

# The Commitment Chemical

---

by Mary Wendt

Creating a motivated, winning team is the subject of millions of books and countless lectures. Modern conjecture on building a cohesive team denies that mere discipline and hard work are enough to accomplish the task. Instead, theorists turn to a more interpersonal approach that is not only widely successful, but exponentially more fun along the way! To have an effective team that remains committed to its ultimate purpose, you must first motivate yourself, understand what motivates others, and set clear and concise goals for the team. Following this recipe for success is guaranteed to bring you personal and professional satisfaction.

## I. MOTIVATE YOURSELF

Before you can inspire others to extend themselves, you need to develop your own sense of motivation. Here are some tips to help you:

- ❁ Build your confidence and develop self-belief. Success doesn't always go to the strongest person, but to the person with the greatest conviction. You are taking a step in the right direction by continuing to network at dance classes, contests, camps and clinics.
  - ❁ If you work alone, identify an understanding person with whom you can talk through dance team issues and who will encourage you. A mentor can help.
  - ❁ If you feel overwhelmed by a daunting task, such as sorting out your costumes or files, it tends to affect the rest of your attitude.
- There are three ways you might deal with a large task:*
1. Divide it up into smaller chunks and start immediately on the first chunk.
  2. Use an officer, parent or call a colleague who can relieve your anxiety in dealing with the task someone who may have more knowledge on the subject than yourself.
  3. Delegate the task to an officer or parent. Delegation can be a great motivator – but dumping an unwanted job on someone isn't.
- ❁ Assess, plan, act. Write a plan for yourself for the next year, both in business and personal terms. To help you stay on task during your weekly planning, set tough, but realistic objectives with timelines that are achievable and defined.

- ❁ Write down why you want to do something, even if the reasons hardly seem valid. Something as simple as 'I want a clear desk so I don't have to start the day in a mess' is valid. Clean it up tonight and start tomorrow afresh.
- ❁ Use picture power or imagination to 'fix' your goals. Have you ever seen something in a catalog and longed for it? Visualize the result you want, because it is easier to visualize having something that you can see. Savor the emotions you will feel when (not if) you land that triple pirouette. Also, collect pictures that summarize these emotions – your inspiration for a song, family fun shots, team games – and pin these around your desk to remind yourself why you are doing it all.
- ❁ Tell your team and officers what you are going to do – it will make you feel more committed.
- ❁ Compile a record of past successes. When you feel you are achieving nothing, review your records to remind yourself what you have achieved!
- ❁ Give yourself a pat on the back. You deserve it for having the strength of character to go out and make things happen. Find the fun in yourself, your own unique zaniness and cultivate a fun and spontaneous spirit.

## II. MOTIVATE OTHERS

Humans have needs, and one of those needs is for belonging. We want to feel a part of something... to be included. Our association with others is a necessary part of our completeness. But if you look at our lives today, there is much separation, both in our neighborhoods and at work. Yet the need for affiliation is always present.

Perhaps this is why dance and drill teams tend to be valued. It's the one opportunity to pull back and look at ourselves as this larger team of people who truly work together toward a common purpose. With that said, how can we take this group of individuals and motivate them?

- ❖ Do Activities. Allowing time for the members to display their talents and further develop creativity will only enhance their ability and provide you with insights into each member's personality and expressiveness. These exercises will facilitate a chance to break the tension, and foster an atmosphere of acceptance, freedom and trust.



---

---

An environment that fosters fun is characterized by positive energy, high self-esteem, and team spirit. People feel alive and want to give their best effort to the task. Fun contributes to the creation of an environment that nurtures and sustains what we call dancer “want to”. You cannot put a price on “want to”. Individuals can be trained to do just about anything, but first they must have the motivation. If work and rehearsals are fun, the results will be better.

*(Adapted from 301 Ways to Have Fun at Work by Dave Hemsath and Leslie Yerkes)*

Some fun ideas to incorporate into your daily routine are:

