

Solutions

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

Albert Einstein

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

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Quick Tip:

From the editors of *Solutions*

Lead by your own actions: If you ask your employees to put in overtime for a project, set the stage by modeling the same work ethic on a consistent basis. Moral will be much higher if you show your employees that you are committed and willing to sacrifice your time too. Being a leader far exceeds the results a mediocre manager will get. Commit your time to being an extraordinary leader.

Remember...
"We rise by lifting others"
Robert Green Ingersoll

Looking for previous issues
of *Solutions*? [click here.](#)

FEATURE ARTICLE

Self-Direction

The Failures of Leaders

By Ray Blunt
GovLeaders.org

She was at the top of her game. A career civil servant, she was widely recognized as the most knowledgeable and powerful procurement official in the Air Force. Responsible for \$30 billion in new weapon systems, she was a tough negotiator and contract monitor while also being highly innovative in her approach. She demanded high quality and fair prices for the government, and over the years she was responsible for savings of over \$20 billion. No wonder she was recognized among the senior brass of the Pentagon as a top tier leader and a formidable force within the Air Force. She was not someone to be toyed with or crossed, but she got results and that's what made her so valued as a leader. But then . . .

The rest of Darleen Druyun's story is not as pretty. It never is when your name appears in *The Washington Post* for improperly steering inflated contracts to a key defense industry manufacturer while arranging jobs for your daughter and yourself with that same contractor. What followed was a very public *mea culpa*, an apology to all concerned, and a jail term. Darleen Druyun unintentionally became a case study in ethics that keeps getting replayed for those senior leaders coming behind her both in the Air Force and the broader acquisition community. Those lessons may be the only positive result of this entire affair, but they came out of a spectacular and very public failure.

Leaders fail. Sometimes the failures play out in the media as Ms. Druyun's did; sometimes the failures are well known within the organization; and sometimes the failures quietly exist and go on for some time with only a few people being aware but not saying anything. And, even more oddly perhaps, senior leaders themselves are often unaware of their own failures.

My point here is not to bash leaders for their failures, but to put failures into perspective and to see if we can all use them as a leadership lesson for development. Why? If you are a leader, you are going to experience failure. Accept that as fact. Hopefully, you won't make *The Washington Post* or *Government Executive*, but you will fail at some point. Anyone who has been a leader will tell you this is true. I can vouch for that myself. So, what exactly are you going to do about it? Maybe the following discussion will help.

A Window into Failures

Many years ago, as a young captain in the Air Force, I was first exposed to something called the Johari Window. The Johari Window (named after the first names of its inventors, Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham) is a model describing what each of us is like, as we are known both by others and by ourselves. The four-paned "window" divides personal awareness into four different types, as represented by its four quadrants: open, blind, hidden, and unknown.

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Make It So

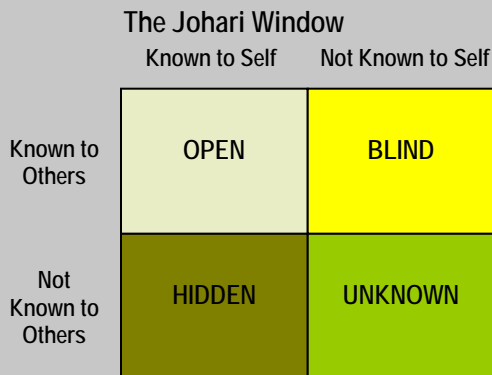
"Think of something that would be 'wonderful' if it were only 'possible.'
Then set out to make it possible."

Armand Hammer

The Failure of Leaders

Continued from page 1

Every day, news headlines like those that featured Darleen Druyun provide for us the “open” window. We know about it, they know about it and the result (other than humiliation) is either confrontational denial or public confession. Often, denial is followed by the confession when a person finally comes to grips with doing the right thing as evidence mounts or as consequences become more serious for others involved. It is often these large, very public failures of others as leaders that perhaps contribute to creating blind spots in ourselves—we’re not THAT bad.



In the second window, there are failures in ourselves that others are aware of, but we are not. This was the case with Darleen Druyun – and is likely the case in most situations of leadership falling short. What happens? From what I have seen (in organizations and in myself), the leader has possibly not taken the most egregious steps yet, but the course they are on is clearly one of potentially larger failure. This typically manifests itself in a variety of ways, such as some degree of arrogance that is evident to many, strongly expressed anger visited on whoever happens to be in the way, or even retaliation against people who oppose them. The ancient Greek tragedies are filled with this failure, *hubris* they called it, which was always a precursor to worse things. It remains so today—human nature has not changed.

