers who were inconvenienced would go home and tell their families that they saw whatever movie or TV show being filmed today and they might even gush about seeing a particular actor. For a brief moment, they can fantasize about belonging to something special.

It was a good lesson and Kyle told himself it would be a great example to use in his workshops on motivation.



*Corporate is threatening to close Diane's factory. Panicked by possibly failing, Diane asks leadership expert Kyle Marshall to help motivate her workers. Kyle says he can't. Instead, he helps Diane understand the real meaning of motivation, and how to create a workplace that encourages individual motivation. Diane is a difficult student with many questions and arguments. In this gripping business fable, Bob Mason illustrates how a better understanding of motivation improves the bottom line.*

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