- ☐ **Play Dance Bingo.** What is dance bingo? Assign students to compile a list of dance terms, fight song words and any other pertinent terminology to play.
- ☐ **Organize spontaneous contests** such as marshmallow fights, a Friday afternoon bowling contest in a long hallway, water gun fights, etc., to build team spirit and foster creativity.
- ☐ **During a “retreat weekend”** getting ready for contest, have dancers bring a disposable camera to record the frivolous side of a stressful season.
- ☐ **Have members bring baby pictures** of themselves and post them on a board in the dressing area. Everyone can try and guess whose baby picture is adorning the wall. This exercise is a fun icebreaker for the newbie’s.
- ☐ **Encourage your social officers to create a fun file.** Capture fun ideas and humorous resources in a file filled with newspaper clippings, cartoons, and headlines. Expand the file to be a “fun first aid kit”, with objects that stimulate laughter and create fun breaks. Before you know it, you will have a fun drawer bulging with activities and ideas to keep the joy in practices. Fun is a social glue: it fosters relationships between individuals in teams; it develops the trust necessary for high performance teamwork; it soothes the natural tensions that arise when people work together; it is fundamental to teams experiencing the satisfaction of creating something larger than themselves.
- ☐ **Motivate with praise!** If you see someone do something great, make sure you notice and praise him or her. Once you compliment someone on something they have done well, they will always do it great from then on.

☐ **Be Excited!** If you are excited they, in turn, will be excited. As the saying goes, you must first activate yourself in order to activate others. Show your enthusiasm for whatever they are working on and it will be contagious.

### III. SET GOALS

The first thing your team needs to do is realize that success is not something that you wish for...it is something you work for! Point out to your line that teams who have achieved success have done so through sacrifice, hard work, and discipline. Luck is not involved. I feel that one of the most important aspects of directing is teaching your dancers the importance of GOAL SETTING.

- Define your goal in writing. Putting your goal on paper reflects a bit of formality, a “contract” you are establishing for yourself. Include your officers or team in on the brainstorming of these ideas. The more they understand, the more they will absorb the philosophy of your directing style and the direction of your program.
- Team Goal Examples
  - a) Competitive
  - b) Community related
  - c) To improve a weak area
  - d) Team reputation
  - e) School public relations
- Individual Goal Examples
  - a) Splits/high kicks
  - b) Top physical condition
  - c) Great attitude
  - d) Improve overall ability (smile, stiffness, etc.)
  - f) Jazz skills/technique

*(Adapted from Cindy Clough’s article on Dance Team Motivation)*

- Set a realistic date for accomplishing this goal.
- What tasks will you need to accomplish in order to meet this goal?
- Make a list of tasks you will need to accomplish to achieve the goals. Prioritize them in sequential order, beginning with those that need to be accomplished first.
- Assign monthly, weekly and daily deadlines to each of the sub-tasks that will lead to the accomplishment of the goal.



- Record your progress in the attainment of sub goals.
  - Reward yourself and your team for the attainment of goals. Balance hard work with FUN!
- (Adapted from Steven Ervin, Salado ISD Superintendent)*

Waiting until everything is perfect before making a move is like waiting to start a trip until all the traffic lights are green.

-Karen Ireland

When you as a director have a vision, you can picture the result of a project before it begins, you can rely on your own measuring stick. If a director stays on course, though good times and bad, the team will work from a firm foundation. They gain an identity. The team stands for something. Define each member's role; they cannot be accountable unless each person understands what is expected of them on a daily basis.

Presenting this foundation will be the basis of your motivational tools throughout the season. Refer to it always, live it and they will buy into it. Having your eye only on the trophy will not guarantee success - but success will ensue when you emphasize that the STRIVING is what builds a team and the ARRIVING completes the team.

Energizing your team on a continual basis can be exhausting. Motivation never lasts - there are always hurdles along the way that drain energy or distractions that take your eye off the ball. Remembering that everyone has different motivations will spare you countless hours of fruitless efforts and allow you to tailor activities for the individual in need. Breaking into smaller groups, fostering each members sense of belonging, and recognizing and rewarding positive effort are all essential tools in building a motivated team.

## Motivational Guidelines

*(Copy for each dancer upon making the team)*

- I. Take Charge Of Yourself
  - A. Keep organized
  - B. Maintain a positive attitude
  - C. Be punctual
  - D. Prepare by practicing to improve your weak areas
  - E. Keep your body physically fit
  - F. Do not criticize others (leaders, directors, team mates)
  - G. Show good school spirit
- II. Be A "Team Player"
  - A. Allow YOUR positive attitude to influence others
  - B. Always be willing to contribute MORE than your share
  - C. Squelch others who are negative
  - D. Lead by example
  - E. Offer help to others who might need it
- III. Support And Respect Your Director/Leaders
  - A. The director is always right
  - B. They always have to put in more time than others
  - C. They will always have the team's best interest at heart
  - D. Be willing to approach them with problems, suggestions and questions

*(From the American Drill Team School website)*