The failure at this point is that the leader has begun to fail the people around them by creating a climate of fear rather than an environment where it is safe to give the boss feedback. They make the work more about themselves than others. These leaders often tell themselves that they have done nothing wrong and that their work is essential to the organization’s results. They come to believe they can do anything because that is how it has been reinforced for them. The danger here is twofold: (1) without understanding where they are falling short, leaders perpetuate their poor performance, especially as it impacts others; and (2) pride and arrogance lead to greater potential failures. From this point is only a short and very slippery slope to more serious failures.

It is in the third window, where we recognize things in ourselves that others do not yet know—where failure can best be headed off early. It is here our beliefs begin to be tested

in the crucible of power. I am confident that none of us starts out in public service with the intention of failing. Quite the contrary. Our commitment and humility are continually tested from the time we take on our first leadership roles. It is in this window into us that the seeds of public failure are either sown or rooted out. So where do we begin?

Heading Off Failure

Honest self-awareness in a leader must begin as a daily discipline before power begins to drown it out, or the drive for results overcomes our desire to serve with humility. Many have found that such awareness comes from self-reflection and is often best practiced at the end of the day. Simply, quietly take stock and review your actions and relationships of the day. How often did you make the effort to serve others before yourself? Are you beginning to feel a sense of superiority over your colleagues or your boss? Begin to work on those areas where you know you are deficient.

In my case, I began to realize that more and more of my time was being occupied by sitting at a computer, talking on the telephone, and going to meetings. I was simply letting my own agenda take priority over the agendas of the people that worked with me. It was one way I was expressing who and what was important—and I was wrong. Some timely feedback from a couple of friends and colleagues and my own reflection on what was said led me to make some changes. Gradually, I had to find some practices that caused me to interact with people, to listen to them, to take their careers and professional growth seriously. As an introvert, I knew I’d rather read and write than interact, but I had to force myself to change. In this regard, in my estimation, I was failing as a leader but it could have been worse had I not taken a second step I now often recommend to rising leaders.

Get yourself a wise mentor or something akin to a personal board of directors—people you meet with regularly who can be honest with you (and you with them); and who are discreet enough to be trusted to listen to your struggles and not broadcast them. We all need a community of people to get through this life. We don’t always recognize that need at work, yet it is at work that we may need it most. Good mentors and good friends are worth their weight in gold, not just to avoid failure of course, but also to help us learn and grow.

There is Grace, Too

Finally, there is also grace, *an acknowledgement and acceptance of our imperfections (and those of others) and a willingness to learn from our failures*. In one of the finest books on leadership and character I know of, the authors of *The Ascent of a Leader* advocate creating a culture of grace in our organizations and that we become leaders of grace. In doing so, we shape our own character and that of others for the good. They echo what John Kotter has said about organizations that create cultures that perform the best—they are organizations that drive out arrogance in leaders and drive out fear in the environment of work. It takes grace to do this.

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The Failure of Leaders

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We began this conversation by observing that all leaders will face failure and that whether it is beyond their control or it is a direct result of their actions, the leader is out on the point when failure comes.

As Jim Collins observes, the best leaders look in the mirror at such times and take responsibility; they don't blame others. While I agree wholeheartedly, I would also make a strong case that we not only need to give others grace as he suggests, we need to give ourselves grace as well. Otherwise, the load of responsibility becomes too great or we become too timid to ever make a mistake again—and that begets a leader who is indecisive and lacks innovation.

I had two close friends who were brilliant leaders who both became passive in the wake of failures that were not even their fault, and, as a result, public service lost their greatest gifts for service.

So, respect the potential for failure, be aware that we all struggle with the Jekyll and Hyde in us, and recognize that we all need both deeper self-awareness and a community around us to help avoid the trap that power can set. But when failure comes, as it will, learn from it and give yourself the grace to get back on the road again.

Don't become a casualty of failure; become fire tested with the internal tensile strength needed to resist the siren call of *hubris* so you can respond to the trumpet call of public service.

About the Author:

Ray Blunt is currently the Associate Director and Fellow at the Washington Institute for Faith, Vocation and Culture. For the past ten years he has served as a leadership consultant and teacher for the Council for Excellence in Government and the Federal Executive Institute as well as for several government and non-profit organizations. He spent 35 years in public service in the US Air Force and the US Department of Veterans Affairs.

