



Cheatsheet: 5 Psychology Basics to Motivate Your Team

If you're a new workplace leader, these five core psychology principles can help you motivate your team with science-backed strategies.

1. Autonomy – MAP

The Power of Autonomy:

Why giving employees a sense of control boosts motivation and performance (even in small ways).

- M – Minimise micromanaging
- A – Allow decision-making
- P – Provide flexible paths to outcomes

Give team members ownership. Autonomy builds motivation—even small choices matter.

2. Progress – WIN

The Progress Principle:

People are most motivated when they feel they're making progress—tiny wins count.

- W – Watch for small wins
- I – Identify progress publicly
- N – Nurture momentum

People are energised by visible progress. Recognise small wins to keep momentum going.

3. Loss Aversion – SAVE

Loss Aversion:

People work harder to avoid losing something than to gain something—how to use this insight ethically.

- S – Show what's at stake
- A – Acknowledge risks
- V – Value what's working
- E – Ethical framing matters

We're wired to avoid loss more than seek gain. Frame changes around what's worth protecting.



4. Belonging & Social Proof – FIT

Social Proof & Belonging:

Humans are wired to conform—how to use team norms and recognition to drive positive behaviour.

- F – Foster team identity
- I – Include visibly
- T – Talk up the positives you want repeated

Humans copy what’s normal. Promote the behaviours you want repeated and build strong team identity.

5. Expectancy Effect – SET

The Expectancy Effect:

People rise (or fall) to meet the expectations you communicate—so set them carefully.

- S – State high (but realistic) expectations
- E – Encourage effort
- T – Track and reflect back progress

People often live up—or down—to your expectations. Set the bar high, and support them in reaching it.