



Different Strokes

“What is it that you want?” elicits responses as varied as the respondents. For the therapy patient, it’s his father’s approval. For the actor, it’s roaring crowds and stinky greasepaint. For Miss July, it’s walks on the beach at sunset.

In companies, of course, a fair wage and non-horrific working conditions are required just to get bodies in the door. But it takes more than that to motivate employees to do the best job possible. Managers assume that “more” means external incentives such as money, titles, and job security. They forget that some employees find greater value in the chance to learn a new skill, the satisfaction of solving a tough problem, or a belief in the organization’s mission.

In his book *The One Thing You Need to Know*, Marcus Buckingham urges managers to treat employees as individuals, designing motivations that play off each person’s strengths, weaknesses, “triggers,” and learning styles. So ask your employees to tell you what itches. Then don’t just throw money at them. Instead, take aim and scratch.

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