Solutions

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

Summer 2007

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Quick Tip:

From the editors of *Solutions*

SMART objectives are the stepping stone to the achievement of goals.

Goals you set for yourself, or others, should be:

Specific – means the objective is concrete, detailed, focused and well defined.

Measurable – If the objective is measurable, it means that the measurement is identified and you are able to track the results.

Achievable – Goals need to be achievable. If the objective is too far in the future you or your employee may find it difficult to stay motivated, or strive to attain it.

Realistic – means that you and the employee have the resources to get it done.

Time-bound – means setting a deadline for the achievement of the goal. Deadlines need to be both achievable and realistic.

Looking for previous issues of Solutions? Click here

PERforM

Productivity, Excellence and Results for Missouri

This summer state agencies will begin using the State of Missouri's new *Productivity, Excellence and Results for Missouri* (PERforM) appraisal system.

If you are a supervisor, you have probably already received information or training on the PERforM system. If not, you may soon.

PERforM is a tool that provides managers and supervisors with an automated, consistent and easy-to-use process for establishing performance objectives and conducting performance appraisals for employees in a timely manner using standard job components, appraisal and rating periods, and rating scale.

Of course, while PERforM is new, performance appraisals are not. It is management's responsibility to the citizens of Missouri to ensure that employees are aware of their job duties and expectations and are performing at a level commensurate with those duties and expectations.

There are also two statutory responsibilities related to the Director of the Division of Personnel: (1) To report on problems in personnel management in state government and take action to resolve those problems; and (2) to implement a standard system of appraisals for state employees and state agencies.

PERforM is simply the result of the Director of Personnel carrying out those responsibilities in an efficient manner.

However, using the appraisal process to plan and accomplish the mission of each agency is every employee's responsibility – regardless of position or job title. For supervisors (or raters), it means creating specific performance objectives for each employee he or she supervises for each of the five or eight statewide components.

For employees, it means dedication to the work at hand and asking for assistance when it is needed.

Throughout the year, supervisors and employees will work together to ensure performance objectives are valid and discuss any issues that may affect the employee's ability to successfully meet them.

Although PERforM will make the mechanics of completing the appraisal easier for raters, the real work is in developing effective performance objectives for employees upon which the appraisal is based; evaluating the employee's performance based on those objectives; and discussing the rating of each of the objectives, and the overall rating with the employee – *important work for individuals critical to the success of their organization.*

If you would like to learn more about PERforM, creating performance objectives for employees, read FAQ's and view an online tutorial of the PERforM process, visit

www.perform.mo.gov

Six secrets to excellent customer service

If you believe any of the "Top 10" Reasons for Customer Dissatisfaction hold true for your Team, consider the following customer service "secrets" to help develop and maintain excellent service:

1. Develop Trust
Customers need to be able to trust your organization to deliver quality services and products. This trust needs to be established from senior level management and cascade to employees. According to Chip Bell, "The leader who fosters trust is one who never forgets that the word embedded in the middle of "trust" is the word "us.""

Leaders who establish a high level of trust with their employees often do so because they use the platinum rule "treat others how they would like to be treated." This rule should also be applied to our customers.

2. Understand Your Customer's Expectations
If extraordinary service is to happen, leaders need to understand the expectations and needs of their core customers. Leaders must also take into consideration what motivates their customers and value the link between the "employee – customer relationship." To accomplish this, the leader must begin by demonstrating empathic listening skills and truly listen to the feedback of their employees. When management demonstrates an "I am listening and I care" attitude, their employees are more likely to demonstrate the same behavior with their customers.

3. Add Charm
Charismatic leaders who display a passion for customer service excellence are usually the ones who can achieve it.

Top 10 Reasons for Customer Dissatisfaction

1. Promises not kept
2. Service that was impolite and ineffective
3. Contradictory messages from employees
4. Feelings of being mistreated by the organization or policy
5. Half truths from an employee
6. Setbacks and long waits
7. Lack of contact & infrequent communication from the organization when there is a dispute or assistance is needed.
8. Treatment as being ignorant to standard operating procedures
9. Faulty or defective products or services
10. Feelings of being dismissed or discounted by the organization or employee

This rousing passion is the force that inspires the organization's standard of customer service to ever-increasing levels. People rally around passionate leaders with compelling quality of ideas, the commitment to lead by example and their commitment to the organization's mission and vision. As Milacron's Alan Shaffer said at one of his corporate retreats, "Our goal is not merely to get buy-in. I want to put a lump in their throats and a tear in their eyes. I want to take their breath away."

