

Beyond the Horizons Consulting

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Perform, Review, Part II

This is the second article in a series about performance management in the workplace. In this article, we enumerate on the first five behaviors we listed last month as key elements in a performance-driven business. Let's examine how *your* business can deliver excellence to its customers/clients.

If you are new to our Newsletters, feel free to send along comments or questions to info@beyondthehorizonsconsulting.com.

Accountability

Accountability is nothing more than holding yourself responsible to your commitments. In the context of the workplace, accountability means that you agree to the



Juggling priorities and making decisions brings with it great responsibility for self and others!

position description. If necessary, you will negotiate those items whose description needs to be amended. However, once you accept your "mission," you proceed to fulfill it as honestly and as competently as you can. If you are unclear about an assignment, you immediately set up an appointment with your supervisor to clarify what is wanted.

Remember, too, that accountability is one of the key hallmarks of a team. Team members hold themselves mutually accountable for meeting team goals. The innovative author, Scott Peck,* used the metaphor of a

gardener aptly to describe the parenting process. He noted that the gardener who truly cares about his plants and the wellbeing of the whole garden will observe them daily, watering a bit here, pruning and trimming a bit there, adding some fertilizer, raking the soil around the base of the plant. *So it is with parents and with leaders.* By extension, each person can become his/her own parent and leader through self-reflection that results in

- ◆ Asking for and giving oneself learning opportunities
- ◆ Making sure that relationships with colleagues are honest and fulfill responsibilities
- ◆ Evaluating oneself and using self-discipline to improve
- ◆ Eliminating destructive behaviors
- ◆ Adding more constructive behaviors

Meritocracy

Meritocracy is a system based on the metaphor, "You sow what you reap." In other words, as an employee, supervisor, or business owner, you hopefully sow seeds of honesty, hard work, appreciation, and ethical behavior with colleagues and with customers. The rewards you reap are customer loyalty, a smoothly running operation, high morale in the workplace, and — probably — steady profits.

It makes sense to reward your employees not across the board, not at personal whim, but in accordance with their meeting agreed-upon performance goals.

Article continues on pages 2 and 3. Please see page three for contact information and a listing of our services.

Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled*. NY: Simon & Schuster, 1978.

By knowing what is expected of them, employees have a sense of security that their “family away from family” is run on principles that are *eminently sensible*. They are protected from the chaos and senselessness of an environment dominated by whim, nepotism, confusion, and the like.

An example: Many state governments are basically tenure systems. Once an employee has survived a prescribed period of time in an agency, s/he is guaranteed a position for life. Transfers between agencies may ensue, but there are incredulously few instances of misconduct for which an employee may be terminated.* In such organizations, there is little incentive for an employee to improve his/her performance. Some supervisors and managers in state agencies acquire their positions because of their “connections,” and they may go on to hire or promote individuals entirely due to personal relationships with them. This type of system is ridden with dishonesty, unfairness, and nepotism.

Suppose, however, that your organization does operate as meritocracy. Now you need to consider the kinds of rewards you provide and what rewards may or may not be an incentive to your individual employees. In our September 2004 Newsletter we looked at individual differences in what people value. Scientific types, for instance, would probably value opportunities for further education, to attend professional society meetings, or to arrange exchanges with counterparts in university research. Utilitarian types, on the other hand, would probably best appreciate a raise or more flexibility to choose among a palette of benefits. Traditional types might prefer a chance to mentor employees or to organize a self-help group.

Substance over Style

“Substance over style” refers to the ability of a manager to distinguish between work which has true value to the organization and its customers versus a product which may be glitzy but is actually of little real value. For instance, companies which sell technical products also produce manuals to help the end user understand the product, troubleshoot problems, diagnose failures, and know when to replace pieces of equipment. Technical writers can produce a manual in a relatively short period of time with a glossy cover and nice drawings, which however does not adequately help the end user with the product. Over against such a “stylish” product would be a manual that covers all the above-mentioned issues in a clear, concise, and readable fashion.

The same distinction between substance and style applies to employees themselves. Certain personality types are defi-

nately more “stylish,” and their best fit in the organization is probably as receptionist, host, advertising agent, or the like. On the other hand, “employees of substance” may not always be the most creative or personable individuals. However, these folks in production or in research and design, for example, can always be relied on to carry out their job functions in a dependable fashion.

Development of Associates

A performance-driven culture oversees professional development — both in terms of providing appropriate opportunities for personnel and in terms of encouraging employees to seek out and obtain approval for courses or learning experiences *not* in the company’s purview. It goes without saying that managers and supervisors must make performance review an ongoing activity, checking in with associates, clarifying ideas, “seeding” new thoughts, “pruning” where necessary, and fostering interpersonal relationships among team members. This after all is the work of a supervisor — someone who “sees above and beyond” the everyday crises and details of the work day.



Measurement of Contributions

It is important not just to note that someone has made a contribution to the team but actually to measure that contribution in terms of its full effect upon company morale and productivity. The purpose of measurement is twofold:

- 1 to promote honesty between manager and employee and among team members
- 2 to create the foundation for a true meritocracy

There are many ways we can *objectively* measure an employee’s contribution, and they will be discussed in a future Newsletter. Suffice it to say at this point that measurement is a left-brained activity. In the psychologist Jung’s terminology, it would be termed a “thinking” rather than a “feeling” function. Raters need to avoid subjective logic based on valuing one person categorically more than another — perhaps because of a vague feeling of empathy for that person or because of some unconscious association. Instead they need to

employ the *same standardized formula* to evaluate each employee — as much as is humanly possible.**

December 2007's Newsletter will complete this section on performance-driven culture. We will then ask and give our own answer to the question, "*Why do we do performance appraisals?*"

Our Offerings and How to Contact Us

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.

** Psychology, whether applied to the individual, the family, or the workplace is at best an imprecise science. Physicists warn us that even our observations of "hard reality" are tempered by our own idiosyncrasies.

- ◆ We also offer group seminars utilizing excellent tools, including the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the DISC, or the PIAV.
- ◆ Our conflict resolution services help opposing parties identify mutual purpose(s) and work toward restoring 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**