

# Motivating the Clinical Instructor

Christine A. Lauber, EdD, ATC • U of Indianapolis  
Jeffrey W. Wimer, PhD, ATC • Millersville University

**A**THLETIC TRAINING EDUCATORS and administrators face numerous challenges, one of which is motivating people. Instilling in others a “desire to achieve a goal, combined with the energy to work toward the goal”<sup>1</sup> is not easy. Understanding motivation is important, because the success or failure of an organization often depends on the motivation levels of the people in the organization. The purpose of this report is to review motivation theory and to provide a framework

for understanding how motivation influences behavior.

Consider a story about Mike, who is the only certified athletic trainer (ATC) at a large urban high school in the Midwest. Mike loves his job and does it well. He recently expressed an interest

started taking graduate courses necessary to pursue a future role as a school administrator, which was demanding much of his personal and professional time. Mike quickly became apathetic about his ACI role. He was unmotivated (Figure 1).

Mike’s case is not atypical. Instilling motivation can be challenging, and sustaining motivation can be even more difficult. Strategies to increase motivation range from fear-inducing threats and tough-love tactics to non-coercive actions that appeal to a person’s moral values and sense of self. Fast forward several weeks in the story about Mike. Upon learning about his frustrations, the ATEP administrator took immediate action by scheduling a meeting at Mike’s convenience to identify and address Mike’s needs. In other words, what could be done to inspire Mike? As a result of quick intervention and acknowledgment of his concerns, Mike and

## KEY POINTS

- ▶ Supportive environments enhance intrinsic motivation.
- ▶ Athletic Training administrators play an important role in identifying staff needs.
- ▶ Intrinsic motivation promotes productivity and creativity

in serving as an Approved Clinical Instructor (ACI) for the local Athletic Training Education Program (ATEP). Initially, Mike was thrilled about the possibility of becoming an ACI. However, his enthusiasm quickly waned after realizing that completion of clinical proficiency evaluation forms required a considerable amount of time and energy, and he felt pressured to complete the forms in a timely manner. Moreover, the daunting task of performing ACI duties suddenly prevented him from providing care for his student-athletes, the primary responsibility of his position at the high school. Additionally, he had recently



Figure 1 Unmotivated ACI.

the ATEP administrator determined that they would need to develop an alternative method for evaluating the students assigned to him.

After the meeting, Mike recognized that he could incorporate the new evaluation system into his daily routine without comprising the amount of time devoted to providing high-quality athletic training services. He was motivated to teach again in the clinical setting, and to do it well (Figure 2). Granted, not all situations such as Mike's are effectively resolved; however, failure to recognize the important role that leaders play in identifying, understanding, and assisting individuals in finding a means to have staff needs met is often a barrier to motivation. The motivation of ACIs, or students or employees, cannot be achieved through a "one-size fits all" approach. What works with one person may not work with the next. Viewing people as individuals is an important step in the process.



Figure 2 Motivated ACI.

## Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Motivation theories often emphasize a dichotomy of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors or a dichotomy of positive and negative motivational factors.<sup>2,3</sup> To be intrinsically motivated means that an individual engages in activities for fun, pleasure, or the satisfaction derived from the activity alone.<sup>4</sup> Work is sustained because of interest and enjoyment in the task, not because of special benefits or external rewards. For example, Mike's desire to serve as an ACI and to teach students demonstrates intrinsic motivation, because he did not seek to gain approval from others, to receive a reward, and/or to avoid punishment. Mike enjoys edu-

cating and mentoring students. Conversely, had Mike sought an ACI role primarily for additional compensation or other incentives, such as free tickets to sports events or a fitness center membership, his behavior would be classified as extrinsically motivated.<sup>4</sup>

Viewing motivation as being either "intrinsic" or "extrinsic" may give the impression that people are primarily motivated by one factor or the other, but the reality is not black or white. Motivation is influenced by numerous factors, such as one's personality, culture, environment, current life situation, and socialization experiences. Individuals can be intrinsically motivated in some activities and extrinsically motivated in others. In fact, individuals may also be both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to pursue the same task. For example, the high school ATC who seeks to become an ACI because she intrinsically enjoys clinical teaching and working closely with students may discover later that the ATEP provides extrinsic rewards, such as free shirts and formal recognition of an association with a university, becomes equally important for continuation in her ACI role.