4. Be A Perpetual Learner
Managers must be constant learners, which mean they have an obligation to utilize every available learning resource. They should also take into consideration the value of training and development for their employees. Leaders need to see how learning impacts outcomes. To achieve customer service excellence, leaders should promote learning opportunities for leadership development and customer service training in the workplace – both formal and informally. Informal opportunities may include a manager discussing what he or she believes excellent customer service looks and feels like – and reiterating its importance. Formal opportunities might include participation leadership and customer service workshops.

5. Create an Environment for Innovation
Leaders should encourage an environment that values thinking outside the box, the expression of feeling and the freedom to do things differently while pursuing the organization's mission and vision. Such an environment should exist to help creative problem-solving when customers present employees with unique challenges. Proactive leaders encourage the constant review of policies and procedures to ensure they are in line with the changing times.

6. Promote Ethics
Excellent customer service is tied to character built upon ethics. Leaders who serve their employees with integrity, competence, independence, objectivity, and professionalism will encourage their employees to emulate the same behavior with their customers. To accomplish this, leaders must go beyond just telling employees the rules. According to Smart Pros Limited, "Leaders need to understand their organization's culture, paying careful attention to the positive behaviors that support ethical conduct, as well as to the limiting behaviors that can influence employees' decision-making and create the risk of ethical violations."

In other words, **leaders are the perpetuators of standards of excellence.**

Written By:
Kelly Levy, Division of Personnel

"If there is any great secret of success in life, it lies in the ability to put yourself in the other person's place and to see things from his point of view – as well as your own. **Henry Ford**

Verbal Communication

The "7 Laws" of productive listening

The better your listening skills, the more you'll understand and the more productive you'll be. Follow these tips to become an expert listener:

1. **Motivate yourself.** Ask yourself: "Why am I listening to this?" and "What will I gain?" to help keep your focus.

2. **Listen with care.** Remember facts such as the person's birth date, hometown, the names of his/her children, etc., and use them in later conversations. That will help build instant rapport with the person.

3. **Clarify assumptions.** Ask questions if you're not 100% sure what you're hearing or what it means.

4. **Be patient.** Don't rush to complete sentences or respond instantly when someone stops talking. Mentally count to three to see if the speaker has anything else to add.

5. **Listen to learn.** Make it a goal to learn at least one useful fact from every conversation you have.

6. **Pace yourself.** When listening to someone who speaks slowly, don't fill in the spaces by drawing conclusions or thinking about your response.

7. **Stop talking.** Your task is to hear and learn from the person speaking, not to dominate the conversation yourself.

Influencing

Managing Gen X: What motivates younger workers?

More than 40 million American workers are in their twenties or early thirties. To stereotype these workers is dangerous, but managers need to understand what motivates younger employees. Here are four ways managers can get through to "Gen X" employees, and motivate them to work hard:

Help them "train for another job." It sounds ridiculous, but younger employees realize that the old "employment contract" is no more. They know they won't stay with one company for their entire career. So, ironically, the way to keep them is to help them acquire skills that will make them more marketable later on. The more they can learn, the more they'll want to stick around and perhaps move up the ranks within your organization.

Give them responsibility for projects. Younger workers have more of an independent spirit than Baby Boomers. Rather than mistake this quality for a liability – e.g. a refusal to stick to procedures – treat it as an asset. Give them clearly defined goals – and the freedom to achieve them in their own way.

Offer constant informal feedback rather then periodic performance reviews. Younger workers expect a lot of feedback from managers. Formal, sporadic performance reviews are not timely enough to keep up with the rapid pace younger employees work best at.

Offer them access to many different kinds of information. Younger workers grew up in the computer age, and are quite adept at using different data and technology to bring together seemingly unrelated elements and solve a problem. Managers who hoard information are stifling the greatest resources younger workers bring to the table.

Influencing

Seven things to motivate *any* employee

It's a fact: Different needs motivate different people. Some crave power, others want money. Some want constant praise, other to be left alone. It's crucial for managers to figure out what motivates individual employees. Ninety-nine percent of employees are motivated by one of the following seven needs:

The need for achievement. These employees want the satisfaction of accomplishing projects successfully. They want to exercise their talents to attain success and will be self-motivated if the job is challenging enough. Provide them with the right work assignments and they will consistently produce.

The need for power. These employees get satisfaction from influencing others. They like to lead and persuade, and are motivated by positions of power and leadership. Give them the opportunity to make decisions and direct projects.

The need for affiliation. These employees derive satisfaction from interacting with others and find the social aspects of work rewarding. Involve these employees in team projects, group meetings, and so on.

The need for autonomy. These employees want freedom and independence. Allow them to make their own choices, set their own schedules, and work independently of others.

The need for esteem. These employees need recognition and praise. Give them ample feedback and public recognition whenever possible.

