

Solutions

Online Performance Strategies for Managers and Supervisors from the Division of Personnel

"The problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them."

Albert Einstein

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Quick Tip:

From the editors of *Solutions*

Lessons in Change Management

Praise is a manager's most powerful tool, but like all tools, you have to be sure you're handling it correctly. Here are two suggestions:

Don't hide your praise behind criticism. The "sandwich technique," in which you couple a piece of praise with an item of criticism, rarely sounds sincere. The employee is more likely to remember the criticism and assume the praise was included only to soften the blow.

Be specific. Vague, global praise like "You're doing a great job," is less meaningful than precise descriptions, such as "You added five new accounts last week. That's great!"

From the Editor's of Manager's Intelligence Report
Lawrence Ragan Communications, Inc.
316 N. Michigan Ave.
Chicago, IL 60601
www.managementresources.com

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Workforce Management

Leaders Are Visionaries... with a poorly developed sense of fear and no concept of the odds against them. They make things happen.

By: Dr. Alan Zimmerman

The title of this article is actually a quote from author Dr. Robert Jarvik. I think it's a great quote because he captures the essence and effect of leadership. It starts with vision and ends in results.

Unfortunately, some of today's business, political, religious, and family "leaders" are anything but leaders. They have no vision beyond their own self-interest, and they do not create an environment in which others soar.

Development Dimensions International, a global human resource consulting firm, identified several telltale signs of leadership failure. Almost all of them related to poor people skills. Some of the stronger indicators were impulsiveness, imperceptiveness, and a dependency on others for approval. One of the strongest indicators of leadership failure was arrogance. As the former head of Russia, Boris Yeltsin said, "You can build a throne with bayonets, but you can't sit on it for long."

Other people mistakenly think leadership is all about expertise. Not at all. Time and again, you'll find the best leaders aren't necessarily the ones who possess the most technical knowledge.

All you have to do is look at the economy to know that. You can ask five different economists to explain what is happening in the economy and what

advice they would give you, and you'll get five completely different and contradictory answers.

The folks at the "Fort Worth Star-Telegram" proved that back in 1997. They even reported their results in the September 29 issue of "Business Week." Scott Fagerstrom, the newspaper's deputy business editor, enlisted the help of Rusty, a 1700 pound bull, and the help of several expert stock market analysts to make his point.

In January, Rusty was placed in a corral broken into 100 squares, each with the name of a company on it. Rusty was allowed to let the chips fall where they may. Based on the bull's droppings, Scott Fagerstrom made imaginary \$10,000 investments into each of the following: Comp USA, Craftmade, GTE, Harken Energy, National Semiconductor, Summit Bancshares, and United Heritage of Cleburne.

How did Rusty fare? At the end of August, his portfolio outperformed the pros' by 11% and the Standard and Poor's 500-stock index by 20%. Obviously, expertise did not guarantee the effectiveness of the "expert's" leadership.

No, **LEADERSHIP, REAL LEADERSHIP STARTS WITH VISION.**

Continued on Page 2



Is your message really being heard?

"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place."

George Bernard Shaw

Leaders Are Visionaries...

Continued from Page 1

LEADERSHIP, REAL LEADERSHIP STARTS WITH VISION. That's how Steve Jobs recruited John Scully to take over Apple Computers. He planted a vision in Scully that Scully later planted in others.

At the time, Scully was destined to lead up PepsiCo. The clincher came when Jobs asked him, "How many more years of your life do you want to spend making colored water when you can have an opportunity to come here and change the world?"

Many people would argue that the best CEO (maybe not the best person) of the 20th century was Jack Welch, the former chairman of General Electric. When asked for his thoughts on leadership, he echoed the same sentiment. Leadership starts with vision. Jack said, "With leadership the question at the beginning and at the end of the day is, 'How far can we take this. . . how big can we grow it. . . and how fast can we get there?'"

With the vision in place, **LEADERSHIP IS EXHIBITED IN A RELATIVE LACK OF FEAR.**

Leaders aren't terribly afraid of change or the difficulties that lie ahead. They've got so much passion that they don't have much time for fear. As August Busch, head of Anheuser Busch said, "We do not know the meaning of the phrase 'It can't be done'."

And it is this relative lack of fear, this abundance of passion, this all-out belief in the vision that turns on everyone else. Michael Eisner, head of Disney, commented on that. As the top dog at Disney, he said 18 presidents report to him, and inevitably the person with the strongest point of view carries the day. In other words, the strongest point of view influences where everyone else will go in the company.

