

Case study – Reengaging Students through Motivations

“Motivational Mapping enables conversations where we can share our destinations through a common atlas of our emotional world”



As educational leaders much of our time is dedicated to negative problem solving and reaction to urgent issues. On a daily basis we are responding to staff issues, parent complaints, student school avoidance or disengagement and regulatory authorities. Many of our conversations are focused on solution frameworks, issues management or tactical responses to daily occurrences.

How would your day be improved if you had a deeper insight into the minds of those you are working with?

How would your conversation alter if you knew what energised them or what areas to focus on?

With the growing on focus on positive psychology within education, we are often bombarded with theories, research or psychology around best

practice and management. Various profiling tools offer insights into personalities, work preferences and the like. How often are we provided insights into engagement styles? *Mapping Motivations* (Sale, 2015) assesses a person's preference for motivation, and as such potential areas of demotivation. Designed by an educational leader to assist schools in reconnecting their staff and students with their passion and ambition, it offers a visual affirmation of personal style with alignment to best encourage self-drive.

Whilst working as an executive in schools in the UK, James Sale found a gap in his resources when it came to an effective and beneficial coaching tool. He explains, “Motivational Mapping enables conversations where we can share our destinations through a common atlas of our emotional world.” As such we

- **e-Shortcuts** – Wisdom for successful school leadership and management
- **e-Teaching** – Management strategies for the classroom
- **e-Technology** – Technology in the classroom
- **e-Early Learning** – Thinking on early learning

Relationship Motivators



Achievement Motivators



Growth Motivators



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are supporting staff and students in building their social and emotional literacy and capacity through understanding and application of targeted enhancements.

Locally, in our work with primary and high schools, we have seen a huge increase in disengaged students, school avoidance and wellbeing issues impacting students, staff and community. Many school staff are responsible for troubleshooting high risk students on a daily basis, trying to bring back their passion for school. We have been looking for a method of cohesively bringing staff, students and parents together for positive, emotionally empowering discussions improving the outcomes of those they touch. Our work has shown mapping motivations has successfully enabled this cohesion opportunity.

It is important to clarify that when discussing motivation, we are referring to “the motive – the internal reason – we have which prompts us to act in certain ways and directions”. When considering students who are emotionally removed from their education, their “internal reason” is a source we cannot always get to through social or hierarchical barriers. In unpacking the emotions behind their energy and drive, we are better positioned to commence a collaboration with students to create active change and improved meaning in their often complicated lives.

A case study example – student wellbeing

The wellbeing of students living remotely or in isolation from their community is always a challenge. During critical years of development, there come times when emotions overwhelm academics as they will for many. We have been honoured to work with several schools in responding to their needs around these areas.

One such school is an independent girls school in Sydney that was looking for a way of better connecting their “students from a remote community in the NT”. They had identified “some gaps in their

literacy” and were seeking a way of having meaningful and deep discussions with girls during their years boarding with the school. Working with the Director of Students and their Indigenous Coordinator we partnered with the school in supporting the girls in undertaking mapping their motivations through Youth Maps©. With the confidence of their coordinator they easily completed the online assessment reflecting on their personal responses to various situations. Following this we, the student with the accredited coach and Indigenous Coordinator, met together for a non-confronting discussion around the report and the student’s experience.

What are motivators?

Utilising evidence-based theories encompassing Maslow, Career Anchors and The Enneagram, three core areas of motivation are recognised:

Relationships – Valuing those people in our world, the past connections we know and trust

Achievement – Goal oriented, responding to current demands with logical thought

Growth – Excited by future potential, recognising value in “gut” instinct.

Within these three core areas each unfolds into three separate motivators, as above.

Individuals completing their online assessment engage in a discussion around those areas that most energise them by identifying moments, methods and situations when they felt they were able to embrace energy and feel the worth of it.

