

Solutions

Performance Strategies for Managers and Supervisors from the Division of Personnel

Winter 2010

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Quick Tip:

Make things happen! If you have difficulty bringing closure to your work, pretend you're going on vacation next week. I'm convinced a national survey would produce a phenomenal correlation between efficiency, effectiveness and results – and the timing of vacations.

Glenn Van Ekeren

12 Simple Secrets of Happiness at Work

"The world is wide, and I will not waste my life in friction when it could be turned into momentum."

-Frances Willard

[Click here](#) for previous Issues of **Solutions**

FEATURE ARTICLE

Putting Goals before the Mission

By Dr. Marshall Goldsmith

Taken from *myquickcoach*

The Division of Personnel's online source of practical answers to workplace challenges

In the movie *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, the lead character, Colonel Nicholson, is a prisoner of war in Burma who leads his men to build a bridge for his Japanese captors. Nicholson is an officer of high integrity, dedicated to excellence, a great leader of men – and thus well trained to complete any mission that he is given. So he builds a beautiful bridge. By the film's end, he finds himself in the painful position of defending the bridge from attack by fellow officers who want to destroy it to prevent Japanese trains from using it.

There's a chilling moment of realization, right before he detonates the bridge, when Nicholson (played by Alec Guinness) utters the famous line, "What have I done?" He was so focused on his goal – building the bridge – that he forgot the larger mission of winning the war.

That is goal obsession, which is a subset of wanting to win too much. It rears its ugly head in many ways. In its broadest form, it's the force at play when we get so wrapped up in achieving our goal that, like Colonel Nicholson, we do it at the expense of a larger mission. It's one of those paradoxical traits that are usually the sources of our success, but taken too far can become blatant causes of failure.

You see this when people become fixated on the wrong goals. Given their history of success, they end up achieving a result that does more damage than good to their organizations and themselves.

The canyons of Wall Street are littered with victims of goal obsession. I asked one hard-driving deal maker, "Mike, why do you work all of the time?" He replied, "Why do you think? Do you think I love this place? I am working so hard because I want to make a lot of money!"

I continued my inquiry, "Do you really need this much money?"

"I do now," Mike grimaced. "I just got divorced for the third time. With three alimony checks every month, I am almost broke."

"Why do you keep getting divorced?" I asked.

The answer came out as a sad sigh. "All three wives kept complaining that I worked all the time. They have no idea how hard it is to make this much money!"

This sort of classic goal obsession would be laughable if the irony – or more accurately, the failure to appreciate the irony – weren't so painful.

One of the most ironic examples of goal obsession was the "Good Samaritan" research done by Darley and Batson at Princeton in 1973. In this widely referenced study, a group of theology students was told that they were to go across campus to deliver a sermon on the topic of the Good Samaritan.

As part of the research, some of these students were told that they were late and needed to hurry up. Along their route across campus, Darley and Batson had hired an actor to play the role of a victim who was coughing and suffering.

Ninety percent of the "late" students ignored the needs of the suffering person in their haste to get across campus. As the study reports, "Indeed, on several occasions, a seminary student going to give his talk on the parable of the Good Samaritan literally stepped over the victim as he hurried on his way!"

Continued on the next page.

Putting Goals before the Mission

Continued from page 1

What's happening here? Goal obsession clouded their judgment. They were under time pressure. They were in a hurry. They had deadlines. They were going to do something that they thought was important. Other people were depending on them. And in that hothouse of circumstances, their goals got warped.

After all, when people committed to hitting their targets pick the wrong one—when they focus on the bridge and not the war—somebody ends up getting hurt.

The solution is simple, but not easy. You have to step back, take a breath, and look around. Survey the conditions that are making you obsessed with the wrong goals. Time and deadline pressures come with being a leader. We confront them every minute of every day. They do not go away. Which makes it all the more important to reflect upon our work, match it up against the life we want to live, and consider, "What am I doing?" and "Why am I doing this?" Ask yourself, "Am I achieving a task and forgetting my organization's mission? Am I making money to support my family – and forgetting the family that I am trying to support?"

After all this effort and display of professional prowess, you don't want to find yourself at a dead end, asking, "What have I done?"