Finally, for today's tip, **LEADERS MAKE THE IMPOSSIBLE HAPPEN.**

Not by themselves, of course. But they make the impossible happen by letting their passion ignite a spark in others, and then they give others the boost they need to make it happen.

Successories summed it up this way, "By the strength of the leader's commitment, the power of the team is unleashed. As La Rochefoucauld wrote,

"Nothing is so contagious as an example. . . (Leaders) . . . never do great good or great evil without bringing about more of the same on the part of others. "

Leaders make the impossible happen by giving the needed boost, just like the catapults on a jet aircraft carrier. When I've worked with the military, they say it takes a lot of guts to take off in a jet aboard an aircraft carrier in the middle of the ocean. They know if the F14 Tomcat depended solely on its own engines, its destination would be the deep blue under instead of the wild blue yonder.

To give the fighter planes an extra boost, the carrier has catapults that accelerate the airplanes to take-off speed. After that, the Tomcat will achieve, on its own, speeds faster than the speed of sound. But it needs that boost. And so do the people around you if you're going to be a leader.

You may not have the official title of leader, and you may not have a designated position of power, but you can be a leader at work or in your community, church, or family. You can make a positive difference. Indeed, you should be doing so. It starts with your vision, your relative lack of fear, and your ability to make things happen by giving others a boost.

Action on Leadership: Lots of people live without vision. They don't look beyond quitting time on Friday or their next vacation. Well that's survival, but it's certainly a long ways from being a peak performer or being a leader.

If you don't have a vision that you can easily articulate in 25 words or less, this is the week to get one. Think about it. Write it down. Try it out on a few trusted friends. Get their feedback. If it isn't initially understandable to them, simplify it and try it again. A well-stated vision will put your life on track and help you lead others.

Strategic Thinking

Frank talk eases stress of change

The key to improving employee moral and loyalty – two attitudes crucial to productivity and organizational success – is communication. And communication is never more important than in times of change.

Results of a recent survey conducted by staffing specialist Randstad North America suggest the following tips for improving communication during workplace transition:

Let employees know about any decisions that affect their job immediately. In uncertain times, don't sit on information – good or bad. Seven out of 10 employees say they want to receive even partial information during times of change.

Keep it simple. Employees want easy-to-understand information about what's happening. Clarity is critical. During periods of change, half of all employees say that things at work seem disorganized.

Tell the whole truth. You can't hold back information in hope that employees will be in a better mood to accept bad news later on. They'll resent not hearing the whole story at one time.

Provide a road map. Employees want to hear where you think the organization is headed. While 83% of employers say they give workers that kind of information, only 68% of employees report receiving it.

Solicit feedback. Employees want to be heard. When companies implement employees' suggestions, 78% of employees say morale is excellent or good.

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Verbal Communication

Train yourself in the art of listening

Once you learn how to listen to employees, your managerial skills will improve dramatically. You'll communicate better and solve more problems. Here are some exercises that will improve your listening skills and help you get the most of each meeting with an employee:

Clean off your desk when meeting with employees. If there are loose papers on your desk, you'll unconsciously start to fiddle with them – and may even start to glance over them. Clear your desk for every conversation with employees, so you can focus your attention on what they're saying.

Train yourself to ask questions instead of making statements. Example: Don't say, "Joan, don't forget that the Anderson report needs to be in on Monday morning." Rather say, "How is the Anderson report coming along, Joan? Any problems with making the deadline?" By asking questions you'll start a dialogue, and you never know what you might learn.

Learn to "lubricate" conversations. Phrases such "Yes, I see" and "I understand" do two things: 1.) They show that you're listening and encourage the other person to keep talking; and 2.) They keep your attention focused.

Don't blurt out questions as soon as the employee is finished speaking. It looks as if you were formulating your reply rather than listening. Before you ask a question, paraphrase the employee's words. Example: "So what you're saying is ..." Then, ask your question: "Well, let me ask you this ..." This cuts down on miscommunication.

Don't smile the whole time. A lot of managers do this because they think it sends a friendly message. It can, but people also often mistake it for mental absence, or a sign that you're not taking them seriously. Save smiles for humorous remarks.

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316 N. Michigan Ave.
Chicago, IL 60601
www.managementresources.com

Workforce Management

Curb excessive phone calls

If it comes to your attention that an employee is spending too much time on personal calls, follow these steps:

Take the employee aside to discuss the matter privately.

Describe what you've seen. Don't accuse; just state the facts. Example: "You made a 20-minute call to your friend on Friday."

Explain why the situation concerns you. Examples: The person's work is falling behind, customers can't get through or other employees can't concentrate.

