

SUSAN FOWLER

Author of *Why Motivating People Doesn't Work...and What Does*

**MASTER
YOUR
*MOTIVATION***



Three Scientific Truths
for Achieving Your Goals

Praise for *Master Your Motivation*

“I’ve performed at the Oscars several times and toured the world with artists such as Justin Timberlake. But *Master Your Motivation* emphasizes that even as a professional dancer, the real reason I practice every day isn’t for those big moments alone. I was energized by remembering to reflect on my life credo: why walk, when you can dance? Now I can apply that important insight to everything I do!”

—**Ava Bernstine, professional dancer and choreographer**

“*Master Your Motivation* teaches each of us that when it comes to motivation, the quality of our motivation matters—and through the skill of motivation, we can shift our motivation anytime we choose! Our tribe flourishes when every member of the tribe thrives through optimal motivation.”

—**Garry Ridge, President and CEO, WD-40 Company, and coauthor of *Helping People Win at Work***

“In Susan’s last book, *Why Motivating People Doesn’t Work . . . and What Does*, I keyed in on debunking the myth ‘It’s not personal; it’s just business.’ As a business owner, ‘If it’s business, it’s personal’ because my work and personal life are both guided by the same values. Now, *Master Your Motivation* gives me the practical skills and tools to guide *everything* I do. Continuously evolving through mindfulness is keeping my passion alive!”

—**Lynn Hutton, business owner and CFO, InnovaSystems International, LLC**

“*Master Your Motivation* is a wake-up call about the nature of motivation. The techniques Susan offers in this groundbreaking book work—I have personally seen people’s motivation transformed, allowing them to be more productive and personally fulfilled in their endeavors. She blazes a trail that leads to a new understanding of motivation that everyone can follow, myself included.”

—**Tom Hood, Deputy Director, Field Sales Leadership Development, Bayer**

“To realize that motivation is both a choice and a skill was a true gift. The feeling that I can manage my own well-being, independent of others, is true power. Thank you, Susan!”

—**Mattias Dahlgren, cofounder and CEO, Great Leaders**

“I loved Susan’s last book, *Why Motivating People Doesn’t Work . . . and What Does*. Our leaders use it to guide their one-to-one goal sessions—which improved our employee work passion scores dramatically. *Master Your Motivation* brings Susan’s groundbreaking model to everyone, along with the skills and tools to apply to both personal and professional goals on a regular basis.”

—**Chris Wollerman, CEO, Inspire Software**

“*Master Your Motivation* teaches all of us, no matter our role, that we can apply the skill of motivation to thrive. But what resonates most for me is the science behind why a strong sense of personal purpose and an investment in deeper relationships are such powerful tools for achieving our goals.”

—**Cheryl Bachelder, former CEO, Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen, Inc., and author of *Dare to Serve***

“I believe this is not ‘just another book on motivation’ but something that is indeed unique and profoundly inspirational. Many aha moments!”

—**Karen Mathis, fashion designer and stylist, powerofappearance.com**

“I can personally attest to the power of Susan’s work on motivation in my own life. I am so excited that through this book, more people will learn about the life-changing skill of motivation.”

—**Nermine Zakhary, Vice President of Professional Development, Xerox Leadership Association**

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for Achieving Your Goals**

Susan Fowler



Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Master Your Motivation

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CONTENTS

Foreword by Jean-Paul Richard with Jacques Forest	v
Introduction—Why Motivation Science Matters	1
Part One—The Truth about Motivation	5
1 Three Scientific Truths	7
2 Motivation Isn't What You Think	17
3 Create Choice	24
4 Create Connection	30
5 Create Competence	37
Part Two—Motivation Is a Skill	43
6 Identify Your Outlook	47
7 Shift Your Outlook	68
8 Reflect on Your Outlook	88
Part Three—What's Stopping You?	109
9 I Can't Shift	113
10 Beware Fatal Distractions	126
11 Work Hazards	139
12 Can People Change?	150
Afterword by Ken Blanchard	159
Notes	163
Resources	169
Acknowledgments	170
Index	173
About the Author	177

*To my siblings, Dee Dee, Terri, and Kip,
whose acceptance of my quirky need to share
whatever I was learning helped me discover my
inherent motivation for teaching. And to my
beloved Drea, who continues to patiently
partner with me on this life journey.*