Marshall Goldsmith (www.marshallgoldsmith.com) is corporate America's preeminent executive coach and founding director of the Alliance for Strategic Leadership.

Mr. Goldsmith's article is part of the Division of Personnel's online learning system:

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BECOME A "HIGH-TRUST" LEADER

Compiled by the editors of Solutions

Do you trust the people you work with? Do they trust you? The answers to these two questions will reveal volumes about your work environment.

Trust has been shown to be the most significant predictor on an individual's satisfaction with their organization.

Low-trust environments struggle with turnover, absenteeism, unresolved conflict, low morale, dissatisfied customers, and a direct negative effect on the bottom line. People will tell you only what you want to hear. There is apathy, backbiting, and disloyalty. Defensiveness, territorialism and an unwillingness to take responsibility for mistakes are commonplace.

You don't need to look far to realize that, as a global society, we have a crisis of trust on our hands. On the organizational level, trust within companies has sharply declined. In many organizations, the message communicated by behavior is not "we care," "it's you're expendable." In his book, *The Speed of Trust*, author Stephen M. R. Covey contends that:

- Only 29% of employees believe that management cares about them developing their skills; and
- Only 42% believe management cares about them at all.

While relationships of all kinds are built on and sustained by trust, they can also be broken down and destroyed by a lack of trust.

Simply put, trust means confidence. The opposite of trust – distrust – is suspicion. The difference between a high- and low-trust relationship is obvious. Take communication. In a high-trust relationship, you can say the wrong thing and people will still get your meaning. In a low-trust relationship, you can be very measured, even precise, and they'll still misinterpret you.

Your boss, division leader, spouse, children, friends and associates may all have problems as far as trust (or anything else) is concerned. But that does not mean that you are powerless!

In fact, you probably have no idea how powerful you can be in changing the level of trust in any relationship if you know how to work from the inside out.

Perhaps the place to begin is to first dispel some common myths about trust explored in Covey's book and condensed in the following chart:

Myth vs. Reality

Myth	Reality
Trust is soft.	Trust is hard, real and quantifiable. It measurably affects productivity and cost.
Trust is built solely on integrity.	Trust is a function of both character and competence.
You either have trust or you don't.	Trust can be both created and destroyed.
Once lost, trust cannot be restored.	Though difficult, in most cases lost trust can be restored.
You establish trust one person at a time.	Establishing trust with one establishes trust with many.
You can't teach trust.	Trust can be taught and learned, and it can become a strategic advantage.

While there are many different aspects of trust, some find it beneficial to initially focus on specific behaviors — that when further developed and practiced consistently can help to build and maintain high-trust relationships.

Covey contends that trust – specifically relationship trust – can be strengthened through **13 Behaviors** that are common to high-trust leaders and people throughout the world. Covey further suggests that as you work on behaving in ways that build trust, one helpful way to visualize and quantify your efforts is by thinking in terms of "Trust Accounts." Remember that each trust account is unique; all deposits and withdrawals are not created equal; and what constitutes a deposit to one person may not to another.

Learn more about all 13 Behaviors on the next page.

BECOME A “HIGH-TRUST” LEADER

Continued from page 2

“It is a leader’s responsibility to demonstrate what it means to keep your word and earn a reputation for trustworthiness.”

- Hank Paulson, Chairman/CEO, Goldman Sachs

“Leadership without mutual trust is a contradiction in terms.”

- Warren Bennis, Author of *On Becoming a Leader*

Learn more about becoming a “High Trust” leader in the Division of Personnel’s next Special Invitation Leadership Series Seminar:

DRIVING RESULTS WITH LEADERSHIP AND TRUST

In today’s ever changing world, a work setting comprised of low trust can generate suspicion that ultimately hinders getting things done. Guarded communication, speculation, and disengagement slow productivity and lead to frustration. But when individuals trust each other – and are trusted by others – communication improves and productivity accelerates as attention is redirected toward team objectives.

Similarly, without leaders who can connect the efforts of their team to the critical objectives of the organization, no organization ever becomes great. Consequently, it’s also important to define a clear and compelling purpose, create and align work systems and processes to achieve success, and unleash the talents and energy of their work teams.

