



# DO MOTIVATIONAL POSTERS INCREASE EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE?

Successories<sup>\*</sup>  
Inspire • Motivate • Recognize

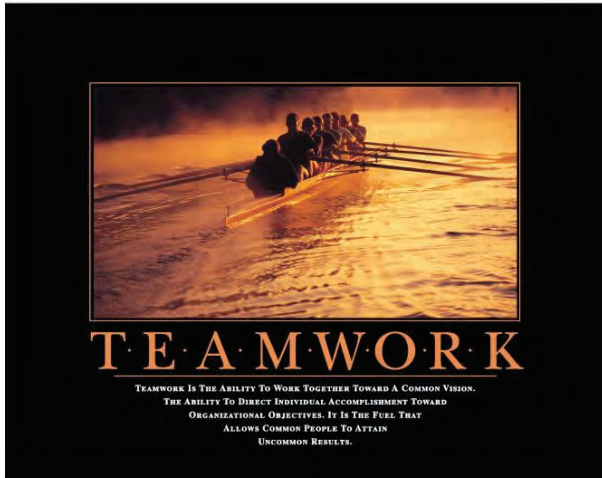


Bare walls aren't only boring, they might be also doing your team a disservice. Researchers have discovered what employees have intuitively known for decades: office décor has a major impact on everything from mood and morale to productivity and performance.

So whether you're moving into a new office space or considering how to spur performance in an office you've occupied for years, now might be the time to scrutinize what's hanging on the walls. And keep in mind that when it comes to motivating and energizing employees, not all décor is created equal. Before you reach for the paintbrush or start hanging art that's more likely to sooth than inspire, consider these findings.

## **COLOR ME SURPRISED**

For proof that bland walls are a morale killer, look no further than the University of Texas at Austin. In a recent study, university researchers found that when workers spent time in an office with bare walls painted gray, beige or white, they experienced a heightened sense of sadness and depression. The effect was universal for both genders, though it was especially pronounced in women. (Men's sadness seemed to spike while stuck staring at purple and orange walls.)



Hanging motivational art and posters doesn't only add color to an otherwise dull wall, it can also break up the visual monotony of an unadorned space. The right motivational art provides a break for the eye (no matter how brief) from the corporate surroundings of desks, file cabinets, and cubicle walls. Instead of institutional white or beige walls that may stir sadness in employees, offer motivational art that evokes an emotional response, whether that's an awe-inspiring vista or an inspiring quote from a great leader.

Don't make the mistake of thinking a coat of paint will be solution enough to combat the sadness that sterile walls creates. Research shows that haphazardly painting walls a vibrant color won't automatically buoy performance. In fact, it can actually dampen engagement.

In a similar study at the University of Texas at Austin, researchers found that when participants were tasked with completing a time-based test in a red room, their performance was, indeed, much better than when they were tested in a white room. Yet participants also reported that they disliked working in the red space. Higher performance, researchers noted, was undercut by a dip in morale and satisfaction. And decorating an office space isn't just about maximizing output, it's also about balancing that need for speed with employee satisfaction and retention.

