The environment organizations operate in is:
- Rapidly changing
- Unpredictable
- Complex
- Global (and virtual in many cases)

This means that ‘standard recipes’ often fail and we expect people in organizations to respond immediately to customers or emergency situations, in an innovative and autonomous way. No time to ‘push decision up’ into management silos and ‘just applying the rules’ doesn’t work anymore either.

Managers should empower employees, foster decision participation and support self-initiation and autonomy. It sounds like old news but putting it in practice is still a challenge.

Walking the autonomous motivational walk often requires questioning organizational assumptions, and taking risks. To avoid these risks, managers too often take the easy way: Talking the politically correct talk but walking the over-learned walk.

The Carrot and Stick approach can create short-term productivity increases by controlling people’s behavior, but the resulting motivation is unsustainable and can create other negative consequences such as cheating, fraud, no attempt to excel, ....

Food for Thought

(excerpt from Annie Hall, Woody Allen)

"Doc," he says, "you must help me. My brother thinks he's a chicken."
"Bring him in," replies the doctor. "I'll convince him he's not a chicken."
"No," the man exclaims, "we need the eggs!"

Managers, too, act like they 'need the eggs'. So they apply carrot and stick motivational strategies, despite the fact that promoting autonomy actually yields more 'eggs' (i.e. motivation).


SDT focuses on three core psychological needs:
- **Competence** is the belief and assurance that one has the ability to influence important outcomes.
- **Relatedness** is the experience of having satisfying and supportive social relationships.
- **Autonomy** concerns the experience of acting with a sense of choice, volition and self-determination. This is not the same as independence, for people may well be dependent on others while acting autonomously.

The general idea is that when those three needs are met, people develop self-fueled and sustainable motivation at work.

Adapted from: Stone, Deci, Ryan, Gagné, e.a.,
Underneath you find a few very concrete suggestions to develop Competence, Autonomy and Relatedness.

**Six Steps**

SDT proposes a six step process to introduce Autonomy, Relatedness and Competence in the Organization:

1. Ask open questions and invite participation in problem solving
2. Actively listen and acknowledge employee perspectives
3. Offer choices within structure including the clarification of responsibilities
4. Provide sincere, positive feedback that acknowledges initiative and factual, nonjudgmental feedback about problems
5. Minimise coercive controls such as rewards and comparisons with others
6. Develop talent and share knowledge to enhance competence and autonomy

**Model**

Underneath you find a few very concrete suggestions to develop Competence, Autonomy and Relatedness.

- Make them Responsibility & Accountable
- Clarify expectations in terms of ‘outcome’ but DO NOT prescribe the WHAT and the HOW
- Don’t create rules, approval systems, etc...
- Eliminate all the ‘easy ways out’ (if you don’t do it or don’t decide nobody else will do for you !)
- No ‘control’ or ‘reporting’ from/to central department
- No ‘parallel’ hierarchical line / behavior
- No initiatives from the central department if workers are not ‘active customers for it’
- ...