



UNLOCKING THE KIBBUTZ PARADOX AND THE HEART OF MOTIVATION TO DRIVE PROSPERITY

“Change comes easier when self-motivated people collaborate to reach a shared goal.”

ZEAL

It was April 1989; the nights at 700m altitude were still cold, but the days were hot; the flowering, buds, and embalming in the apple orchards, our main fruit crop, had long passed.

The fruit deciduous crops we were growing at the Kibbutz were, in the order of harvest time, cherries, sweet cherries, nectarines, pears, apples, and walnuts, which were 1 to 5 months from harvest.

I was the crop protection officer, and it was my first year on the job.

To be precise, there was a lot at stake: over 1,000 tons of fruits valued at over \$1M that the Kibbutz expected to get in revenues, which were highly needed to support its growing population and plenty of planned activities.

If something goes wrong with crop protection, I am the one to blame.

1989 was also our first year trying to shift crop protection from preventative sprays to Integrated Pest Management, which meant higher risks than ever.

With highly destructive pests, such as fruit flies and moths, fruit infestation could jump from less than 1% to 20% and even more in days if not handled correctly.

I was a rookie, but the pests were not; their risk was genuine, and I had no intention of letting them make a fool out of me.

As a groom dressed in his wedding suit, I wore my pride and honor.

I probably wouldn't have walked down that alley if I knew what I got myself into.

But I didn't know it then and nearly blindly walked into that troubled alley of crop protection and pesticide sprays.

The night is the best time for spraying; there is no radiation and wind, the temperatures are lower, and the humidity is high.

Hence, being in charge of crop protection and sprays meant you spray at night. The mornings were reserved for monitoring pests and infestations and taking care of the technological equipment, e.g., tractors, sprayers, ordering chemicals, etc.

Everything had to work perfectly, as each hectare was getting 1 to 2 sprays a week, which translates to over 40 sprays per hectare in the apple orchards, and even the cherries, with the shortest season, would get no less than 15 sprays per season.

To execute that plan, we had to invest over 5,000 working hours, much of it in spraying.

At that time, my daily routine was: early dinner, then at 7 pm, I started spraying, which continued until 7 am, breakfast, taking care of the equipment, reports, ordering pesticides, monitoring, lunch, getting everything ready for the night work, sleeping for 3-4 hours before dinner, and repeat it all over.

Sometimes, just before dawn, I was so tired that my eyelids would become so heavy as rocks that I had to stop the tractor to avoid an accident.

I would leave the tractor's engine running so the sprayer would continue mixing the chemicals, then lay down on the ground next to the tractor and fall asleep for a few minutes of heaven on Earth.

Work was abundant, and a young man named Nadav worked with me to implement the intensive plant protection program.

While I was spraying one orchard, Nadav was spraying another every night.

Nadav was diligent, efficient, and blessed with a peaceful character.

Just when I thought things couldn't get more stressful and demanding, everything changed.

The orchards' manager informs me that the Kibbutz's work organizer has decided Nadav is more necessary elsewhere and, therefore, he would immediately stop working in the orchards.

I was shocked and amazed and felt my work and self-sacrifice were unappreciated if they thought it was easy and I could do without help. I mean, what do they expect me to do? Am I expected to press two days in one!?

So, in the evening of the day after that decision, I went to the home of the orchard's manager to talk with him about this.

I stood before him and decisively said, *"How do you expect me to do my job properly with 50% less workforce? You put me in a situation where there is no way to succeed. I can't be part of it; I resign."*

In a symbolic act, I pull the tractor keys out of my pocket and place them on the dining table, silently standing in the center of the small kitchenette, filling most of it.

Before I turned to go, I said to the orchard's manager, in an uncomfortable voice, *"Father, we must get Nadav back; I can't do my job without him."*

It was the first and last time I went on strike, and it was against my father, who at this moment represented the establishment.

Do you want to know how it ended?

It ended without drama but in an anticlimax banal and effective manner.

