



Help your subordinates make progress in their work

The stakes

Researchers have shown that the pleasure of doing one's job efficiently is one of the main factors in employee satisfaction. People who take pleasure in their work are more motivated and ultimately perform better. Managers are thus advised to create conditions that help their subordinates feel their efforts are productive. This can be done in several ways: set clear and stimulating objectives, allow freedom to take initiative, offer encouragement, etc. But the experts suggest that managers primarily focus on eliminating the obstacles which may hinder effective action, because people become demoralized when their progress is totally or partially blocked. Lifting these roadblocks is consequently one of the most powerful drivers available to managers to support the performance of their team members.

Watch out for four potential pitfalls

Keep an eye on four potential pitfalls in particular to reinforce the motivation of your employees:

PITFALL	EXAMPLE	TIPS
1 Organizational constraints Many managers underestimate the internal constraints faced by their subordinates. And yet, due to their position in the hierarchy, managers can often do a great deal to eliminate roadblocks.	Asking your subordinates to validate every step of a project with a sluggish department, and letting them manage on their own, while dropping a word with the department manager could alleviate the problem!	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask your subordinates to tell you about the obstacles they encounter in their work, of which you may not be aware.• Try to rectify the situation when your subordinates suffer from organizational constraints detrimental to their performance.
2 Lack of strategic clarity For people to feel they are progressing in their work, they must have a clear and credible objective. But because managers are "at the controls" and better informed, they do not always realize how confusing or variable the vision may seem to their subordinates.	Asking people every quarter to pursue new strategic objectives or tackle new issues without completing the initiatives from the previous quarter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take the time to discuss the strategy to help people see the big picture.• Take care to explain the underlying reasons for your directives and why priorities may need to change at times.
3 Feeling unsupported Feeling supported is sometimes indispensable for people to make progress in resolving technical problems or simply stay motivated. A delicate balance must consequently be struck between empowerment and support.	Entrusting team members with a highly challenging project, and then, in the name of autonomy, letting them find their own solutions, without providing support or verifying the results.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be sure to schedule updates with your subordinates to discuss how their work is progressing.• Clearly explain that you are available if needed and specify how your subordinates should go about asking you for support.• Regularly compliment subordinates for the work accomplished.
4 Lack of autonomy Managers concerned with supervising the advancement of work may require excessive reporting, or be too hands-on, giving subordinates the impression they have no room to move.	Asking a subordinate to take charge of a given project, only to step in at regular intervals to redo or modify the person's work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agree on the level of autonomy granted to your subordinates and the points on which they should consult you.• Accept that your subordinates may not necessarily do things as you would, and avoid imposing your methods on them.