FOREWORD

Jean-Paul Richard with Jacques Forest

My experience as head coach of the Swedish Olympic team for the Vancouver 2010 Olympics was totally different than coaching the Canadian team in Sochi four years later. The difference wasn't the caliber of athletes competing or the flag I coached under, although being a Canadian coach for a foreign country competing in Canada added extra scrutiny! Both Olympics required a meticulous and rigorous approach to the technical and physical preparation of my program and athletes. In both cases, our goals were high, and the athletes were world class. But the two experiences were as different as night and day—and so were the results. The big difference between my two Olympic experiences was helping my team and athletes master their motivation and, perhaps even more important, learning to master my own motivation so I could be an effective coach. I think my story perfectly illustrates what you can gain from Susan's work and this book.

In Vancouver 2010, our high-caliber athletes had the opportunity to achieve great performances in the name of Sweden. One of the main goals and motivation in our mind (consciously or unconsciously) was to win medals. The pressure to win, not disappoint people—indeed, an entire team, sport, country!—who were supporting us was increased by my need to attain the status of being an Olympic medalist coach and gain the recognition of my peers, not to mention funding and a contract renewal. As you will learn from reading this book, I was partly blinded because my eyes were constantly

on the tangible reward of winning medals and the intangible rewards of status and image. The athletes I coached also didn't receive 100 percent of what I could give them. Under the pressure, I adopted behaviors that limited communication with my athletes—and kept me in only partial touch with my own feelings and emotions.

Using Susan's term, my "suboptimal motivation," fueled by the constant state pressure of the traditional sports system and typical Olympic environment, infected the motivation of everyone around me, creating a chain of events, a loss of energy and concentration, and ultimately limited expression of the athletes' full promise. Focusing on winning medals led to not winning any. Regretfully, we failed to achieve our potential.

I knew I had to find a way to escape the pressure and the negative emotions it generates. The solution came at the beginning of the Olympic cycle on the road to Sochi 2014. I was back in Canada to lead the women's freestyle ski team when I discovered the new science of motivation. With the help of Dr. Jacques Forest, a leading researcher in the field and a professor of motivational psychology in Montreal, I came to understand the role motivation had played in Vancouver. In preparation for Sochi, Dr. Forest and I developed a program to help my staff and athletes shift their focus from winning medals to satisfying their psychological needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence, or what Susan refers to as Choice, Connection, and Competence.

With our focus on what really matters, on February 8, 2014, in Sochi, Russia, we won two Olympic medals (gold and silver) and exceeded all expectations. We learned that winning is a by-product of mastering your motivation—not the reason for your motivation.

I share my story because Dr. Forest and I discovered Susan's first book on motivation, *Why Motivating People Doesn't Work*

... *and What Does*, when it was published in late 2014. We were thrilled. For the first time, someone had unraveled and captured the complex science of motivation for leaders—and more importantly, provided a framework and process for applying it with others. Susan's book went on to become a bestseller translated into fourteen languages, which is testimony to its quality of being far-reaching and easy to understand. I continued to use it with the Canadian Olympic team, and Dr. Forest uses it in his teaching and consulting. Today, the book is still on my desk and helps me in my work as the head of the training programs for Cirque du Soleil.

Now Susan has evolved her ideas and approach to applying motivation science to benefit every individual. I am convinced this book will help you achieve your goals for the right reasons. If you are an athlete, it will help you enjoy the process of training and competing by using your full potential. If you have kids, it will help you give them the gift of optimal motivation. No matter your role, it will give you access to principles for creating a workplace where you can thrive. Ultimately, Susan's approach to motivation, based on real science, will help you be an optimally functioning human being. Now that athletes and coaches have a resource to help them master their motivation, I look forward to hearing them tell their own success stories.

Jean-Paul Richard, head of artist training programs, Cirque du Soleil, cofounder of reROOT Inc., and Olympic medalist coach (Freestyle skiing, Moguls, Sochi 2014)

Jacques Forest, PhD, professor-researcher and motivational psychologist, ESG UQAM, and partner at reROOT Inc.

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INTRODUCTION

Why Motivation Science Matters

Motivation is at the heart of everything you do and want to do but don't. Motivation is also the reason you do things you wish you didn't.