Listen to any explanation that the employee gives. There may be extenuating circumstances. If not, move on to the next step.

Ask the employee to limit calls to break time or lunchtime unless an emergency arises.

Explain that your discussion is not a personal attack and that others will be held to the same standard for personal phone usage.

Thank the employee for future cooperation.

Be sure to hold other employees to the same standard.

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Integrity

Sharpen your judgment

Manager John Wilkins thought back to all the times he'd walked through the office and heard Lynn Carlson and co-worker Mickey Spence bantering cheerfully. It just didn't jibe with what he was hearing now.

"What do you mean Mickey's sexually harassing you?" John asked Lynn. With all those people around?

"He whispers comments about my body," she said. "Or he'll accidentally brush up against me when he walks by my desk. I can't deal with it."

John's thoughts were written on his face.

"Don't you believe me?" Lynn asked.

"But your desk is right in the middle of the office with, what, a dozen people around?" John asked. "And you two get along great."

Lynn didn't respond.

"Well, I'll talk to Mickey about it," John said. "If that's happening, it can't be tolerated."

Mickey thought the whole thing was ridiculous, since Lynn was his buddy. But he promised John he'd be more careful in the future. And to John's urging, he wrote a letter of apology to Lynn.

Shortly after that, Lynn complained again, and this time she sued the company, saying she was a victim of hostile work environment.

The company tried to have the case dismissed.

Did it win?

Find out on Page 4.

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**Employee Services
Doug Smენტkowski, Manager**

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Vision

Seven steps to addressing unacceptable behavior

As managers, we often avoid opportunities to address unacceptable performance or behavior. Perhaps we fear our feedback will result in a difficult-to-handle response or harm relationships. The reality is, withholding constructive feedback will do more harm than good in the long run. Giving constructive feedback is easier and more effective when we are prepared.

Following are 7 steps for addressing inappropriate behavior.

Here's the scenario: Jessica has been tardy 3 days this week.

1. State the facts – Start off by stating the facts. Be concise and direct. You know you've stated the facts when no one can disagree with what you've said. The goal of this step is to get both parties on the same page and to set the tone for productive dialogue. "Jessica, you were 10 minutes late this morning. You were also a few minutes late on Friday and Monday."

2. Interpret the facts, giving the benefit of the doubt – The other person may become defensive after you've stated the facts. After all, you've just pointed out a flaw in their performance or behavior and it is natural to take this personally or to become defensive. In this step, you want to bring down the wall of defensiveness by giving the person the benefit of the doubt. "I know your son just started kindergarten this week and I imagine the transition is effecting your schedule."

3. State your feelings – The reason you're addressing the issue is because you have some feeling about it. Honor yourself and get those feelings out. Simply identify and state your feelings. When you do, don't justify or minimize the feeling(s) – just name it. "I'm disappointed in your recent tardiness. Your tardiness directly impacts our service levels which means customers have to hold longer and your co-workers have a difficult time handling calls."

4. Validate the relationship – You've just authentically stated your feeling(s) regarding unacceptable performance. This may be a hard pill for your employee to swallow. So, follow this up with something a little easier to take. Find something constructive to say about your relationship and make it genuine. "You are one of my best employees! I've always appreciated the way you take initiative and anticipate customer's needs."

5. Say, "Help me understand." – In steps 1 – 4 you are doing all of the talking. Now it's time to turn this into a dialogue and get your employee's feedback. Do this by simply saying, "Help me understand..." For example: "Help me understand why you've been coming in late."

6. Request behavior change – Now you need to directly state what you need to have happen. "I have to have you here on time. Our customers need you here and your co-workers need you here."

7. Ask, "What do you think of what I've asked of you?" – This is a dialogue and what your employee is thinking and feeling matters. Let them know this by asking for their input. "Do you think what I'm asking of you is reasonable?"

Managers using this method should not fear getting a difficult-to-handle response or harming the relationship. This method is direct, clear and maintains the esteem of your employees.

About the Author:

Since 1999 Myra Golden has been providing customer service training solutions for some of the world's most recognized brands. From Fortune 500 companies to Government agencies, Myra gives clients ground-floor access to specialized measurably effective training and timely market intelligence, helping them completely restore customer confidence in their brands after any service mishap —without giving the store away.

Myra is the former head of Consumer Affairs for Thrifty Rent-A-Car System, where she led a strategic team that regained the goodwill of unhappy customers and she worked with the company's loyalty program to create value for the most frequent customers. She can be reached at info@myragolden.com or 866-873-8419. Her website is www.myragolden.com.