**IF YOU DON'T  
MAKE  
MISTAKES,  
YOU'RE NOT REACHING  
FAR ENOUGH.**



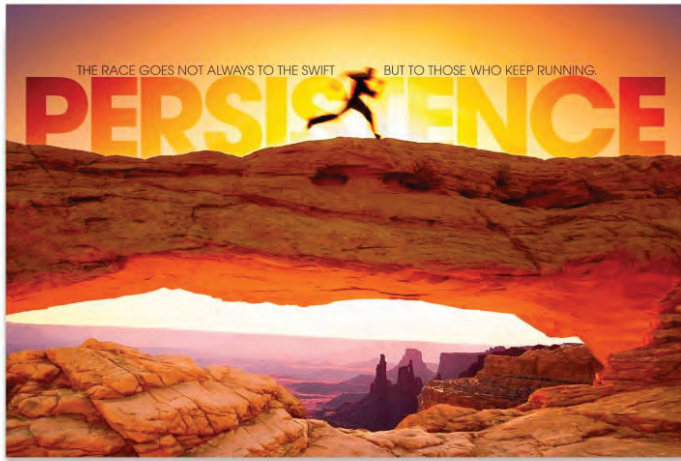
**BE**  
**THE DIFFERENCE**

## THE ART OF MOTIVATION

Including art and posters in the office décor signals to employees that you care about their experience at work. In a survey by the International Association of Professional Art Advisors, more than 80 percent of employees who worked in offices with art on the walls reported that the art was important to their environment. Of those employees, nearly three out of four reported that their perception of the office would change if the art were removed.

Employees consciously understand that having motivational or inspiring images to look at makes it more enjoyable to spend time at work, but they might not realize that those images can also subtly impact their performance and productivity.

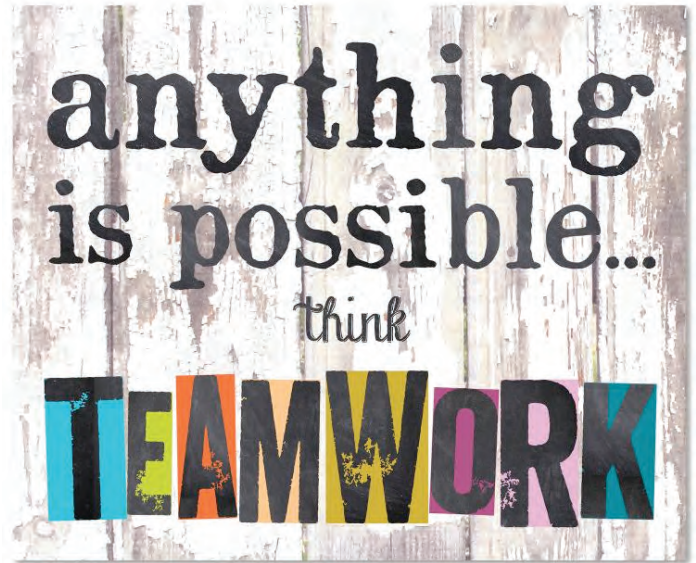
When researchers at the University of Toronto set out to study the subconscious effects that motivational art can have on employee performance, they created a field experiment at a university call center. First, they divided participants into two groups. They then calculated the number of pledges and the amount of money the workers generated while working with no motivational art on the walls or with a photograph on the wall. The researchers tested two different types of photographs: an achievement-centric image of a person winning a race or a context-specific image of other call center employees in action.



It's important to note that the artwork didn't seem to register on the call center employees. In fact, when they asked about the presence of the photographs in the debriefing session, "they said they were too busy making calls to potential donors to pay attention to a picture," the researchers noted.

Yet the data shows that the artwork had a significant impact on their performance. After the two-week trial, the researchers concluded that working in an office with motivational pictures increased employee performance success rate by 33 percent.