Millions of books, podcasts, seminars, workshops, incentives, contests, rewards, coaching sessions, diet plans, and self-help groups attest to our desire to master our motivation. They also reflect our lack of understanding about what motivation is and how to use it for achieving our goals.

What's missing in most approaches to motivation is a unifying theory and foundational model explaining why a technique works or doesn't. How else will you know when advice is valid, reliable, or worthy of pursuit? We need motivation science—ideas and techniques we can rely on because they are backed by empirical evidence and demonstrated over time to work across a variety of cultures, situations, personalities, genders, and generations.

Of course, a plethora of motivation theories have been touted over the years. Unfortunately, some of the most commonly accepted theories are outdated or have been proven inadequate or downright wrong. For example, we're only now realizing the drawbacks and hidden costs of relying on extrinsic motivation in the workplace. External forms of motivation, often referred to as "carrots" (rewards, incentives,

power, status, and image) and “sticks” (pressure, guilt, fear, and threats) were popularized back in the 1940s by B. F. Skinner, who used training animals as a model for motivating human beings. Now we know that extrinsic motivators do not promote real or permanent change and are more likely to diminish the quality of your results, performance, creativity, innovation, and well-being—even in the short term. And, despite Abraham Maslow’s contributions to motivation science, his hierarchy of needs, the most popular motivation model in the world, has never been empirically proven.¹

Enter Dr. Edward Deci and Dr. Richard Ryan and thousands of self-determination theory (SDT) researchers who have rigorously pursued understanding the nature of our motivation and explaining how it really works.² Their discoveries using a variety of scientific methods, including qualitative and quantitative academic research, neuroscience, and psychological clinical practice, represent the most comprehensive breakthroughs in motivation science. The three scientific truths revealed in this book are at the core of their groundbreaking research. You will come to understand these truths in the coming pages, but that won’t be enough to master your motivation.

As the old saying goes, to know and not to do is not to know. Good science is applied science. Understanding the three scientific truths is only the beginning. You also need to know how to apply the truths—what to do differently than you’ve done in the past. But even well-intentioned approaches to good applied science face the challenge of unraveling complex ideas and translating them into digestible nuggets. Oversimplifying great science to the point it loses its potency poses a challenge. For example, you might have heard about two types of motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic:

- Intrinsic motivation, considered the preferred type of motivation, occurs when you do something for the pure enjoyment of doing it, without the need for or promise of an external reward.
- Extrinsic motivation, considered the less preferred type of motivation, occurs when you need an external prompt or reason for doing something you don't naturally enjoy doing.

However, boiling motivation down to its nubs renders it almost impossible to use. For example, I'm sure you can identify a goal or task that will never be intrinsically motivating to you: dragging yourself out of bed in the morning to attend a staff meeting you think is a waste of time, being forced to leave your family on a Sunday for a business trip, completing bureaucratic paperwork that steals time from your "real" job, or giving up french fries and comfort food to lose weight for your upcoming school reunion.

Simplifying motivation into two types, intrinsic and extrinsic, presents a conundrum when you aren't intrinsically motivated. Your only fallback position is extrinsic motivation. And if extrinsic motivation is your only other option, you are more likely to succumb to traditional and outdated techniques to compensate for your lack of intrinsic motivation—perpetuating those proverbial extrinsic carrots and sticks to motivate yourself and others.

The challenge this book takes on is to simplify motivation science without oversimplifying it. Yes, this new and cutting-edge science is more complex—and reaching the other side of complexity takes time, experimentation, and diligence. That's why I've spent decades working with some

of the best minds in the world to develop a unique framework and approach to motivation that has proven both empirically sound and practical to use.

When my book *Why Motivating People Doesn't Work . . . and What Does* was published in 2014, its focus was to teach leaders how to nurture a work environment where people are more likely to experience optimal motivation, produce results, and thrive.

The focus of this book is you. Instead of waiting for someone else to shape your motivation, you will learn the skills for mastering your own motivation. The ideas have been vetted by individuals from across the globe in almost every type of industry you can imagine, representing people of all ages and generations. Many of them share their firsthand accounts in this book. My greatest hope is that you will discover and embrace the insights and tools to master your motivation, improve the quality of your life, and, in the process, find joy in contributing to a world that works for all.

The Truth about Motivation

What if you were offered three elixirs promising to transform your everyday experiences? Imagine you suddenly understood the real reason dieting doesn't work and what does. Imagine you grasped why you tear your hair out each month to submit expense reports on time and how to meet those deadlines while not losing your hair. Imagine discovering peace of mind.