## Multi-Dimensional Perspectives of Motivation

Numerous theories have been developed to explain human motivation. One of the more popular theories is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which suggests that individuals aim to satisfy physical needs, and self-esteem needs to attain self-actualization.<sup>5</sup> Maslow's theory lacks an evidence base to support this contention, but efforts to develop such a unified theory that can be applied to multiple situations continue.<sup>6</sup>

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)<sup>4,6</sup> is an evidence-based approach to understanding motivation that involves a concept that is somewhat analogous to Maslow's theory, i.e., individuals pursue activities to satisfy their basic psychological needs. SDT is not concerned with what causes intrinsic motivation, but rather what maintains intrinsic motivation.<sup>7</sup> According to SDT,<sup>4,6</sup> there are three main psychological needs that are the basis for sustaining motivation: (a) autonomy, (b) competence, and (c) relatedness, each of which are essential for self-motivation and personal well-being. When these three needs are met, an individual is considered to be self-determined, i.e., not tethered by the demands or wishes of others, but free to pursue one's own interest. Unlike Maslow's theory, there is no

hierarchy dictating that lower needs must be satisfied first, and then higher needs become activated. SDT suggests that the three needs must be met to maintain motivation. Most importantly, this means that the environmental conditions surrounding the individual must be supportive, such as the availability of resources for development in the ACI role and the provision of positive performance feedback.<sup>7</sup> If an individual's psychological need changes, the ATEP administrator should be prepared to help the ACI meet the new needs.

One need that individuals have is the opportunity to make independent choices, i.e., autonomy. People often become apathetic when they cannot control their environments. A second need that individuals have is a sense of competence, which relates to an individual's innate abilities to master tasks of their own choosing without a need for external rewards. A third need that individuals have is for a sense of relatedness, i.e., emotional connection and acceptance by others. People want meaningful relationships and supportive environments that they seek from groups and the community. SDT suggests that highly motivated individuals are driven by a desire to develop a sense of self. Leaders who wish to motivate others should consider the environment surrounding the individual, as well as the personal circumstances of those they wish to motivate. Personal and family issues are potential factors that may undermine the internalization of motivation.

## Self Determination Theory Applied

Returning to Mike, remember he expressed an interest in teaching and sharing his knowledge and skills with students and sought out the opportunity to fulfill this interest without any coercion from the ATEP. In essence, Mike exhibited fulfillment of the psychological need for autonomy by initiating the process of becoming an ACI. It was his decision, not an assignment placed upon him by his school's administration or the ATEP. In terms of competence, Mike agreed to serve as an ACI to demonstrate his athletic training skills and knowledge to students. He may also have wanted the opportunity to serve as an ACI because he thought it would be challenging. In SDT, competence relates to an individual's desire to utilize knowledge and skills, especially when the situation is challenging. In terms of relatedness, or feeling connected to others and accepted, Mike was the only ATC at his high school. He may have sensed that mentoring athletic training

students was a way to meet a relatedness need through an affiliation with the ATEP.

Deci and Ryan<sup>4,6</sup> suggest that when an individual has self-determination toward an activity, motivation to engage in the activity is enhanced. Intrinsically motivated individuals tend to persist longer and are more fully engaged than individuals who are extrinsically motivated. Individuals with self-determination have more interest, excitement, and confidence, which results in enhanced performance, persistence, and creativity, i.e., the behaviors that ATEP educators and administrators want from ACIs. Table 1 identifies several strategies for promoting self-determination.

**TABLE 1. STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE SELF-DETERMINATION**

Listen carefully to ideas and suggestions.
Encourage and promote participation in decision making.
Respond to questions quickly and provide answers to questions.
Provide positive feedback.
Provide support and encouragement.
Acknowledge effort and service as an ACI.
Communicate often.

## Using Self Determination Theory as a Framework

A framework is a conceptual model used to solve a complex issue. For ATEP administrators working with ACIs, SDT can provide a useful framework. For example, recall how Mike had become frustrated with the task of completing the student evaluation forms. He viewed them as a burden that required an excessive amount of time and effort, and which detracted from fulfillment of his primary job responsibilities and time devoted to his graduate studies. Addressing situations such as Mike's in a timely and direct manner is an important characteristic of effective ATEP leadership. However, identification of the best means to intervene is not easy. SDT provides a framework for ATEP administrators to consider when working with an apathetic ACI.

The meeting with Mike at his high school was an important first step that created a sense of relatedness, or community connection. Through active listening, the ATEP administrator discovered that Mike was feeling pressure to complete the evaluation forms within a specific time frame set by the ATEP. Mike indicated that taking graduate courses also contributed to his anxiety. Interestingly, Mike admitted that he did not fully understand how to properly complete the evaluation forms, which may have contributed to his sense of frustration. Good communication between the ATEP administrator and ACI is critical for identification of the psychological needs and life stressors experienced by the ACI. By encouraging Mike to share his perspectives, the ATEP administrator could determine the reasons that his motivation had diminished.

