

Motivation and Confidence

Motivation is the amount of or level of *desire* to accomplish a specified outcome. Confidence is the perception of one's abilities to succeed in the fulfillment of the specified outcome. Both are related to the *same* outcome. However, and this is a critical distinction, even though both are directed at a future outcome, confidence is generated from past experiences and motivation is generated from anticipation of a future result.

Let's start with motivation. This is something I would say to a student *after* we have identified their academic goal. For example, "how motivated are you to achieve your stated goal of a 75% average?" In other words "How *much* do you really want this?" During this time, the student is in a future orientation, thinking about this future outcome of achieving a 75% average. This is measured on an interval scale of 1 to 10, where 1 represents a complete lack of motivation or desire to accomplish the stated goal.

A score of 1 on the motivation scale is almost always because the goal is *not internalized*, meaning that the person is feeling external pressure rather than internal pressure, to achieve the goal. In my business, it might be that the student's parents are putting on academic pressure, or that the school and teachers are exerting pressure on the student, or that the entrance requirements to post-secondary institutions are forcing certain outcomes on the student. These externally driven goals, if not *internalized* by the student, will not produce motivation, or it will produce intermittent striving for the goal, but will not persist in a consistent way. As well, a student may have become so discouraged from previous failures that they cannot even imagine the possibility of a better outcome and therefore have no motivation to try.

A score of 10 on the motivation scale indicates that the goal is completely *internalized* and that this is a true desire for the student. They have taken the external expectations and *internalized* it and now, the achievement of the goal is their own. This is something that they truly want. A score of 5 represents someone who is intermittently motivated (perhaps just before an exam) and sometimes not (Friday, Sat and Sunday). These students have their feet in both camps. They know enough to get that they *need* to do something positive for their future, but they rise and fall in their behavior relative to the achievement of that outcome like a hot air balloon, sometimes up and sometimes down.

Confidence on the other hand, is a person's perceptions of their own abilities to achieve a stated outcome. Using the example of obtaining a 75% grade point average, we are determining their ability to do this based on what they currently know and what they are currently doing towards achieving this goal. This is substantially different from *desiring* the goal, this is about "do you have the necessary skills and competency to achieve this stated outcome?" And more importantly, confidence is evidence based, meaning that during those moments of self-reflection to determine their score, the student is subconsciously searching their memory data banks for evidence of their past experiences related to this goal.

Again, confidence comes from past experiences whereas motivation comes from anticipated future outcomes. This is assessed on a scale of 1-10. A score of 1 on the confidence scale means that the student has for sure, failed in the past, has had desperate disappointments, and has had consistent evidence that they absolutely cannot succeed in the achievement of the stated goal. A score of 10 indicates that the student thinks or perceives that they could achieve the goal easily 'if they choose to'. A confidence score that is higher than the actual GPA is an over-inflated self-assessment and indicates a lack of true awareness on the part of the student. It may be a safety mechanism keeping them from actually testing their own abilities, using the 'back door' escape hatch. "I can do it if I want to, I just don't want to." A score of 5 means that the student sometimes thinks they can do it, and sometimes, not.

A very interesting finding of the confidence score is that it is a valid indicator of real confidence. If the confidence score comes back lower than the student's actual GPA, (a score of 5 with a 64% average) they are undervaluing their abilities and giving greater mental weight or attention to sporadic low test scores than they give to more consistent good test scores. If they give an over-inflated confidence score relative to their GPA (e.g. a confidence of 9 with a 64%), they are over-estimating their abilities. Generally though, most students give a confidence score that is within 5% of their actual Grade Point Average. This is never correlated in our discussions and is therefore indicative of past experience. In addition, as their test scores go up, the confidence score goes up accordingly.

These three scores, motivation, confidence and actual GPA are very powerful indicators as to the success of the student. The ideal

distribution is to have confidence match very closely to actual GPA and for motivation to be higher than confidence. (e.g. GPA is 75%, confidence is 7.5 and motivation is 9). If the motivation score is lower than the confidence score,(e.g. GPA 50%, motivation 5 and confidence 8) this indicates an unwillingness to generate new behavior in the actualization of the outcome. In terms of applying new strategies to assist themselves, it is not very probable. Conversely, if the motivation score is higher than the confidence score,(e.g. GPA 50% Motivation 9 and confidence 5) then the student is much more likely to implement the new behaviors and to be successful.

This is because confidence can be 'borrowed' from someone else through trust, but motivation must be generated internally. Motivation creates the pressure to act, to change, to take action. And because we cannot force another to act, to change or to take action, (morally and lawfully) this must come from the within the individual. Confidence is different because someone can rely on the expertise of another to make up the deficit in their own confidence. If a student expresses a 6 confidence level in their own abilities to achieve a 75% GPA, they can rely or trust my past experience until they have their own evidence.

And this is a critical difference between confidence and motivation; confidence can be loaned or borrowed through the currency of trust, but motivation cannot (at least, not permanently). The implication is that when we are trying to encourage someone to alter their behavior in a positive way to achieve their goals (not ours) we need to place less emphasis on *motivation* and more on establishing trust in our expertise. We, as experts, can make up the deficit in their confidence to achieve these valued outcomes on their own. This borrowed boost in confidence will generally increase motivation in the student to try the new learning methods for themselves. When they begin to get positive feedback and see their grades increase, their own confidence now increases as well, and concurrently, so does motivation.

Therefore, these two constructs are powerful indicators as to someone's actual intent relative to a preferred outcome. As long as motivation is either equal to or greater than confidence, the student is much more likely to succeed in the achievement of their goals, because they want to do it, and they are *willing* to trust and be guided by an expert.

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