Attend this program to see how you can create a place where people want to stay and contribute their best effort, time and time again, helping your organization achieve its most critical priorities.

March 30, 2010

8:30 AM – 4:30 PM

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The 13 High Trust Relationship Behaviors defined by Stephen M. R. Covey in *The Speed of Trust* require a combination of both character and competence. The first five flow initially from character, the second five from competence, and the last three from an almost equal mix of character and competence. Taken to the extreme, however, these Behaviors do not build trust, and the “opposite” or “counterfeit” of each Behavior creates the biggest withdrawals from your “Trust Account.”

The 13 Behaviors of High-Trust Leaders

Talk Straight. Communicate clearly. Tell the truth and let people know where you stand. Don’t manipulate people, distort facts or leave false impressions. Counterfeit behaviors include withholding information, flattery and spin.

Demonstrate Respect. Show that you genuinely care through respect, fairness, kindness, and civility. The opposite is showing disrespect, which is a huge issue. The counterfeit is to fake respect or to show respect and concern for only those who can do something for you.

Create Transparency. Be genuine, open and authentic with no “hidden agendas.” Tell the truth in a way that people can verify. The opposite is to obscure, and the counterfeit is illusion or pretending things are different than they are.

Right Wrongs. Apologize quickly. Make restitution when possible and demonstrate personal humility. The opposite is to deny or justify wrongs because of ego and pride, and the counterfeit is to cover up mistakes.

Show Loyalty. Give credit freely. Don’t badmouth people behind their backs and don’t disclose others’ private information. The counterfeit is to appear to share credit but then downplay others’ contribution when they are away.

Deliver Results. Do what you are hired to do. Because it can be difficult to measure results, take time to define results up front. By establishing a track record of success, and not making excuses for not delivering, you can restore and/or build trust on the competence side.

Get Better. Continuously improve by learning. Develop formal and informal feedback systems and respond to them. Others will develop confidence in your ability to succeed in a rapidly changing environment. The opposite is deterioration, while the counterfeit is the eternal student – always learning, but never producing.

Confront Reality. Meet the tough issues head-on; acknowledge the unsaid and lead conversations courageously. When leaders use the opposite behavior by ignoring problems, they pay a huge tax when their followers believe they are being dishonest.

Clarify Expectations. Always discuss and reveal expectations, and never assume they are clear or shared. The opposite is to leave undefined expectations and the counterfeit is to be vague about specifics.

Practice Accountability. Hold yourself and others accountable. Don’t avoid or shirk responsibility, and be clear on how you’ll communicate progress. The opposite is not to take responsibility, and the counterfeit is to point fingers.

Listen First. Genuinely understand another person’s thoughts and feelings, before trying to diagnose or advise. The opposite and counterfeit are to speak first and listen last, or not at all, and to pretend to listen while waiting for your own chance to speak.

Keep Commitments. It is the quickest way to build trust in any relationship. The opposite is to break commitments and the counterfeit is to make vague, unreliable commitments, or never make them in the first place. Make keeping all commitments the symbol of your honor.

Extend Trust. Extending trust leverages it to create reciprocity. Extend trust abundantly to those who have earned it. Extend it conditionally to those who are first earning it. While the other Behaviors help you become a more trusted person or manager, this Behavior helps you become a more trusting leader.

Like all relationship components, there is no magic formula for making trust suddenly appear. Trust isn’t something we give attention to from eight to five; it requires a way of life that consistently displays, at minimum, the 13 Behaviors for building trust. It takes an incredible commitment to develop the persistence, the patience and the discipline to hold a relationship together for the long haul. Trust lies at the heart of this endeavor and consistency is the path that leads you there.

Coping techniques for a lean organization

Do your employees and managers have the skills to work effectively in a leaner organization? It's a reasonable question, given the number of organizations that have experienced downsizing in recent months. And the answer, for many of these organizations appears to be "Not really."

This answer emerged from a recent CareerBuilder survey of over 4,000 workers nationwide. Fully 47% of them said they'd inherited new duties after a layoff or downsizing, and 37% said their workload had doubled as they tried to cope with tasks previously done by two people.

