

## **How Can You Improve Employee Performance?**

Whilst human beings are a complex breed, and they don't come with a *user's guide*, there are some simple steps that can be taken to determine why people are not performing up to required expectations.

There are four main reasons why people don't perform:

### **1. They just can't do what you want them to do.**

They are not capable. You simply have the wrong person in the job. If this is the case, you need to look at why did you *select* this person to do this job? And, before you go out and hire a replacement, check out your *selection* practices to ensure that you are hiring people who are capable of doing the job you require.

### **2. They don't know what to do.**

If you have people who are capable of doing the job, do they know what is expected of them? I saw an old black and white training film many years ago called "But I told them what to do!" Yes many managers have told employees what to do, but that does not mean that their understanding of what to do is the same as what is in your head.

Have you given them a clear picture of what you want accomplished, and what the finished job will look like? Have you agreed on when it will be completed? And, has the employee confirmed that they have a clear picture by describing what you expect in their own words?

Two-way *communication* is essential here. Otherwise how do we know that we have been understood? Too often managers believe that it is solely the employee's responsibility to make sure that they understand, but it is a joint responsibility. Managers also have a responsibility to ensure that their communications are understood. Only through effective two-way *communication* can that happen.

### **3. They don't know how to do it.**

If the employee is capable of doing it, and knows what needs to be done, we may still need to develop their knowledge and skills so they can actually accomplish it. *Training* or *learning* is the solution here. That does not necessarily mean formal training... on-the-job *mentoring* by someone who is skilful in the area is often more effective, and cost-efficient.

### **4. They don't want to do it.**

If the employee can do it, knows what to do, and how to do it, then it comes down to a *motivation* issue... they don't *want* to perform at that level. Motivation is a complex subject, but the reality is that people are motivated by one of two things:

- They do what they want to do... what will satisfy their needs, or...
- They do what they believe they should do, what is the right thing to do based on their values or principles.

So when people don't want to perform, you can be sure that their needs as they perceive them are not being satisfied, and secondly, they don't believe they should do it.

I think that in most instances where performance is lacking, this is the issue. The *motivation* is lacking. And I believe that the primary reason is that many managers believe that employees are motivated only by *money!* Regular pay rises to lift performance do not have any lasting effect and are not the answer!

### **Money is not the primary motivator for people.**

There are other needs people have that are actually more important than money and there are many research studies to demonstrate this. But those needs vary from employee to employee, and even from one time to another... one way you can find out what people's needs are is to ask them.

There are however two basic needs, according to Dr William Glasser, that are common to all human beings, which you can capitalise on to greatly increase performance. In his book *Reality Therapy* he says that all people have a need to be *accepted* or *respected* for who they are, and to feel that they are *worthwhile* to themselves and to others.

In other words, people *have a need* to do the right thing and to make a difference when they come to work. All their managers and supervisors need to do to ensure that they do is to satisfy the other need... *respect* them for who they are. We are not talking rocket science here; we are talking basic human decency... just treat someone like a person rather than as a thing called an employee!

All you need to do to create an environment where people want to perform at their best, is figure out how you would like to be treated if you were in their position.