The day after, I returned to work, and with the orchard's manager's support, my father, we recruited three older members (they seemed very old to me, but they were only in their 50s), who helped me with the night sprays whenever needed.

Nadav never returned to work with me.

This story, though taking place in a Kibbutz, is not about the Kibbutz or implying we should replicate it; it is about a rural community, values, human interactions, and the motivations that make us do or not do whatever we should.

Amazingly, regardless of cultures, languages, countries, continents, and sex barriers, people share very similar Motivation-Creating Factors (MCF).

Questions:

What motivated me to work so many hours every day and night?

What motivated me to resign and then resume my job?

FINANCIAL COMPENSATION ON THE KIBBUTZ

The column [*The Impoverished Rural Community That Changed Its Nation's History*](#), from two weeks ago, presents how Israeli farmers in the early 20th century who live in a village-like community (called Moshava) struggle to finance themselves, even when supported by philanthropists.

We spoke about Dgania, the first Kibbutz (1910), and how its community, organizational structure, and business model made it economically sustainable and profitable.

But I didn't mention something critical for understanding Dgania's economic success and the hundreds of Kibbutz that followed it, something that may shock you.

While farmers on a village's income and profit are individual and linked directly and solely to their activity, in the Kibbutz, financial compensation to Kibbutz members is minimal and indirect.

The financial compensation and incentives shared below represent most Kibbutz from 1910 to 1990, including when the story that opened this column took place.

Salary – Kibbutz members working in the Kibbutz did not receive a salary nor any other financial compensation for their work or achievements, and the salary of members working outside the Kibbutz transferred directly to the Kibbutz bank account.

Fundamental Rights – All Kibbutz members received, free of charge, the same level of basic needs, such as housing, education, food, healthcare, clothing, and transportation.

Personal Budget / Allowance – A Kibbutz member received a monthly "Personal budget", like "pocket money", to buy extra things that the Kibbutz didn't supply, such as cigarettes and sweets, vacation, bicycle, etc.

In return for its fundamental rights and a personal budget, the Kibbutz member was asked to work in one of the Kibbutz sectors, e.g., agriculture, education, food, etc.

However, a Kibbutz member who was sick, couldn't work, or worked less than others (regardless of the reason) would still get the same compensation.

THE KIBBUTZ PARADOX

The Kibbutz message to its members is "*Each work and contributes to the community as they can and get as needed*".

If you can get the same benefits without working, why would anyone bother working!?

I mean, think it over, if everybody gets the same, while requirements to give back are fuzzy and unclear, i.e., "give as much as they can", why would people not use it to get as much as they can and give back as little?

Seemingly, the Kibbutz community social economy shouldn't have worked and surely not prosper as a business.

I ask you, what business works like this?

Hence, The Kibbutz Paradox stresses the tension between the two parts of the following equation -

(A) Members don't benefit directly and personally by working and contributing more to the community/organization.

(B) The Kibbutz system is economically sustainable and profitable, and Kibbutz members belong to the Israeli middle class. Furthermore, although the Kibbutz population is only 1% of that of Israel, the Kibbutz movement as a whole is the most productive sector in Israeli society relative to its size. The Kibbutzim produces 42% of the agricultural products, 10% of the industrial products, excluding hi-tech branches and diamonds, and more than 16% of the industrial exports of the State of Israel. (from Wikipedia)

The Kibbutz Paradox challenges the typical business approach where we incentivize people with monetary, or equivalent, rewards to motivate them to improve results and performance.

The story that opens this column deals with a young man who works very hard for many hours, although he is getting zero direct financial incentives for doing this.

Looking at the Kibbutz movement, we learn that "my story" is not unique but represents many others in multiple communities, where hard-working people from across continents, countries, and cultures effectively reach professional and business goals.

How do you explain The Kibbutz Paradox?

Do you recognize principles?

What can we learn from "The Kibbutz Paradox" about how we should approach poverty eradication, or as I prefer to address it, the creation of prosperity among impoverished rural communities?

THE SOURCES OF MOTIVATION

I can tell you something about yourself; if you read those lines, money is not the only incentive that motivates you, probably not even the most critical cause of motivation for you.