Not surprisingly, employees believe that they have to work more hours to get their tasks done. Some 34% of workers who survived a layoff said they're spending more time at the office. And some are taking it to extremes – 17% are working 10 hours a day or more, while 22% are working more weekends.

As a result of this, almost one third of those employees whose organization had experienced layoffs felt burned out.

So what can be done? In many instances you just can't reduce the workload or back away from services that are part of the organization's mission.

What you can do though, is work on the flexibility and negotiation skills necessary to weather rough patches at work with your mental and physical health intact – and still complete the work that needs to be done. It's important to remember that while employees and managers may have all the good will in the world when it comes to meeting increased work demands, it won't help if they don't know how to organize their response to those demands.

"If we recognize that change and uncertainty are basic principles, we can greet the future and the transformation we are undergoing with the understanding that we do not know enough to be pessimistic."

-Hazel Henderson,
The Politics of the Solar Age

Here are three techniques to help employees and managers cope:

Managers must not expect employees to do everything at once, and employees must not try. Employees shouldn't overpromise and managers overexpect. If an employee's task list is growing out of control, she or he should feel comfortable asking the manager to help identify the key tasks and establish reasonable timelines.

Employees and managers need to reserve time to "sharpen the saw." Working without respite is an accident waiting to happen – the person's efficiency will eventually suffer. Aside from the legalities of FLSA requirements, managers should be encouraging, not discouraging, employees from taking full meal breaks and scheduled break times to diffuse stress and tension that builds up throughout the day. Similarly, encourage employees who have sufficient annual leave to take a personal day when the job appears just too daunting.

Employees and managers shouldn't be in touch all the time. Ongoing feedback is a good thing. But with the proliferation of electronic devices like laptop computers, Blackberries, iPods, etc., employees can easily overdose on contact with their boss. Unfortunately, managers who send midnight emails may inadvertently feed a sense of paranoia, leading employees to conclude that if they're not in touch 24/7, they're not doing their job. So, if the message can wait to be sent until regular working hours, make an effort to send it then and avoid the 1AM text messages.

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Top employees need more attention

It's easy to overlook top performers when it comes to coaching employees. They don't seem to need as much attention as the middle and lower-level performers. But stars need recognition. In fact, they may need more than the non-stars. After all, not only do they excel at what they do, they often feel abused, having to pick up the slack for those who aren't as capable or motivated.

Here are some ways to keep top employees happy and motivated:

- **Involve them.**
Use their skills and knowledge to solve problems, set strategies, even help make hiring decisions.
- **Delegate extensively.**
Then stand back and give them the freedom to perform.
- **Encourage them to teach.**
They'll learn even more while they do it.
- **Let them fill in for you.**
Groom them to be candidates for promotion.
- **Challenge them.**
Give them the chance to stretch without making them feel abused.
- **Spend time with them.**
Listen to their ideas.
- **Recognize their successes.**
Tell and show them how they mean to you and the organization.

Adapted from "The Manager's Coaching Handbook," by David Cottrell and Mark Layton.
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Solutions

"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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Ready, set— execute your goals

Setting goals is important, but that's just the beginning of the hard work. What turns a goal into an achievement is effective execution. Here's how to map out a successful execution strategy:

Highlight your goal's importance. You want people to get excited. Explain the impact of your objectives—not just what you want people to do, but how success will make a positive difference. People want to devote their energy to goals that seem worthwhile.

Look beyond the immediate payoff. Your objective shouldn't be an end in itself. Plan what you'll do once you've reached your target, and include the next steps in your execution strategy. Designing a better product or process is a worthy goal, but think about how you'll "sell it" once you've succeeded.

Emphasize hard targets. A touchy-feely goal like "improve working conditions" probably won't motivate people as strongly as a solidly quantifiable target. Employees need to be able to visualize what they're working toward.

Measure progress closely. Regular milestones help people stay on track, and also provide a motivational bump: Your people will be able to see how far they've come and what they've already accomplished, so they'll remain committed to the end result.

Establish accountability. If you ask your team, "Whose job is it to do _____?" they should be able to respond quickly. If not, things will take longer to get finished—or they won't get done at all. Clarify who's responsible for what right away.