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Team Building

Merging values with mission

Adapted from Robert H. Waterman, Jr., *The Renewal Factor*- (Bantam: NY)

President Don Petersen instigated a major part of Ford Motor Company's renewal when his dissatisfaction with the company's cars prompted him to ask the design engineers pointed questions.

"Do you really like what you're building?"

"Is this what you like to drive?"

"Would you want to see it parked in your driveway?"

Chief designer Jack Telnack had to admit that he didn't like what he was designing, didn't want to drive it or even see it parked in his driveway. When Petersen pressed further to ask, "What would you like to drive?" Telnack asked him to come back in a few weeks. "We'll have something to show you," he said. And he did.

It's fair to say that Ford's turnaround—symbolized by the Taurus cars started the day the company began working on designs that they were proud to create.

Keep this story in mind as you confront what any leader will tell you is his or her most difficult challenge: thinking of ways to develop a sense of values and mission in the organization. Here are four questions to help develop and hone this sense:

1. Looking back on the history of our organization, what have we done that gives us the most pride?
2. Looking back on our history, what shouldn't we have done?
3. What could we do now that would make us all feel proud?
4. Ten years from now, what will we have done that will have made us most proud?

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Influencing

Retain your best employees

Adapted from "Stay connected: Why keeping good people is still important ... really"
by Randy G. Pennington, on the Positive Performance Management Web site.

No matter what happens to the economy, retaining good people will remain a chief goal of every leader in every organization. Take a short refresher course in the basic factors that keep your most valuable employees at your side:

Give people the full picture.

Employees want to know more than what to do – they want to know why it matters. When you discuss goals and delegate tasks, show the linkage between the work and the organization's big picture.

Confirm that they've got the right

tools. Don't just assume your people have all the training and equipment they need – or that they'll ask for anything they don't have. Talk to them to find out what they could use to become more successful. Being proactive shows them you care about reducing their frustrations and helping them do a better job.

Reward their successes. People who do good work without recognition will go elsewhere, searching for employers that pay attention to their efforts. Don't go overboard, but don't ignore an employee's success, or even a good attempt. A simple "thank you" can go a long way toward solidifying employee loyalty.

Address poor performance

promptly. In your desire to create a positive workplace, don't ignore work that doesn't measure up. Productive workers may grow resentful of a culture that tolerates inefficiency and bad attitudes.

Have fun. Promote an atmosphere where people feel comfortable and relaxed enough to find the fun in their work. Encourage employees to open up and express their personalities so they feel valued as individuals.

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Polish your communication skills

Every day people speak to you. But are you really listening—or are you merely hearing? Listening skills are especially critical in doing a job accurately and fostering good relationships—not to mention understanding others’ needs.

Here are five tips to improve your listening skills:

Assume an attitude of listening readiness. Listening is active, not passive. Don’t answer your phone or check your PDA. It’s also rude to answer a cell phone. Doing so shows lack of respect for others and will make people feel less important than the call you answered.

Write thoughts down. You don’t have to pretend you are writing a novel, but jotting an occasional key work or fact can improve retention. The speaker also will feel flattered that you are taking time to note his or her thoughts.

Paraphrase the other person. That helps you stay alert and attentive, and you will be less likely to misunderstand what was said.

Assume an uncomfortable position. If you are sitting on the edge of your chair or leaning against a wall with your hand, you won’t be so comfortable that your mind roams. Listening needs to be active—if you are too comfortable, you become passive.

Listen as though you need to report the information to others. Ask yourself “What’s in it for me?” Then listen to make sure you understand correctly the content and feeling behind it. By actively practicing these effective listening pointers, you will be able to improve your communication skills in 2008...and beyond.

About the author: Editorial Advisory Board member Marjorie Brody, CSP, CMC, PCC is an author, sought-after public speaker and coach to Fortune 1,000 executives. Visit www.brodypro.com for more information.

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Ringtone rage: when co-workers are irked by employee cell phones

‘If it rings again, I’m going to flush it down the toilet!’

Even though many organizations have policies about personal cell phone use in the office, there are still plenty of cases of ringtone rage.

What causes the rage? How about the reactions of co-workers who are tired of hearing an unattended phone play the “Mission Impossible” theme 15 times.

That’s the situation manager Cindy Brown found herself in when one good employee regularly failed to put her phone on vibrate—or take it with her.

Going off the deep end

“I’m just about at the end of my rope,” Bill Andrews said.

“What are you going off the deep end about now?” Cindy asked. “Janet’s cell phone,” Bill said. “She’s the most thoughtless person I’ve ever met.”