Integrity

Sharpen your judgment The Decision

No, the company failed to get the case dismissed and faced the prospect of an expensive jury trial.

The company argued that Lynn's claim had to be exaggerated because her work space was in an area that was visible to many other employees.

The company also pointed to her apparently friendly relationship with Mickey.

That was proof that even if there was harassment, it didn't adversely affect her working conditions.

The judge disagreed, saying that John, as a supervisor, didn't do enough to address the issue, and therefore might have implicitly condoned Mickey's behavior.

Analysis: Take it seriously

Even when harassment claims seem far-fetched, investigate them immediately and respond appropriately.

Managers should notify HR immediately, and make sure all steps are documented. Further, an employee's apparently friendly relationship with an accused harasser isn't likely to be a viable defense. Anything short of immediate action could be perceived as the company condoning the harassment.

(Based on *Hernandez v. Industrial Medicine Associates*)

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"It's not what happens to you that determines how far you will go in life; it is how you handle what happens to you."

Zig Ziglar

Learning to Lead: Part 1

By Major General Perry M. Smith, USAF (Ret.)

The following article was originally published in the Marine Corps Gazette in January 1997. Solutions reprints Part 1 of this article with the kind permission of the author.

Successful leaders don't need rows of sharp teeth to swim with the sharks.

In speaking to large audiences on leadership, I am often asked to do the impossible. In less than an hour's time, I am expected to motivate them to improve their skills, inspire them to be better leaders, and to acquaint them with new technologies and concepts.

To cover all these points in the time allotted, I have come up with "30 *Blazing Flashes of the Obvious*" about leadership. Here they are:

1. Know Yourself

All leaders should realize they are, in fact, five or more people. They are who they are, and who they think they are, (and these are never the same); they are who their bosses think they are; and who their subordinates think they are.

Leaders who work hard to get feedback from many sources are more likely to understand and control their various selves, and hence be better leaders.

2. Develop Mental Toughness

Leaders must be brutally honest with themselves or they will slip into the terrible habit of self-deception. Even the best leaders make mistakes. By smoking out these mistakes and correcting them quickly, a good leader can become a superb one.

3. Be Magnanimous

Leaders who share their power and their time can accomplish extraordinary things. The best leaders understand that leadership is the liberation of talent; hence they gain power not only by constantly giving it away, but also by not grabbing it back.

4. Squint with Your Ears

The most important skill for leaders is listening. Introverts have a great edge, since they tend to listen quietly and usually don't suffer from being an "interruptaholic." Leaders should "squint with their ears." Too many bosses are thinking about what they will say next, rather than hearing what is being said now.

5. Trust Your Instinct and Your Impulse

If something smells bad, sounds funny, or causes you to lose sleep at night, take another look. Your instincts combined with your experience can prevent you and your organization from walking off the cliff.

6. Learn by Failure

In my professional career, I have learned much more from my failures than from my successes. As a result, I have become tolerant of the honest failure of others. When a major setback comes along, try to treat it as a marvelous learning experience, for most certainly it will be just that.

7. Protect Innovators

For three years I had a Medal of Honor recipient from Vietnam, Army Col. Jack Jacobs, working for me. He is by far the most innovative person I have ever known. Well over 50 percent of his ideas were awful, but buried among these bad ideas was an occasional pearl of great wisdom. I learned that I had to protect Jack and my organization from his bad ideas while encouraging him to present all his ideas, so we could use his great ones.

8. Beware of Certainty

Leaders should be a bit skeptical of anyone who is totally certain about his or her position. All leaders should have a decent doubt especially when dealing with "true believers" who are always sure they are right.

9. Be Decisive

Top leaders usually must make prudent decisions when they only have about 60 percent of the information they need. Leaders who demand nearly all the information are usually months or years late making decisions.

10. Don't Become Indispensable

Organizations need indispensable institutions not indispensable people. Leaders should not allow themselves to become indispensable, nor should they let any of their subordinates do so.

11. Avoid the Cowardice of Silence

During meetings, so-called leaders often sit on their hands when it is time to raise a hand and speak up. Leadership requires courage – courage to make waves, courage to take on the boss when they are wrong, and the courage of conviction. Every Robert E. Lee needs a James Longstreet to tell him exactly the way it is.

12. Fight Against Paranoia

Welcome criticism. Help people understand that it is OK to have "love quarrels" with the organization. Loyalty and criticism are mutually supporting while slavish loyalty is deadly. Avoid the defensive crouch. Never attribute to malice that which is adequately explained by stupidity.