What if you were told these magic potions could help you generate the positive energy you need to achieve your goals, promote your mental and physical health, experience well-being, be more creative, improve your work performance, and fuel work passion? The only caveat is that the three elixirs must be used in unison—each potion by itself is beneficial, but real magic happens when you combine them. Would you be intrigued enough to explore the possibilities?

The three scientific truths at the heart of mastering your motivation are like the three elixirs. Using them in combination could transform the way you approach goals and live your life. These three scientific truths are not a magic cure-all that is too good to be true; they are backed up by empirical research and testimonials from people with firsthand experience. Frankly, the three scientific truths to master your motivation are even better than elixirs because they work

like magic but are real, don't cost a fortune, and won't cause harmful side effects. Their discovery represents one of the greatest breakthroughs in motivation science.

1

Three Scientific Truths

Are you lazy? Do you think most people are basically lazy? Do you enjoy being disengaged at work? Do you think millions of people worldwide enjoy being disengaged? Is that why we need to be prodded, bribed, praised, and pushed into doing what we're tasked to do? If managers did not hold us accountable for achieving our goals, do you think we would slack off? If you answer any of these questions yes, maybe your basic beliefs about human motivation need updating.

You have a natural yearning to thrive—thriving is your human nature. Being bored or disengaged isn't thriving. Being lazy isn't thriving. Resenting hard work isn't thriving. The truth is, no one wants to be bored, disengaged, or lazy. At our core, we don't resent hard work. We welcome productive and meaningful work, even when it's hard. We appreciate meaningful challenges. We even want to be accountable—we just don't like being *held* accountable! We want to contribute, feel fulfilled, and grow and learn every day. We long to thrive.

Recognizing our nature to thrive leads to a critical question: How do I thrive? Now, thanks to groundbreaking research, we know the answer. And, it's different than what we've been led to believe. Thriving doesn't depend on money, power, or status. Thriving doesn't come from promotions, perks, or driving for results. Thriving certainly doesn't happen through pressure,

tension, or fear—or even willpower or discipline. Thriving requires Choice, Connection, and Competence.

Motivation is the energy to act. Choice, connection, and competence generate the high-quality motivation (energy) you need to thrive. Your high-quality motivation—and the energy to achieve your goals and find meaning in their pursuit—depends on creating choice, connection, and competence.

**To master your motivation, create choice,
connection, and competence.**

Our need for choice, connection, and competence has been verified scientifically, and I think you'll resonate personally with the definition and description of each scientific truth.

1. *First scientific truth: you need to create choice.* You have an innate need to perceive you have choices, recognize and feel you have options within boundaries, and have a sense of control over what is happening at any time: "I am the source of my behavior." When you don't create choice, your energy is diminished, and you are less likely to achieve your goals.
2. *Second scientific truth: you need to create connection.* You have an innate need to feel a sense of belonging and genuine connection to others without concerns about ulterior motives, pursue goals aligned to meaningful values and a noble purpose, and contribute to something greater than yourself. When you don't create connection, your energy is compromised, and even if you

achieve your goals, you are less likely to find the experience meaningful or worth repeating.

3. *Third scientific truth: you need to create competence.* You have an innate need to feel effective at managing everyday situations, demonstrate skill over time, and feel a sense of growth and learning every day. When you don't create competence, your energy is blocked, and your frustration at not being able to meet challenges or make progress puts achieving long-term goals at risk.

The evidence supporting the three scientific truths at the center of your motivation is compelling, but all you need to do is look around you. Notice that when you create choice, connection, and competence, you feel a sense of well-being, are in a flow state, or experience deep-seated peace. On the flip side, observe that when one or more of the three truths are diminished, you feel pressure, tension, stress, loneliness, pride, superiority, despair, fear, anger, or frustration.

When you create choice, connection, and competence, you flourish. When they are eroded, you languish.

The Three Truths—Everywhere You Look

Have you ever bought a new car and then noticed every car on the road that looks like yours? This phenomenon is called reticular activation—a function of your brain that filters information. Your reticular activating system is at work when you are in a noisy room, someone mentions your name, and you snap to attention. You can use reticular activation to confirm the power of creating choice, connection, and competence.