The need for safety and security. These employees crave job security, a steady income, health insurance, and a hazard-free work environment. Give these people predictable work with little risk or uncertainty.

The need for equity. These employees want to be treated fairly. They probably compare work hours, job duties, salary and privileges to those of other employees – and will become discouraged if they perceive inequities.

Workforce Management
"Off–limit" questions when interviewing job candidates

Job interviews present a minefield of legal problems. One wrong question could spark a discrimination lawsuit. That's why you should never "wing it" during interviews. Instead, create a list of interview questions and make sure every question asks for job-related information that will help in the selection process.

Federal and state laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of an applicant's race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age or disability. Some state laws also prohibit discrimination based on factors such as marital status or sexual orientation. If you ask a job applicant a question specifically relating to one of those characteristics, you've broken the law and are subject to being sued, as is your organization.

Every question you ask should somehow relate to this central theme: "How are you qualified to perform the job you are applying for?" Managers usually land in trouble when they ask for information that's irrelevant to a candidate's ability to do the job.

To avoid the appearance of discrimination during interviews, do not ask the following questions:

- ☐ Are you married? Divorced?
- ☐ If you're single, are you living with anyone?
- ☐ How old are you?
- ☐ Do you have children? If so, how many and how old are they?
- ☐ Do you own or rent your home?
- ☐ What church do you attend?
- ☐ Do you have any debts?
- ☐ Do you belong to any social or political groups?
- ☐ How much and what kinds of insurance do you have?

The following questions could result in an Americans with Disabilities lawsuit:

- ☐ Do you suffer from an illness or disability?
- ☐ Have you ever had or been treated for any of these conditions or diseases? (followed by a list)
- ☐ Have you been hospitalized - why?
- ☐ Have you ever been treated by a psychiatrist or psychologist?
- ☐ Have you had a major illness recently?
- ☐ How many days of work did you miss last year because of illness?
- ☐ Do you have any disabilities or impairments that might affect your performance in this job?
- ☐ Are you taking prescribed drugs?
- ☐ Have you ever been treated for drug addiction or alcoholism?

Many companies ask female applicants questions they don't ask males. Not smart. Here are some questions to avoid with female applicants:

- ☐ Do you plan to get married?
- ☐ Do you intend to start a family?
- ☐ What are your day care plans?
- ☐ Are you comfortable supervising men?
- ☐ What would you do if your husband were transferred?
- ☐ Do you think you could perform the job as well as a man?
- ☐ Are you likely to take time off under the Family and Medical Leave Act?

Final Point: If a job candidate reveals information that you're not allowed to ask, don't pursue the topic further. The "she brought it up" excuse won't fly in court, so change the subject right away.

Self-Direction
Fight burnout by treating these symptoms

You can't lead a team very effectively if you're burnt out. The symptoms aren't always obvious, but if you pay attention to your feelings and behavior, you'll be able to treat the problem before it gets out of control. Here's what to look for, and what to do:

Fatigue/exhaustion. If you find yourself often feeling worn out and tired, take a look at how much rest and exercise you're getting. Be sure to schedule enough time in your day to take care of yourself physically.

Emotional exhaustion. If you notice that you don't have the enthusiasm or drive that you once had, or that you don't even have the energy to get angry when it's appropriate, you probably need to take some kind of break to replenish your emotional reserves. If you can't take a lengthy vacation, try spending some time away from work doing things that are meaningful to you—listening to music, being outdoors, visiting an art museum.

Isolation from other people. Do you find that you're not paying attention to the accomplishments of those around you, especially people who expect you to provide advice and leadership? Make a point of looking for their positive achievements and praising them for their contributions to the organization.

Feelings of being unappreciated. When your own efforts aren't recognized or appreciated, your personal morale will suffer. Look for ways to share news of your contributions with people who ought to know.

Obsession. If you find yourself becoming too focused on a single project or area of work, force yourself to take a break and do something different to restore your balance.

Solutions

Planning
Working cooperatively to maintain an effective workforce

A core responsibility of a manager is building and maintaining an effective workforce and organizational structure to support and enhance the necessary work of the organization. A supervisor's efforts may focus on developing, directing, and encouraging quality performance from subordinates. A supervisor or manager may have the additional responsibility of developing plans for a new position or positions, or of redistributing job duties among multiple positions. On a broader scope a manager may need to develop a new or expanded work unit, make organizational modifications for quality improvement, or streamline the work in response to shrinking resources. The Division of Personnel (DOP) can assist in these enhancement and consolidation efforts being undertaken by you and your organization.

