

Beyond the Horizons Consulting

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Perform, Review, Perform, Review, Pt. 1

This is the first article in a series about performance review in the workplace. In this article, we introduce the reader to the concept by presenting our philosophy on oversight of employees and by noting key behavioral elements to look for. If you are new to our Newsletters, feel free to send along comments or questions to info@beyondthehorizonsconsulting.com.

"It is the easiest thing in the world for a person to deceive himself." — Benjamin Franklin

A Philosophy about Performance Management

Performance management is not just a yearly or even a semi-annual appraisal of an employee's performance



over a specific length of time. Instead it ideally should be a daily communication between employee and his/her manager.

Performance review notes all of the following:

- ◆ The employee's stress level
- ◆ Whether the employee might possibly be abusing alcohol or drugs
- ◆ Whether the employee may be depressed
- ◆ Whether the employee exhibits any signs of becoming violent

- ◆ Whether the employee is a victim of domestic abuse
- ◆ The level of morale among team members
- ◆ The level of absenteeism among team members
- ◆ Signs of "presenteeism" among employees
- ◆ The performance level of each team, and *finally*
- ◆ The actual performance level of the individual employee

Note that the actual performance level of the individual, as measured in specific output, comes *last*. A good manager observes and reflects upon any patterns that develop among the earlier items before concluding that "Joe's performance is just not up to par."

A Word about Eminent Sensibility

As individuals, we sometimes make decisions that "just don't make sense." Usually this is because we are in a completely new situation. Or we may be fearful or feel pressured to make a "snap" decision and get on with business. These are usually disastrous decisions. Organizations at times also make decisions that ultimately don't make sense. Sometimes these are driven by a need quickly to enhance "the bottom line." Thus whole departments may be laid off based on the fact that they don't show profit numbers matching other divisions.

The author knows of one case in which the entire service division of a company was eliminated. It was known to have provided excellent personal travel services to executives of five-star companies. In fact, these Fortune 500 companies begged the parent company to retain the tagged division with its dedicated service people. However, the service division had failed to meet the standards of the "number crunchers" at the top of the organization, and it was disbanded. The result? A great deal of good will, which

had not been figured into the purely numbers equation, was lost. Not only that, the lives of many excellent employees, whose careers had been devoted to providing those services, were disrupted. This decision was not eminently sensible!

Just so, decisions within the whole area of performance management can be short-sighted or not based on well-designed job descriptions. When a candidate applies for a position with a particular job title, let's say, administrative assistant, the actual duties need to be outlined. For one person this job title may signify writing letters, filing, and attending to the boss' immediate needs for expediting a project. Another person may envision such as position as orchestrating the office staff, pulling together travel and convention planning, and being a hostess to visitors.

Of course, positions evolve. Even in manufacturing industries, engineers design new products, and line employees must incorporate this knowledge or skill subset into their formula. That is why it is important to review all job descriptions at least semiannually and to add or delete items appropriately with the input of the employees themselves. Embedded in these descriptions may also be tasks that employees have taken on grudgingly. These probably need to be negotiated in terms of who does what.

In addition, just as a company's culture cannot be legislated but develops from the good will among colleagues and management, so too will certain individuals agree to taking on "the niceties" that contribute to the team's overall wellbeing. Those individuals who test SF (Sensing-Feeling) on the Myers-Briggs are more than likely apt to be persons who desire harmony at work and who also are willing to take in hand those "little things" that will contribute to it. It is important *not* to continually take advantage of these "touchy-feely" persons but to reward them with generous strokes of appreciation.

In performance review it does *not* make eminent sense to rate a person

- On the basis of an outdated job description
- "Just because it's time for the annual review"
- Using a form that does not really measure the behaviors necessary to do the job (i.e., an invalid instrument)
- Using a form that is subjective and has not been tested over a period of time (i.e., an unreliable instrument)

It also does not make sense NOT to

- List the employee's strengths
- List his/her weaknesses

- Plan how you will go forward after the discussion
- Develop a personal improvement plan with the employee
- Check in with the employee often about such things as his/her stress level, issues with team members, suggestions, and the like

In some ways performance management is like parenting. You cannot be a good parent if all the time you spend with your child is two weekends a year and then during that time criticize him/her for behaviors you deem reprehensible! You say, "Of course, not!" Yet that is exactly what many managers, supervisors, and



employers do. They *neglect* their employees most of the time, and marriage and family therapists tell us that neglect is probably the most serious form of abuse.

You don't need to be "big brother," looking over the shoulders of your employees, culling gossip from teammates, or micromanaging them. If an employee's performance is questionable or starting to fall off, all you need do is make brief visits with him/her weekly and use your emotional IQ to understand the bigger picture. Sometimes it's personal issues an employee is grappling with, and sometimes it's the work environment. Try to get a handle on whether there have been misconceptions and misunderstandings among team members. Listen to all parties. Call in an objective third party if necessary. But, above, all *be present* — don't become a victim of denial and presenteeism yourself!

A Performance-Driven Culture

According to Tony Rutigliano, Vice President and Chief Learning Officer of ADP*, if a company's culture operates on the premise of delivering excellence to its clients/customers and demanding excellence from its associates, it will

- ◇ Drive accountability
- ◇ Operate as a meritocracy
- ◇ Value substance over style
- ◇ Develop its associates
- ◇ Measure employee contributions
- ◇ Value output more than politics

Next month we will examine each of these factors in depth. A thank you to our loyal readers. See page 3 for information on our services.

*From the Webinar, "The Missing Linkage, Learning and Performance, 9/13/2006.

Stay tuned to Beyond the Horizons Consulting Newsletters for timely information to solve your management challenges! Please feel free to write us at

info@beyondthehorizonsconsulting.com

or to call us at 505-466-4990 to schedule a free, complimentary coaching session or consultation for your business needs.

Beyond the Horizons Consulting offers a variety of services for individuals, teams, and organizations.

- ◆ Individual coaching for managers is a process that begins by identifying your style, what you want to retain and strengthen, and what you want to modify. Objective assessments are part of the process, as are also a mutual give-and-take process of creative problem solving and supportive guidance.
- ◆ We offer group seminars on identifying and dealing with stress in a relaxing and supportive environment.
- ◆ Our team building seminars will help your team or department run more smoothly, whether it is a brand-new team or one that has been put together after a reorganization.
- ◆ Our communication seminars identify crucial parts of the communication equation and help you put them all together by using role play, among other practical, hands-on experiences.

- ◆ We also offer group seminars utilizing excellent tools, including the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator or the DISC.
- ◆ Our conflict resolution services help opposing parties identify mutual purpose(s) and restore harmony to your workplace environment.
- ◆ It is our pleasure to tailor a seminar to your company's, department's, or team's needs!

Take a look at our May and June, 2005, Newsletters to see our new, serene home, a place we invite you to take advantage of!

Call us to schedule a complimentary consultation for yourself or your business!

Our helpful Office Administrator, Stan, will work with you to schedule a meeting time that fits your schedule.

**Stan and Jean Eva can be reached at
(505) 466-4990**