Case Incident 1
Multitasking: A Good Use of Your Time

Multitasking—doing two or more things at once, or rapidly switching from one task to another—is a characteristic of the Millennial generation. One recent study revealed that during a typical week, 81 percent of young people report "media multitasking" at least some of the time.

Multitasking nicely illustrates our point that motivation is not just effort but also how you direct your efforts. However, is the direction of efforts in multitasking efficient or inefficient?

Many people who multitask say it makes them more efficient: "Why not do two things at once if I can accomplish about as much as if I only did one thing?" they ask. Research, however, suggests multitasking is inefficient, that it actually takes longer to do two things at once than to do one thing first and then turn to the other. David Meyer, a University of Michigan psychologist who has studied multitasking, argues, "You wind up needing to use the same sorts of mental and physical resources for performing each of the tasks. You're having to switch back and forth between the two tasks as opposed to really doing them simultaneously."

Multitasking appears to result in adverse outcomes beyond inefficiency. Another study found multitaskers absorb material more superficially; they notice more things in their environment but are able to learn material less deeply. "It's not that they can't focus," says one researcher. "It's that they focus on everything. They hear everything— even things they would normally be able to block out— because they are now so used to attending to many things at once." Other research suggests that while multitaskers have more friends, these friends are more likely to be superficial contacts who quickly fade away. One researcher says, "There's a danger that having few long-term relationships is giving way to many superficial, fleeting relationships."

Questions
1. One expert who has studied multitasking calls it "a big illusion," arguing that multitaskers think they are more motivated and productive even when they aren't. Do you consider yourself a multitasker? If so, does this case make you reconsider whether multitasking makes you more motivated or productive?
2. The effects of multitasking have been found to be more negative when the tasks are complex. Why do you think this is the case?
3. You might think multitasking makes you happy. While there is less research on this topic, some evidence suggests multitaskers feel more stress in their work. Multitaskers "feel a constant low-level panic." Do you agree? Why or why not?
4. One expert recommends we "recreate boundaries" by training ourselves, while doing something, not to look at other devices like cell phone or television for increasing periods of time. Do you think you could do that? For how long?

Sources: R. A. Clay, "Mini-Multitaskers," *Monitor on Psychology* 40, no. 2 ((2009), pp. 38–40; and A. Tugend, "Multitasking Can Make You Lose . . . Um . . . Focus," *New York Times* (October 25, 2008), p. B7.

Class Exercise

- Form groups of two.
- One is the multitasker; the other is the observer.
- Have the multitasker set up for three activities.

Go to:
http://www.springfrog.com/games/bridges/

Reading comp 1 http://www.abcteach.com/free/l/landmarks_everest_wardcam_a.pdf

Reading comp 2
http://www.abcteach.com/free/r/rc_bridge_goldengate_upperelemmiddle.pdf

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g891E2aczys&feature=popular

1. Have the multitasker start with the following objectives:
    - Complete three wins on the bridge building game.
    - Complete all the questions on the reading comprehension exercise
    - View the Lady GaGa interview.
2. The multitasker should jump from one activity to the next as the observer announces "Switch" every thirty seconds.
3. When tasks are complete, record the time it took to complete them all.
4. Have the multitasker take all tasks again, but working on one at a time. Have the observer calculate time to complete all.
5. Discuss whether or not there was a difference in time taken. Did the multitasker feel any different in the two exercises?
6. Can any conclusions be drawn about the effectiveness and efficiency of multitasking?

Case Incident 2
Thanks for Nothing

Though it may seem fairly obvious that receiving praise and recognition from one's company is a motivating experience, sadly many companies are failing miserably when it comes to saying "thanks" to their employees. According to Curt Coffman, global practice leader at Gallup, 71 percent of U.S. workers are "disengaged," essentially meaning that they could care less about their organization. Coffman states, "We're operating at one-quarter of the capacity in terms of managing human capital. It's alarming." Employee recognition programs, which became more popular as the U.S. economy shifted from industrial to knowledge-based, can be an effective way to motivate employees and make them feel valued. In many cases, however, recognition programs are doing "more harm than good" according to Coffman.

Take Ko, a 50-year-old former employee of a dot-com in California. Her company proudly instituted a rewards program designed to motivate employees. What were the rewards for a job well-done? Employees would receive a badge which read "U Done Good" and, each year, would receive a T-shirt as a means of annual recognition. Once an employee received 10 "U Done Good" badges, he or she could trade them in for something bigger and better—a paperweight. Ko states that she would have preferred a raise. "It was patronizing. There wasn't any deep thought involved in any of this." To make matters worse, she says, the badges were handed out arbitrarily and were not tied to performance. And what about those T-shirts? Ko states that the company instilled a strict dress code, so employees couldn't even wear the shirts if they wanted to. Needless to say, the employee recognition program seemed like an empty gesture rather than a motivator.

Even programs that provide employees with more expensive rewards can backfire, especially if the rewards are given insincerely. Eric Lange, an employee of a trucking company, recalls the time when one of the company's vice presidents achieved a major financial goal for the company. The vice president, who worked in an office next to Lange, received a Cadillac Seville as his company car and a new Rolex wristwatch that cost the company $10,000. Both were lavish gifts, but the way they were distributed left a sour taste in the vice president's mouth. He entered his office to find the Rolex in a cheap cardboard box sitting on his desk, along with a brief letter explaining that he would be receiving a 1099 tax form in order to pay taxes on the watch. Lange states of the vice president, "He came into my office, which was right next door, and said, 'Can you believe this?'" A mere 2 months later, the vice president pawned the watch. Lange explains, "It had absolutely no meaning for him."