After the meeting, Mike better understood how to complete the student evaluation forms and even offered to apply his technology skills to convert them into web-based electronic forms. By developing electronic student evaluation forms, Mike was able to complete and submit them at his convenience, which contributed to a sense of autonomy. As a result of Mike's development of electronic forms, the ATEP derived the benefits of a new system that could be used

by all of its ACIs. The ATEP administrator continued to communicate with Mike throughout the year to further address his needs and to solicit his input regarding ATEP procedures.

## Strategies to Enhance Motivation

By using the principles of SDT, ATEP leaders can become better equipped to recognize the intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors influencing the behaviors of ACIs. Table 2 presents strategies for enhancement of intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation.

Providing special gifts or rewards to an intrinsically-oriented person can be perceived as a manipulative tactic or an act of power and thus may undermine motivation.<sup>8</sup> Gifts and rewards for intrinsically oriented individuals should be presented in a manner that promotes a sense of competence and appreciation for a "job well done." Gifts and rewards are significant motivators for an extrinsically motivated individual, but tend to be less sustainable than factors promoting intrinsic motivation. In Mike's case, simply giving him an ATEP staff shirt without trying to understand the factors influencing his behavior as an ACI would have ignored several key concepts of motivational theory.

**TABLE 2. STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE MOTIVATION AMONG CLINICAL INSTRUCTORS<sup>9</sup>**

Intrinsic Motivation	Extrinsic Motivation
Verbally praise good teaching.	Free staff shirt
Intentionally link teaching effectiveness as an achievement for the ACI.	Free athletic pass or tickets
Provide training, learning opportunities, and development.	Free campus fitness center membership
Provide informational feedback about the clinical instructor's role as an ACI.	Free library subscription
Provide positive feedback from students.	Paid NATA membership dues
Encourage self-evaluation and reflective teaching practices.	Paid liability insurance
Provide frequent interaction and collaboration opportunities with other clinical instructors.	Paid off-campus continuing education opportunities
Support efforts to improve instruction by being accessible for questions and concerns.	Paid on-campus continuing education opportunities
Allow involvement in programmatic decisions.	Recognition given at banquet or luncheon with a certificate or plaque



## Conclusions

SDT provides a potentially valuable framework for athletic training educators and administrators to use in developing strategies that will enhance the motivation level of ACIs. The theory suggests that humans have a natural tendency to engage in activities that satisfy psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these three needs are fulfilled, an individual is considered self-determined, thereby sustaining intrinsic motivation and promoting productivity. ■

## References

1. Lintern, S. *What is motivation?* Retrieved August 1, 2007 from <http://www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/motivation/Pages/What%20is%20Motivation.htm>; 2002.
2. Hoy WK, Miskel CG. *Educational Administration Theory, Research and Practice*. 5th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.; 1996:320-323.
3. Hanson EM. *Educational Administration and Organizational Behavior*. 4th ed. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon; 1996:200-202.
4. Deci EL, Ryan RM. *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-determination in Human Behavior*. New York: Plenum; 1985.
5. Maslow AH. *Motivation and Personality*. 2nd ed. New York: Harper & Row; 1970.
6. Deci EL, Ryan RM. Overview of self-determination theory: an organismic dialectical perspective. In: Deci EL, Ryan RM, eds. *Handbook of Self-determination Research*. Rochester, NY: The University of Rochester Press; 2002:3-33.
7. Ryan RM, Deci EL. Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *Amer Psych*. 2000;55:68-78.
8. Deci EL, Koestner R, Ryan RM. A meta-analytic review of experiments examining the effects of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation. *Psychol Bull*. 1999;125:627-668.
9. Holloway JH. Sustaining experienced teachers. *Educ Leadership*. 2003;60(4):87-89.

**Christine A. Lauber** is an associate professor in the Department of Athletic Training at the University of Indianapolis.

**Jeffrey W. Wimer** is an associate professor of Wellness and Sport Science at Millersville University in Millersville, PA.

# LET US HELP YOU...



- MANUFACTURER OF CUSTOM FOOT ORTHOTICS.
- SUPPLIER OF A FULL LINE OF FOOT RELATED ITEMS: MOLESKIN, FELTS, FOAMS, PRECUT PADS, TURF TOE PLATES, REPLACEMENT INSOLES, FOOT SPLINTS AND HEEL CUPS, CRADLES & LIFTS.

**WHEN YOU THINK FEET.... THINK FOOT MANAGEMENT**

*Put Us On Your Bid List!*

**800-HOT-FOOT**



**Email Us:**  
[info@footmanagement.com](mailto:info@footmanagement.com)  
**Shop at:**  
[www.FootManagement.com](http://www.FootManagement.com)