

Unit 2.2 Coercion Versus Choice

OVERVIEW

Motivating yourself and other people to achieve is important to each of you, whether you're a business manager, a political leader, a teacher, or a parent. Unfortunately, the approach that many of us use in trying to motivate people produces results opposite to what we want. People either resist outright, or else they say they agree and then do nothing.

There are two main motivational styles. One is based on fear, and the other is based on the promise of positive outcomes. The first is called the "coercive style," and it's the motivational style that far too many people choose. One reason is that it seems easier to simply force people to do what you want (especially if you're their boss) than it is to patiently persuade them.

But think about it from your own perspective. Subconsciously, you're programmed to resist coercion. You don't want to be controlled. Whenever you feel coerced into doing something against what you think is your own choice or free will, either consciously or subconsciously you tend to push back. If you tend to react that way, why would others be any different?

The secret to motivating people is to get rid of coercion, to get rid of the "have to" mentality. Whenever possible, people should be allowed to do what they want to do, to take "ownership" of their own decisions. There's just one caveat: they have to accept the consequences of every choice they make. In other words, there's free choice, but no "free ride."

UNIT QUESTIONS / EXERCISES

1. Think of a time when you were forced to do something against your will. How did you feel about it? What thoughts came to mind? Share your answers with your coach and/or the group.

2. How do you motivate someone, like a spouse or co-worker, where coercion is not even an option? Discuss your answers with your coach and/or the group.

3. Think about how this applies to your work relationship at John L. Scott. Identify cases in which coercion may have been used, and even if it was successful in the short-term, it had negative long-term consequences. When has choice-based motivation been used to positive effect? Discuss these questions with the group.