Such experiences resonate with employees who may find more value in a sincere pat on the back than gifts from management that either are meaningless or aren't conveyed with respect or sincerity. However, sincere pats on the back may be hard to come by. Gallup's poll found that 61 percent of employees stated that they haven't received a sincere "thank you" from management in the past year. Findings such as these are troubling, as verbal rewards are not only inexpensive for companies to hand out but also are quick and easy to distribute. Of course, verbal rewards do need to be paired sometimes with tangible benefits that employees value—after all, money talks. In addition, when praising employees for a job well-done, managers need to ensure that the praise is given in conjunction with the specific accomplishment. In this way,

employees may not only feel valued by their organization but will also know what actions to take to be rewarded in the future.

Questions

1.   If praising employees for doing a good job seems to be a fairly easy and obvious motivational tool, why do you think companies and managers don't often do it?
        Answer: Often times, managers are socialized to "expect" good performance from people; you often hear the phrase, "They are paid for the work that they do; they don't need me to thank them for it." It is often inconsistent with the culture of an organization to positively praise employees.

2.   As a manager, what steps would you take to motivate your employees after observing them perform well?
        Answer: Students should work in teams to generate lists of possible techniques, rewards, and other mechanisms that may reinforce appropriate performance.

3.   Are there any downsides to giving employees too much verbal praise? What might these downsides be and how could you alleviate them as a manager?
        Answer: The only downside is that people come to expect praise and recognition for a job well done. If a manager begins this process, there is usually no retreat.

4.   As a manager, how would you ensure that recognition given to employees is distributed fairly and justly?
        Answer: Students can work in teams to generate lists of various ways that recognition can be distributed across employees within an organization. Have each team report to the larger group.

Source: Based on J. Sandberg, "Been Here 25 Years and All I Got Was This Lousy T-Shirt," *The Wall Street Journal,* January 28, 2004, p. B.1.

Instructor's Choice
Applying the Concepts

What is the most successful film studio of all time on a picture-for-picture basis? If you said Disney, Universal, Fox, or MGM you would be wrong. The answer is Pixar. That's right, Pixar, the company that brought you Buzz Lightyear and Nemo. Their success, according to industry experts, is based on the fact that Pixar creates the entire film itself—the idea, the story, characters, relationships, production, and even distribution to some extent. This turnkey approach has left other film studios in the dust and scratching their heads. In the beginning Pixar was tied to Disney since Pixar made movies and Disney distributed them (to the tune of $200 million net per movie). However, recently Pixar has decided to change its Disney relationship and negotiations have been very strained. Pixar is poised to go it alone. Why? Each Pixar film has pushed the threshold of photorealism and Pixar sees films as expressions of entertainment art rather than cold products. Will Pixar make it to "infinity and beyond?" Chief Pixar architect Steve Jobs is betting that the answer will be an unqualified "yes."

- Using a search engine of your own choosing, conduct a research query about Pixar and its history. List the successes that the company has had.
- After reviewing the company's Web site (see Pixar.com) and information gained from "a" above, write what you perceive to be five (5) organizational objectives of Pixar.
- How are the organizational objectives you have just written connected to the success of Pixar?
- Review Pixar's plans for the future. Are these plans consistent with the organizational objectives that you have listed? Explain and discuss.

Instructor Discussion

Before beginning your evaluation of Pixar, read a recent article about the company and its relationship with Disney entitled "Welcome to Planet Pixar," by Austin Bunn found in *Wired* (June 2004). From this article or an Internet search, students will be able to list several organizational objectives of this emerging film giant. A few of those objectives would be: creativity, flexibility, control, imagination, profitability, independence, and futuristic artistic applications. Students should be able to cite more objectives based on their research. Pixar's move to replicate the success of George Lucas and Steven Spielberg will make it no friends in the stogie film industry but it does provide an interesting study in extending one's corporate mission.

**EXPLORING OB TOPICS ON THE
WORLD WIDE WEB**

Search Engines are our navigational tool to explore the WWW. Some commonly used search engines are:

www.goto.com   www.google.com   www.excite.com
www.lycos.com   www.hotbot.com   www.bing.com

1.   Paying up is hard to do! Should the organization choose a skill-based pay plan or pay-for-performance? Start by comparing the two, then making a recommendation as to why one would be preferable over the other. Go to http://www.hrzone.com/topics/skill_based_pay.html to learn more about skill-based plans. Go to http://www.edweek.org/ew/ewstory.cfm?slug=28denver_web.h23 to learn why teachers in Denver have approved a pay-for-performance plan. If you were to make a recommendation as to what strategy would be the most effective, which would you choose? Why? (Hint: it will have to be linked to a motivational theory). Write a one-page reaction paper discussing your views.

2.   From quality circles to TQM, getting employees involved is not a simple venture. The Web site http://www.govexec.com/reinvent/articles/0797fqg2.htm discusses this issue and why America did not have the same success as Japan with the concept. Once you've read this page, click on one of the related stories (e.g. Death of TQM). Write a short summary of both pages—key points only—that can be used during a discussion of TQM.

3.   What do workers want? Money? Probably, but other things too. Go to About.com to read an assessment of what workers want at:

http://humanresources.about.com/library/weekly/aa083002a.htm

Write your own assessment of what motivational theories are at play in this article—just a paragraph or two. Bring your assessment and the article to class for a group discussion.

4.   Self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-respect, and self-actualization. Learn more about these terms and how employers can foster these concepts in their employees at:

http://humanresources.about.com/library/weekly/aa081301a.htm

Write a journal entry or short paper about when you experienced an environment that encouraged you to develop your potential. For example, it could be when you were involved in an arts program, writing clinic, a club, a sports team, a class, etc. What motivated you when you felt discouraged (or were simply tired and did not want to go that day)? Who was the "coach" who encouraged you, and how important of a role did that person have in your success? What did you learn about yourself in the process? Do these skills transfer to other areas of your life?