“She left her cell phone ringer on again?” Cindy asked.

She’s been reminded before

“Yeah, and I’m tired of it,” Bill said. “It was bad enough when she was hooked on the ‘William Tell Overture’ and the ‘Pink Panther’, but now she’s gone modern. It’s Nickelback and Rascal Flats!”

“Bill, I’m sorry. I’ve spoken to Janet about it before,” Cindy said. “I’ll remind her.”

“Look, we all forget to put our cell phones on vibrate from time to time, but she never remembers,” Bill said. “What makes it worse is that she’ll go into a meeting, leave her phone on her desk and get six calls in an hour.”

“As I said, I’ll talk to her again,” Cindy said.

“Why don’t you do more than just talk to Janet?” Bill asked. “We have a cell phone policy and she’s clearly violating it. “And it’s not like it’s the first time you’ve said something to her about it.”

“Bill, you really don’t think I should suspend someone over a ringing cell phone, do you?” Cindy asked.

“Well, if you don’t get this fixed, one day someone’s going to flush her phone down the toilet,” Bill said.

“Bill, you wouldn’t...” Cindy said.

“Boss, I’m not going to make you any promises,” Bill said.

The Big Question

Cindy didn’t want this to escalate any further. Both Janet and Bill were good workers. But despite several reminders, Janet had never gotten into the habit of putting her phone on vibrate. If you were in Cindy’s situation, what would you do?

For potential solutions to consider, read the rest of the story on page 5.

Solutions

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Ringtone Rage: How would you solve the problem?

Continued from page 4

Following is what two managers suggested. See if you agree.

Act decisively to correct the situation.

"I wouldn't put up with it. I'd write Janet up in a flash. And I'd include the statement that if she doesn't correct the situation, the ramifications include suspension or termination at the discretion of management. You can't let one employee irritate and annoy other employees, or disrupt work. That's all there is to it. If an employee wants to walk herself to the door over something silly, that's her business. And I'd do it before others are tempted to take matters into their own hands. They're tempted only because leadership isn't doing anything about the problem."

Document discussions to get Janet's attention

"I'd document each time I've asked Janet to silence her phone and I'd again remind her about the policy. After three written documentations, if it happened again, I'd put a written record in her file. At our company, we have policies. If you have written warnings, it can lead to a suspension. Something has to be done to get Janet's attention."

So what would you have done?

As a supervisor, you have every right to insist on civility in the workplace by reminding everyone that:

1. Interruptions and distractions affect others
2. Professional behavior is a requirement, not an option, and
3. Consequences for repeated violations of any stated policies can be serious.

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Technical Knowledge

Frequently asked classification questions and answers from the Division of Personnel

What is position classification?

Position classification is the systematic grouping of positions, based upon an impartial assessment of assigned duties, responsibilities, authority, and other objective criteria, into classes sharing a common title, description, qualifications and pay assignment. Its function is to assess a position's set of agency-defined duties and responsibilities; not the employee doing the work.

What is its purpose?

Position classification facilitates the establishment and maintenance of a logical and consistent relationship between the duties and responsibilities of positions, their necessary qualifications, and the salary parameters provided. It establishes the foundation for all other HR activities; recruitment, selection, pay, training, employee relations, etc.

What information is used to determine a position's classification?

While the Position Description Form (PDF) completed by an employee, their immediate supervisor and agency management is a primary source of information, Division of Personnel staff may review information from a number of sources in their effort to determine an appropriate allocation for the position under review. Examples include; organizational charts, class specifications, allocation standards, agency program information, on-line research, and information on related or similar positions.

Staff may also contact the agency for additional information, and may as needed conduct personal interviews, or as commonly referred to, position on-site audits.

When does a position's classification need to be reviewed?

An incumbent or the agency should request a review when significant and permanent changes to a position occur, or when changes materially change the

nature or level of the work performed. The Division of Personnel can also initiate the review of a position.

How does an incumbent or an agency request to have a position reviewed?

Completion of a PDF by the affected employee, supervisor and management staff, followed by its submission to the agency's Human Resources office is necessary to initiate a review. It is critical that the PDF provide a clear overview of the position and its purpose, accompanied by a detailed description of the assigned duties and responsibilities, and its authority.

What are possible outcomes of a position review?

At the completion of the review process, a position may:

- ▶ be found to be correctly allocated
- ▶ be reallocated to a higher classification
- ▶ be reallocated to a lower classification or,
- ▶ may be reallocated to another classification at the present pay range

An agency may also elect to restructure the position's duties and responsibilities.