Starting the conversation

The girls were quickly at ease recognising the discussion was about aspects of themselves they knew all too well but may have not valued as aligned to their engagement. Staff mentioned that, “In many respects the descriptors gave me words for qualities which I only faintly recognised,” thus enabling a specific conversation in a tone and manner of both interest and intrigue to the girls. Through comfortable yet deep discussion encompassing boarding life, social circles

and academia, the girls' natural intrinsic motivators became clear and evident to students and staff. For example, for one girl the school shared, "I have always known that she has been quite motivated academically. To read that knowledge was important to her as a motivator, then made complete sense. She is also a very adaptable and resilient young woman and has coped better than others with the ups and downs of living far away from home with a degree of equanimity which I have found remarkable. That too came through in her report which points to balance within her personality."

Comparatively another girl in the school shared during her discussion that "What has kept her going in this, sometimes difficult, situation of boarding so far away from family and culture is that she wants to achieve to make her family proud one day and she also wants to be a role model for other Indigenous youth. It seems as if that future goal has kept her motivated through the trials and tribulations of life away from home. This came through in her report where she is described as being 'Growth' focussed and future orientated. One of the issues for her which we had already recognised at school is her lack of or limited connection with other people. The report also pointed to lack of relationships as a potential problem which she will need to be conscious of and work actively to mitigate."

These moments sharing understanding and awareness have been supported through robust consultation at the time of receiving the results, collaboration with staff in a position to continue the conversation, and goal setting with students so that they can continue to build awareness and application of their motivational preferences into their whole lives, with one area being the academic. In deepening the understanding of the personal preferences, we have seen a reconnection with purpose and meaning, as well as a purposeful and direct discussion with staff able to connect with and maximise these students' emotional and social styles.

Benefits to staff

When reflecting on the benefits for staff mentoring these girls by utilising the comprehensive insights raised in the student, mentor and parents' reports and consultation, staff mentioned, "It helps me to focus on the type of feedback for the students which is most meaningful to them. It assists me in using language which is more appropriate to their motivational styles and thus is more relevant to them. It will also assist me as a guiding tool in speaking to my teaching colleagues about the girls if there are future issues with application and motivation at school or with other activities."

Value to students

In assessing the value for the students themselves, "The best part of the process was going through the feedback on the reports which you gave to each of the girls. It was good to watch them receiving what was very positive feedback on the whole. It was a real boost

to their self-esteem. Within that context you were also able to point to areas of concern which they may have to potentially watch out for." For many students this sense of self-worth is a challenge; receiving confirmation of our natural manner of responding to life affirms our sense of self. The vulnerability of the process is minimised through the language within reports, quality of consultation and shared story telling.

Continuing the conversation

Constant growth leads to change. In continuing this discussion, the Indigenous Coordinator shares personalised reports with the students' guardians/parents and conducts regular mentoring discussions to help the girls deepen their understanding and so responses in managing life's changes and challenges. Additionally, in managing the process through an influential leader such as the Director of Students, the school is in a position to tailor the mentoring and response to the girls' needs through a specific mentoring platform recognising broad staff qualities and competencies across the school. Staff are approached with the girls for individual goals which may lead to continued discussions with one or more members of staff. Overall as a school the mapping assists all staff in utilising these insights in their discussions with students requiring an individualised approach.

The value of engaging in timely and meaningful coaching not only offers support to disengaged students but also to the staff supporting them within the class, school executive and counselling areas. Additionally, outside of the school, parents are brought into a critical conversation around their child's preference for engagement. Used well, this can improve parenting interactions, along with the partnership between the school and home valuing the uniqueness of the student and their individual qualities that may or may not be embraced in their current circumstances. Quality exchanges, continued discussion and flexible, thought-through, attainable application provide a platform for success and better involvement and outcomes from all parties.

Bibliography

Sale, J 2015, *Mapping Motivation*, Ashgate Publishing Limited, UK.

"One very important aspect of motivation is the willingness to stop and to look at things that no one else has bothered to look at. This simple process of focusing on things that are normally taken for granted is a powerful source of creativity".

Edward de Bono

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