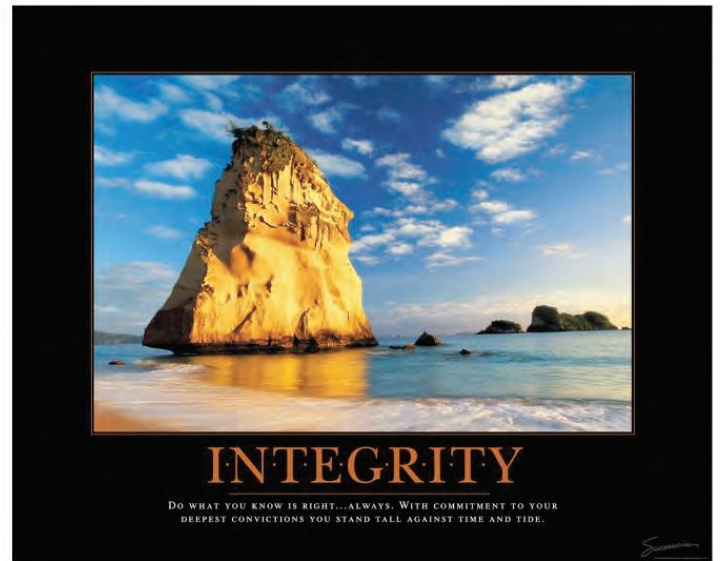
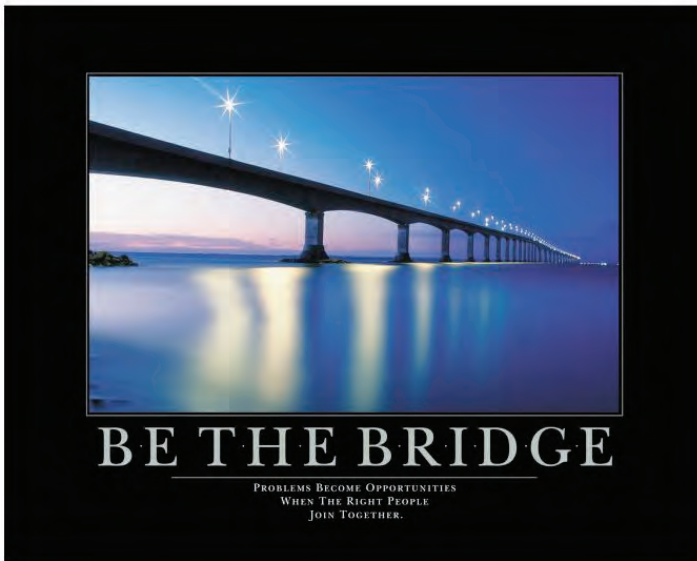
Employees in the group with the general achievement imagery raised 60 percent more money those who worked without any motivational imagery on the wall. That's an incredible ROI for a minor investment in motivational art.



## MAXIMIZING MOTIVATION

It's possible to synthesize the various studies and experiments that have centered around office décor and employee performance into a few key takeaways.

- 1. DON'T SWEAT A SMALL BUDGET.** Employees will respond to evocative images and inspiring artwork, whether it costs thousands of dollars or less than \$50. Don't let a small budget stop you from hanging motivational images and posters in the office. No matter your budget, sizable images may make more of a visual impact, so look for poster-size images or larger, if your office walls can accommodate that space.
- 2. PUSH PAST PAINT.** A vibrant print can bring energy to a flagging staff, while a scenic landscape image is particularly invigorating if your office lacks windows. Don't assume that colorful paint alone is enough to motivate and inspire employees. Break up the color of walls with motivational art that fits the feelings and values you wish to communicate to your team.
- 3. CREATE CONTEXT.** To get even more motivation from your team, look for a poster or photograph that's contextually relevant to your staff. That might mean a quote that evokes the start-up mentality of Mark Zuckerberg, for instance, if you work at a technology company or at a start-up that's looking to make a big impact on the business world. Or that could mean hanging a motivating message



written in chalkboard typography if you work at an education firm. Or if your organization values core themes such as teamwork, excellence and leadership, find motivational artwork that directly speaks to those sentiments.

**4. THINK BEYOND THE LOBBY.** Too often, offices limit their artwork to the lobby, hoping to make a good first impression on visitors and clients. Yet employees are the engine of output for any firm, and strategically placed artwork can lift their performance and their satisfaction. Hang an inspiring image in the company break room, so that a rest from their desks is actually a rejuvenating experience. Consider hanging a reminder about the importance of teamwork in shared office spaces and the power of leadership in executive offices.

**5. GET EMPLOYEES INVOLVED.** Research shows that the impact of hanging art on employee performance doesn't diminish over time. So hanging a motivating image today can increase productivity tomorrow—and a month from tomorrow. Yet while there's no need to rotate art regularly, you might want to engage employees in the process. Hosting a spring-cleaning event where you refresh the office décor with new images is an easy, low-cost way to show workers that you care about their input and want to make sure that they're satisfied with their surroundings.

## Sources

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