

# What Is Motivation and Why Is It Important?

**Motivation is the driver for everything.**

by [Peter Axtell](#) (hyperlink to bio as seen at the end + all articles that were written by the author)



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Every action you take is dependent on motivation. Everyone is trying to figure out how to be successful. The foundational element of being successful is finding out what motivates you. This article is based on Self-Determination Theory put forth by Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci, authors of the book “Self-Determination Theory: Basic Psychological Needs in Motivation, Development, and Wellness” (hyperlink <https://www.amazon.com/Self-Determination-Theory-Psychological-Motivation-Development/dp/1462528767>). Self-determination is the ability to make choices and have control of those choices.

## What is motivation?

According to Wikipedia “motivation is the reason for people’s actions, desires, and needs or as psychologist Dan Ariely puts it, “motivation is what moves us to feel

enthusiastic about what we're doing." (hyperlink [https://www.amazon.com/Payoff-Hidden-Logic-Shapes-Motivations/dp/1501120042/ref=sr\\_1\\_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1516774075&sr=1-3&keywords=dan+ariely+books](https://www.amazon.com/Payoff-Hidden-Logic-Shapes-Motivations/dp/1501120042/ref=sr_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1516774075&sr=1-3&keywords=dan+ariely+books) )

Motivation can either be enhanced or depleted depending on the type of motivation. It's essential to identify and understand what types of motivation will move you to feel enthusiastic about what you're doing on a long-term basis.

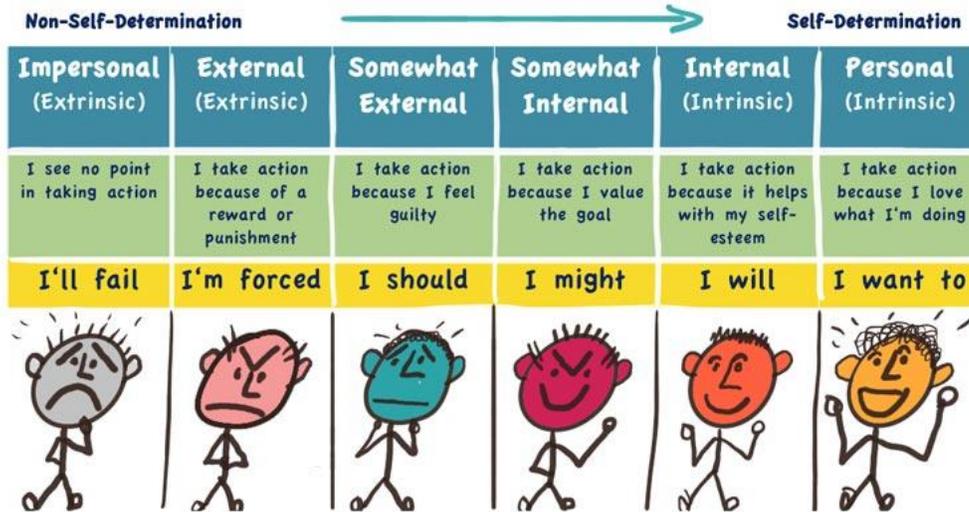
## The two types of motivation:

Self-Determination Theory divides motivation into two different theories or types:

1. **Intrinsic Motivation** - The main feature of this motivation is that it is an *internal* feeling that says, "I really want to do this thing." There is no external pressure. You and you alone are determining the action you are taking. This type of motivation is called Self-Determination or **Autonomy**. This is the ultimate goal for well-being. Another important point is that intrinsic motivation builds on itself and there is a feeling of naturally moving forward rather than stagnating. Intrinsic motivation is at one end of the "Spectrum of Self-Determination."
2. **Extrinsic Motivation** - This is the least desirable part of the spectrum for some well-researched reasons. The keyword is "pressure." Whenever there is an externally imposed pressure, you are in a state of Non-Self-Determination. The result of this is that your motivation will be depleted, not increased as with intrinsic motivation. External pressure could be in the form of being forced to do something or because of a reward or because of an internal message like "I should do this." For example, an impersonal order from a manager has been shown to result in an attitude of "there's no real compelling reason for me to make a strong effort because I believe my success is unlikely or impossible. I'll do it for the paycheck (for now), but I won't go the extra mile or innovate." When money is the only reward for your work, studies show that your motivation will eventually be depleted. Of course, money is essential, but it must be coupled with intrinsic motivation so that you stay motivated.

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## Spectrum of Self-Determination



I was at the hospital the other day and I asked the nurse how motivated she was to get up in the morning and go to work. Betty (not her real name) said that it used to be much better but that the culture changed. She told me she took a lot of initiative setting up the medical unit with procedures and practices that were working very well - without any increase in pay. At her yearly review, her manager put "good" in the report. Somewhat dismayed, Betty asked, "why did you only score me as good? I took the initiative and did all this work without extra pay." Her manager replied, "because that's your job." As Betty told that story, I could see her motivation crushed and draining out of her.

This is the exact opposite to one of the best work environments I know of, the Barry-Wehmiller Corporation. And whenever the CEO Bob Chapman and Author of the book "[Everybody Matters](https://www.amazon.com/Everybody-Matters-Extraordinary-Caring-People/dp/1591847796/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1516774019&sr=8-1&keywords=everybody+matter)" (hyperlink [https://www.amazon.com/Everybody-Matters-Extraordinary-Caring-People/dp/1591847796/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1516774019&sr=8-1&keywords=everybody+matter](https://www.amazon.com/Everybody-Matters-Extraordinary-Caring-People/dp/1591847796/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1516774019&sr=8-1&keywords=everybody+matter)) is asked what his company does, he replies: "We grow people."

**Question:** *Where are you on the spectrum? How can you move to more self-determination?*

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**SEO tags:** motivation, work environments, xxx

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## Peter Axtell

**Writes and speaks about:** Motivation, Purpose, Values, Coaching, Assessments, Entrepreneurship, Leadership, Team, Hiring, Employee Engagement

Peter is Co-Founder and Director of Media Production & Coaching Strategy at [WhatsNext.com](https://www.whatsnext.com) – the leading career design and job search platform with an audience of over 100,000. He's also Co-Founder and Chief Business Development Officer at [MotivationFinder.com](https://www.motivationfinder.com) – platform for the only proven and scientifically validated assessment that helps you reach your full potential through *self-motivation*.

You can take the [MotivationFinder™ self-assessment](#) for free and instantly discover your number one motivator.

As a long-time trained coach with decades of experience in what triggers and motivates people Peter uses efficient strategies that deliver results while maintaining or building a culture of trust, communication, and caring between individuals and teams, enabling them to be their best selves most quickly.

At a glance, Peter is a serial entrepreneur, husband, father, speaker, musician at heart and a relentless reader.

**Peter's WHY:** To help people discover their central purpose, do what they love and live a fulfilled life.

His core idea is "If you understand what makes you tick, then the things you try will start to click." The easiest way to get in touch with Peter is through [LinkedIn](#).