It doesn't mean money is insignificant for you; it means that it is not the #1 factor that dictates what you do.

So I ask you please to answer those questions before continue reading:

What motivates me to work harder?

What makes me do things for which I get no monetary or tangible reward?

In 1989, I learned a lot about myself, and when I was pushed far from my comfort zone, I learned even more about what motivates and matters to me.

When the person working with me, i.e., Nadav, was taken from me, I first approached it with a sense of justice, saying, "*It's not fair*".

But the day after, I realized it is not about "fair" if I continue doing what I did; it's about myself.

I found out that I care about crop protection, **I strive for the best results - even if not all conditions are optimal**, I take things very personally and **have feelings of responsibility toward my job**, I am very competitive and aim to excel in my quest to succeed regardless of the opening conditions or those that develop along the way. Looking back, I also learned that money did not motivate me.

I learned that what motivates me are internal feelings, beliefs, visions, values, thoughts, etc. In short, intrinsic motivation. I also learned that external motivation factors, such as money and what others say about me, have little impact on my motivation.

Motivation can vary significantly from one person to another as it is related to personality, values, and circumstances and always results from a combination of factors.

Below is a breakdown of prominent motivation factors ranked from potentially most motivating to least.

MOTIVATION-CREATING FACTORS (MCF)

- 1. Intrinsic Motivation:** This comes from within and is driven by personal satisfaction, enjoyment, or a sense of fulfillment from the activity itself. It can be the most powerful and sustainable form of motivation.
- 2. Purpose & Meaning:** Feeling that your work serves a greater purpose, contributes to something meaningful, and what you do makes a difference.
- 3. Personal Growth & Development:** The desire to improve oneself, learn new skills, and grow personally and professionally.
- 4. Recognition & Appreciation:** Being acknowledged and appreciated for your efforts, whether by colleagues, supervisors, or others.
- 5. Sense of Achievement:** Accomplishing goals, overcoming challenges, seeing tangible results, and achieving success.
- 6. External Rewards:** While less powerful, unsustainable, and with short-term impact versus intrinsic motivation, external rewards such as **money**, promotions, or prizes.
- 7. Competition:** The desire to outperform others, yourself, or to win.
- 8. Fear of Failure:** A powerful initial motivator, yet unsustainable, leads to draining and burnout.
- 9. Social Pressure:** Peer pressure or societal expectations can motivate action. It relies solely on external pressure.
- 10. Boredom or Routine:** Some people may find motivation simply from the need to break the monotony of everyday life or routine.

Look again at the above list; money and financial rewards are ranked #6 out of 10 in the second part of Motivation-Creating Factors (MCF)!

Yet we reach out to them and use them daily as if they are the only motivation tool available, or at least the most critical one.

We seem surprised that the Kibbutz is an economic success, but think again of the MCF "buttons" it pushes to get its members to move to action – those MCF are numerous and include the top five.

Do you think the Kibbutz is the only organization taking this path? Not at all.

The most demanding organizations and wherever we find exceptional results are almost always the outcome of intrinsic non-monetary MCF.

For example:

- Nobel Prize Winners.
- Change-inducing Leaders (M.L. King, Mahatma Gandhi, N. Mandela, Moses, Greenpeace, etc.)
- Life-threatening and saving professions, e.g., soldiers, firefighters, doctors, and nurses.
- Entrepreneurs
- Volunteers, NGOs, rescue missions, etc.

How would Albert Einstein, King, Gandhi, and Mandela react if a wealthy philanthropist offered them more money if they "improved" their revolutions?

If we had paid a higher salary to soldiers, would they jump first to go to war and risk dying?

Does innovation sprout more from established companies where people are well compensated or those driven by vision and values?

As we see, as human society, when we look at what brought us to where we are, we will find those people and organizations energized by non-monetary MCF.

In contrast, people motivated primarily by monetary MCF are often toxic to their organization.

Then why do we use monetary MCF in our efforts to create change? Because it is easy and requires nearly zero thinking and effort.