13. Be Goal Oriented

Leaders, even at the lowest level, must try to set some long-term goals for their people and for their organization. People want to know where they are going and in what order of priority.

14. Follow the Platinum Rule

The golden rule is marvelous. But in leadership situations, the platinum rule may be even better: "Treat others the way they would like to be treated."

15. Don't Waste People's Time

The best question a leader can ask a subordinate during a counseling session is, "How am I wasting your time?" Not everyone will tell you, but cherish the ones that do, for they will help you grow and prosper as a leader.

Part 2 of this article will be printed in the next issue of Solutions.

About the Author:

A retired major general, Perry M. Smith served for 30 years in the U. S. Air Force. During his career he had a number of leadership experiences, including command of the F-15 wing at Bitburg, Germany where he provided leadership to 4000 personnel. Later, he served as the top Air Force planner and as the Commandant of the National War College, where he taught courses on leadership of large organizations and on strategic planning. He is the author of the book, "Rules and Tools for Leaders."

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The future of performance appraisals for state employees

The performance appraisal was created to evaluate the work of employees for use in identifying strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for development.

Unfortunately, many appraisal processes contain inconsistencies in the elements covered by evaluations, how employees are measured, and how often appraisals are conducted for each employee. These variances can also prevent performance appraisal ratings from accurately representing the success and developmental needs of the workforce.

As many state employees may have heard, the Division of Personnel is working on a new performance appraisal system, **Productivity, Excellence, and Results for Missouri** (PERforM). The primary goal of PERforM is to standardize the approach of evaluating the performance of state employees.

Supervisors will use pre-established components to evaluate the performance of the employees they supervise. These components will assist supervisors in providing employees with a better understanding of the objectives they must achieve to be successful in their positions. Also, both supervisors and their employees will benefit from a defined performance appraisal year and established timeline for completing annual evaluations. As an overall result, the process should provide more consistent and accurate performance appraisals.

It is the expectation that PERforM will provide a more realistic picture of an organization's performance. In effect, agencies will be able to identify employees who meet the expectations of their positions as well as those who require assistance to be successful. PERforM will also assist agencies in recognizing employees who are exceptional, and may support decisions made toward succession planning.

Marian J. Luebbert
Personnel Analyst III
OA/PD - Employee Services

Mentoring

Care enough to hold the difficult conversation:

Discussing embarrassing performance issues with employees

In "Seven Steps to Addressing Unacceptable Behavior" on page 4, we focused on practical steps to redirect an employee with a performance issue. However, if you manage people, chances are good that one day you will also need to hold a similar conversation with an employee resulting from what many people might consider being an embarrassing situation.

Someone dresses inappropriately and unprofessionally for work. Personal hygiene is becoming an issue. Flirtatious behavior can lead to a sexual harassment problem. Unreturned pop cans do draw ants. Vulgar language is unprofessional. Revealing cleavage belongs in a club, a party, or on the beach. Leaving dirty dishes for others to wash is rude. These are just some examples of behavior that cry out for some professional feedback.

If you happen to find yourself in this type of situation, consider the following steps to help you manage the conversation with your employee.

Seek permission to raise the issue. Even if you're the supervisor, start by stating you have some feedback you'd like to share. Ask if it's a good time or if the employee would prefer to select another time and place (within reason, of course).

Go slow. Once the time is right, don't just blurt out your feedback. Give the employee a chance to prepare for your message by telling him or her that you need to provide feedback you wish you didn't have to share and that he or she probably doesn't want to hear.

Remember why you are there. Often, you are in the feedback role because other employees have complained to you about the employee. If this is the case, don't give in to the temptation to expand on this point, or excuse your responsibility for the feedback by stating that a number of coworkers have complained. This will only make things worse and add to the employee's embarrassment.

Keep it simple. The best feedback is simple feedback. Simply tell the employee that you are talking with him or her because this is an issue that needs to be addressed for their continued success in the organization—then provide the employee with the feedback.

Once you have delivered the feedback, make sure the employee understands the impact that changing his or her behavior will have from a positive perspective. Tell the employee that choosing to do nothing could negatively affect their career and job.

Reach agreement. Be specific about what the employee will do to change their actions or behavior. Then, set a due date for the change to occur (immediately, tomorrow, next week, etc.). Follow-up to make sure the employee doesn't slip back into any old habits.

Practice and these basic steps can help to build your comfort level in delivering difficult feedback.—because in the end, choosing to hold a difficult conversation can mean the difference between success and failure for a valued employee.