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Legal Brief:

Are you doing enough to stop harassment?

"What happened?" asked Supervisor Fran West, seeing the coffee stain on Cindy Nixon's shirt.

"Karl bumped into me—after Tim bumped into me earlier this morning!"

"I thought they stopped all that stuff after I had that meeting with all of you," said Fran.

"Yeah, for a few weeks, but they've been back at it. I can feel them staring at me, and I look over and they're smirking."

"Is Karl talking to you now? I remember he said in the meeting the only reason he'd been giving you the silent treatment was because he had some personal things on his mind."

"Yeah, he's talking. In fact, now I have the opposite problem to deal with. He's switched to yelling at me. He says it's constructive criticism from one coworker to another. But he gets right in my face and yells."

"Yeah, Karl can get pretty riled up. But there's no excuse for the other stuff. I'll talk to them right now. You shouldn't have to put up with them bullying you."

After that, Karl and Tim didn't bump into Cindy again, but they kept up the staring and smirking.

The harassment did finally stop.

Soon after, Cindy quit. She went to the EEOC to complain of harassment and then filed a lawsuit. In court, she said she felt forced to quit because the company hadn't done enough to stop the harassment.

The company said whenever the supervisor talked to Karl and Tim, the harassment tapered off, so the message was getting through to them.

Decision: The company lost. The harassment did die down but not enough—and it certainly didn't stop. Plus the supervisor never disciplined them, only asked them to stop. So a jury had to hear the case.

Key: Harassment can be complicated. It can take time to sort through the mess, but do what's necessary to stop harassment.

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Quick solutions...

Have a good day

Believe it or not, something as simple as how you walk into work can set the tone for the entire day.

When "The Boss" walks in, people pay attention. If you brush past a worker without saying good morning, people notice. If you snap at someone first thing, people will avoid you the rest of the day. If you seem preoccupied or upset, the "stay away from him" message will spread to your employees before you reach your desk. Take a couple of seconds before you enter the workplace to gather yourself. Walk in with a smile and stop to chat with an employee or two. It will get the day off on the right foot.


Attack the problem

Every employee makes excuses at one time or another. It's better to ignore the excuse, and focus on the job at hand.

For instance: An employee tells you that he "would have finished the job but people kept interrupting me." Wrong answer: "Why did you let them interrupt you? And by the way, who was interrupting you?" Right answer: "Fine. What is the status of the job now, and when will you be finished?" The right answers keep the discussion focused on the job, not the excuse.

As a general rule, attack the problem and ignore the excuse.

Find out who's naughty and nice By Dr. Alan Zimmerman



In *"The Leadership Secrets of Santa Claus,"* Eric Harney talks about Igor, one of Santa's first elves at the North Pole. Igor was "nice" when he first started to work for Santa, but things slowly began to change. Igor would occasionally start his shift a few minutes late and take a bit longer to return from breaks.

Santa, the boss, didn't say anything because he thought, "I'll let it slide because he does good work, or "It's no real problem right now." But if it becomes one, you'll bet I'll act." But deep down, Santa knew he was just too chicken to confront Igor and his tardiness. After all, Santa wanted everything to be "nice." That was *mistake #1* – overlooking Igor's tardiness, hoping it would magically go away on its own.

It didn't. It continued. Then, instead of talking to Igor, Santa sent out a memo to the entire staff reminding them of the importance of being on time. *Mistake #2.* Santa hoped Igor would "get the message" and correct his problem. He didn't. And all the other elves were left wondering why they got a memo about something they were already doing.

Igor's problems continued. Santa looked for every excuse to avoid a confrontation. *Mistake #3.* But the issue came to a head when one of the elves asked Santa, "When are you gonna do something about Igor? His being late all the time is really unfair to the rest of us."

The elf was right. Santa knew he had to do something, and he was angry that Igor had put him in this position. So he called Igor into the office and really let him have it. *Mistake #4.* Now they were both angry, and the tension was high.

Then Igor asked Santa, "If this issue is so important, why didn't you say something to me sooner?" Good question. And it's the same question YOU need to answer if you're ever going to lead anyone.