The same answer applies to the question - Why do we focus much of our efforts on bringing change to impoverished rural communities by introducing novel technologies?

When we focus our efforts to change on Values, Vision, Goals, Cooperation, Collaboration, and Integration, as Kibbutz Dgania members did, we put into action the most powerful tools in our arsenal to motivate people's action.

Using Intrinsic Motivation, Purpose & Meaning, Personal Growth & Development, Recognition & Appreciation, and a Sense of Achievement, MCF is not "tricking people" but, contrary, it is about returning to our roots and the nature inherent in us from birth.

Now, please stop and think about the projects you are familiar with aiming to eradicate poverty.

How much of those projects' budget is dedicated to financial rewards and technology upgrading, and how much to non-monetary MCF, as done in the Kibbutz and other organizations that excel?

How do you suggest we do things differently from now on in our efforts to create prosperity for impoverished rural communities?

Please share your thoughts with me.

Remember, money (paper notes, coins, or digital) doesn't create motivation. Instead, **it symbolizes those things that motivate us into action, which we hope to achieve by owning them, such as respect, power, love, security, and meaning.**

J.F. Kennedy with his "Go to the Moon" speech, Dr. King with his "*I Have a Dream*" speech, Gandhi with his march to the sea, and the Kibbutz pioneers in their desire for equality and work the land created lasting motivation which no monetary reward could replace.

Organizations, such as Kibbutz, which offer their members direct access to non-monetary Motivation-Creating Factors (MCF), derive their strength from enabling individuals to experience genuine sources of motivation rather than relying solely/primarily on monetary incentives that may not fulfill their true desires.

Rural communities don't need to become Kibbutz to understand the critical need for long-term, sustainable-motivating, non-monetary incentives to induce change leading to prosperity.

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Here are four ways you can work with me to help your rural communities step forward to shift from poverty into ongoing prosperity:

* **Consultancy** on rural communities' lifestyles: Why, What, and How, e.g., based on the Kibbutz and Moshav lifestyles.

* **Local & National programs related to agro-produce export** - [Dream Valley](#) global vertical value and supply chain business model and concept connects (a) input suppliers with farmers in developing economies and (b) those farmers with consumers in premium markets.

* **Crop protection: [Biofeed](#)**, an eco-friendly **zero-spray control and protocol** solution, is most suitable for developing countries.

* **IBMA Conference - To learn, share, and practice novel business models: the [IBMA 2024 conference](#)** theme is "*Reshaping Agribusiness Models for Building Prosperous Rural Communities.*" Register now.

TAKEAWAY MESSAGES

- **MORE OFTEN THAN NOT**, excellence stems from non-monetary Motivation-Creating Factors (MCF).
- **ALWAYS REMEMBER** that the top five MCFs are Intrinsic Motivation, Purpose & Meaning, Personal Growth & Development, Recognition & Appreciation, and Sense of Achievement. External Rewards is MCF #6.
- **THE KIBBUTZ RURAL COMMUNITIES THRIVE** not because monetary rewards are not on its top MCFs but thanks to it.
- **RETHINKING POVERTY ERADICATION:** Emphasizing intrinsic motivation over monetary incentives may lead to more effective poverty alleviation strategies.

More on the October 7th genocide in South Israel:

[Humanity is one organism](#)

[Videos - The October 7 genocide](#)

If you got to here, read this column, and enjoyed it, please be nice to your friends, share it with them, or help them [Subscribe](#).

"Change begins with a decision that the existing reality is a choice and not a decree of fate."

See you soon,

Nimrod



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P.S.

If you missed it, here is a link to last week's blog, "[Ubuntu and The Prosperity Road: From Theory To Thriving Communities](#)".

P.P.S.

[Dream Valley](#) is a field-proven disruptive business model based on the successful Israeli Model.

You can also follow me on [LinkedIn](#), [YouTube](#), and [Facebook](#).

*This article addresses general phenomena. The mention of a country/continent is used for illustration purposes only.