What if the incumbent or agency disagrees with the classification determination?

Either the affected employee or the agency may request that a determination be reevaluated. Such a request must:

- ▶ be in writing
- ▶ be submitted through the agency HR office
- ▶ clearly indicate why the determination is considered incorrect
- ▶ indicate what classification is thought to be appropriate;
- ▶ and what aspects of the position support its reallocation

Written by:
Bruce Prenger,
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Completing annual appraisals using PERforM

It is hard to believe, but the first rating period for annual performance appraisals in PERforM has arrived and spans from January 1 through March 31. Annual appraisals can be created in PERforM at any time during this period, but due to the steps involved in the process it's a good idea to start them early.

At the same time annual appraisals are being created, you should also think about objectives or expectations for the new appraisal period. You may consider reviewing next year's Performance Plan with the employee in conjunction with the review of the Performance Appraisal. Take the time to communicate your evaluation of the employee's performance during the last appraisal period and to discuss any modifications to their objectives.

NOTE: If you decide to adopt this process, you should create the annual appraisal in PERforM before making any revisions to the objectives for the new appraisal period. You do not have to populate the annual appraisal at the time you create it, but you must save it to indicate that it is "In Progress." Once the appraisal is in this status, changes made to the objectives will only be applied to future appraisals you create.

There are many tools available in PERforM to assist you in creating annual appraisals, such as links to information, mouse-over descriptions, and On-Line Help which opens the PERforM webpage (www.perform.mo.gov). There you will find various materials including [PERforM Guidelines](#) and [Frequently Asked Questions](#) about the appraisal process or related policy information.

In order for the appraisal process to be successful, communication between the rater (supervisor) and reviewer (second-level supervisor) as well as the rater and employee is a necessity. To ensure this occurs, annual appraisals should be started early in the rating period to allow sufficient time for completion.

If you cannot locate an answer to a question you have concerning the appraisal process or about the PERforM system in general, you can use the [Contact Us](#) link on the PERforM webpage or send an email to perform@oa.mo.gov.

Written By:
Marian Luebbert
Division of Personnel

Insist on fluent English only if the job requires it

It's clear that you can require bank tellers and phone salespeople to speak fluent English. But can you make the same demand of a construction worker or dishwasher?

In many cases, it makes good business sense to require employees to communicate effectively in clearly spoken English. But the EEOC is warning that overly broad policies will violate federal national-origin discrimination laws.

So, when can you set an English-fluency policy? That depends on the nature of the job. The EEOC says such policies are allowed in positions only if fluent English is needed "for the effective performance of the position for which it is imposed."

Bottom Line: Avoid setting identical fluency requirements for a broad range of positions. And don't require a greater degree of fluency than necessary for that job.

You'll stand on safer legal ground if you can document objective business reasons, such as safety or communication with customers.

Online resource: For more EEOC guidance on English-only policies, English-fluency policies and accent discrimination, go to www.eeoc.gov/origin.

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Mediating

Take charge when conflicts erupt

-Adapted from "Five habits of highly effective conflict resolvers" by Dina Beach Lynch, on the Business Management 360 Web site

Like it or not, dealing with conflicts between employees is an inevitable part of your job. Don't be afraid. Just follow these suggestions for resolving issues effectively:

Find out what each employee wants. The better you know each employee, the easier your job of getting to the roots of conflict quickly. When a dispute arises, take some time to explore each person's position. Find out how they view the situation, and what they specifically want you to do.

Practice collaborative listening. Don't just nod your head while letting employees explain their case. Acknowledge what they're telling you, both the facts ("So you believe Joe could get his work done more quickly") and the emotions ("You feel frustrated and angry when Janis is rushing you to finish"). People will be more willing to work together when they know you understand their position.

Look for positive messages. Conflicts make people angry. Part of getting past that anger is finding common ground based on mutual respect. When you talk to both parties, look for areas of agreement and positive feeling: "It sounds like Janis really likes the work you do."

Identify sources of power. When people feel powerless, they grow frustrated and angry. Look at the power relationships between the two parties, but keep in mind that power can shift unexpectedly, and that people may not realize how their power affects others.

Remain optimistic. Assure your employees that they'll be able to resolve their differences. A positive approach makes them more open to ideas. Stress compromise and resilience: Both parties may have to make changes, but in the end they'll be able to get back to their jobs without the worry they've been battling.

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