As a leader, it is YOUR responsibility to hold others responsible. So let me suggest a few ways to deal with those who are naughty and nice.

1. Confront performance problems early on. When Igor asked, "Why didn't you say something to me sooner?" Santa didn't have a good answer. All he had was excuses – the same type of excuses he wouldn't accept from others. Santa had been unfair to Igor and the other elves. By not saying anything, Santa was as much to blame for Igor's continuing performance problem as Igor was.

The point is simple ... when you see a problem, you've got to deal with it early on. And then ...

2. Tell the truth without sugar coating it. Richard Hamermesh wrote in *"Fad-Free Management,"* "Failure to honestly critique an employee's performance hurts the company and the employee." No one benefits. Glossed-over feedback is not "nice" and is not helpful.

Andy Pearson helped turn PepsiCo around by getting people to tell the truth. When he first came on board, he found a long record of only positive performance reviews. So he instructed his department heads to honestly evaluate their staff, from top to bottom – rather than give them all fours or fives in every category. "As harsh as it was," Hamermesh says, "it transformed the performance review process and improved the frank exchange between supervisors and employees."

3. Use some *spectatoring* to reduce defensiveness. When I say "tell the truth without sugar coating it," I am advocating openness, honesty, directness, and assertiveness. I am NOT advocating harshness, cruelty, or mean-spirited communication. You don't have the right to talk that way. No one does. Besides that, it doesn't work anyway.

Now it may be difficult for some people to accept this. They may get defensive and shut down rather than "hear" the feedback and make the necessary changes. If so, try *"spectatoring."*

Steven Stowell and Matt Starcevitch talk about that in their book, *"Win-Win Partnerships."* *Spectatoring* is simply giving feedback from a third person's point of view. Talk about how a third person might see the behavior and what he/she might suggest. That takes away all the personal, me-against-you stuff.

Take Bob, for example. He likes to pretend he's a sports car driver, and he likes to push his car to the limits ... going as fast as he can. And no amount of "constructive criticism" from his wife got him to change his behavior.

Then, one day as he was driving like a maniac, his wife put a hand on his shoulder and calmly whispered, "Bob, your daughter is watching you very carefully right now." His daughter didn't hear – as she was getting into the thrill of fast driving. After all she was just two years from getting a driver's license and looked forward to driving the same way.

It was a powerful *spectatoring* message. Bob said his wife's words resonated in his mind for weeks. Nothing else needed to be said. From then on he drove more slowly and more responsibly.

4. Use yourself as an example.

No one likes to be told they're wrong. But Roger Harrison found that he could be straight forward with colleagues at Yale and still maintain warm relations with them – if he framed his feedback as a description of something he had learned about himself. He talked about it in his book, *"Consultant's Journey."*

For example, when Roger wanted to tell another professor to slow down when he was lecturing, Roger said, "You wouldn't believe how long it took me to learn that if I stopped talking and waited for a response after making my first point, I had people's full attention. I used to string my points together, one after the other, but people became so full of their unspoken rejoinders that they couldn't hear what I was saying."

By applying to himself the feedback he wanted to share, Harrison saved face for his colleagues. No one came across as "holier than thou."

Well, there are four tips you can use to deal with those who are naughty and nice.

The other day, I saw the following poster hanging in a manager's office. It read:

LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES

I will do more than belong. I will participate.

I will do more than believe. I will practice.

I will do more than forgive. I will forget.

I will do more than teach. I will inspire.

I will do more than comment. I will help.

I will do more than be fair. I will be kind.

I will do more than dream. I will work.

I will do more than give. I will serve.

"Good points. Good poster," I thought. But based on my comments here, I would have to add ...

I will do more than hope my people are responsible. **I will hold them accountable.**

I will do more than wish my people understand. **I will give feedback.**

About the Author:

For over 20 years, best-selling author and Hall of Fame professional speaker, [Dr. Alan Zimmerman](http://www.DrZimmerman.com) has helped more than a million people transform their power to lead and communicate. For a free subscription to his award-winning Tuesday Tip Internet newsletter, for a free e-book of his most popular articles, and for a free \$10 product coupon, go to: www.DrZimmerman.com