Consulting with the DOP early in your organizational and individual position changes can benefit both the agency and DOP staff. Agency Human Resources (HR) staff and our office may be in a position to offer much assistance to managers in analyzing new or revised positions and suggesting organizational change alternatives. There are multiple ways that work may be distributed within a work unit – and how the work is distributed may impact the class allocations for individual positions. You and your staff have particular expertise on your work. However, you may overlook or not be cognizant of the potential impact such changes may have on the class allocations of individual positions.

Listed are some of the changes or modifications that agency management may wish to implement and ways in which the DOP may provide assistance in the planning stage.

Agency Action	Division of Personnel Advisory Role
New positions	☐ Provide possible class titles for proposed duties. ☐ Advise on potential negative impact on existing positions.
Redistribution of duties among existing positions	☐ Provide information on potential impact both positively and negatively in the class allocations of specific positions.
Developing staffing patterns for positions with supervisory responsibility	☐ Review preliminary proposals and comment on issues which should be considered. ☐ Suggest alternative staffing pattern examples and the respective class titles for specific positions.
New/expanded organizational units or downsizing restructuring	☐ Suggest information which will be helpful or necessary in our assessment of proposed changes. ☐ Advise on possible class titles for proposed positions. ☐ Upon request, may offer preliminary, unofficial class allocation projections to assist in organizational change planning in agency.

Minimal Position Changes

Frequently an agency or institution may wish to establish a work unit or special positions similar to ones already established. In those cases determination of the correct class titles of the new or modified positions may be obvious. At other times, while the new positions may seem similar to existing positions, the new position(s) may have the potential to significantly change the responsibilities of existing positions. These changes could mean the modified duty assignments no longer support existing positions being appropriate to their respective class titles. The DOP might be able to point out potential problems in job restructuring plans, and thus be able to prevent unforeseen consequences, prior to management implementing the changes.

Major Organizational Changes

With larger organizational changes, cooperation between agency managers, HR staff and the DOP may be beneficial to everyone concerned. Some proposed positions have atypical duty assignments which might be appropriate to other classes depending upon the nature and emphasis of responsibilities. Our staff might be able to make recommendations about potential classes to be considered by managers. The specific distribution of supervisory or other senior-level duties could impact upon the class allocations. When agency staff is assigned to multiple shifts each day and/or to more than regular workweek schedules, there may be additional staffing alternatives. Different staffing patterns may support different job titles for specific positions in a work unit. In some cases our office may be able to offer preliminary or unofficial class allocation determinations to assist management staff in their organizational planning.

Facilitating the Changes Requested

If we have a better understanding of the individual position changes and the overall organizational modifications, we should be able to provide more prompt and comprehensive service to agency management. The more we know and understand the mission and work of an agency/program, the better we can understand the responsibilities assigned to individual positions. If we possess a good understanding of your agency, programs, and individual positions, we would be in a better position to expedite the reviews of individual positions.

Developing a closer working relationship not only benefits the respective Human Resources staff, but also line management. When agency supervisors and managers have a better understanding of what information is needed and useful to the Division of Personnel in connection with position reviews, they may find the task of collecting and providing the necessary information less formidable. These managers may initially be considering the fiscal impact and the credentials of individuals and/or new or updated positions and only later focus on the specific duty assignments of those positions. Understanding the necessity and importance of the determining and specifying the specific duty assignments of each position can assist these line managers to accomplish desired staffing changes.

As demonstrated in this article, cooperative communications among managers, agency staff, and the Division of Personnel benefits all. We appreciate the efforts made by agency employees to enhance and promote these positive interactions.

Written By
Sue Tillema, Division of Personnel

Self-Direction

Learning to Lead: Part 2

By Major General Perry M. Smith, USAF (Ret.)

In speaking to large audiences on leadership, I am often asked to do the impossible. In less than an hour's time, I am expected to motivate them to improve their skills, inspire them to be better leaders, and to acquaint them with new technologies and concepts.

To cover all these points in the time allotted, I have come up with *"30 Blazing Flashes of the Obvious"* about leadership. Here they are:

16. Fight the Natural Tendency to Clone Yourself

Although it is very common, it is a terrible mistake to hire people who look, act, and think like you do. Every time you are about to make a decision to hire someone be brutally honest with yourself. Is this person attractive to you because he or she brings a fresh background, perspective, or point of view? If not, keep looking. Also, after you hire someone, force yourself to avoid the tendency to encourage that person to act and be like you.

17. Welcome Criticism

All leaders should fully understand that criticism and loyalty are mutually supporting. When subordinates quit complaining that can be very bad news. It means that they are either afraid to complain or have given up on making things better within the organization. Both are deadly.

18. Don't Set Unreasonable Deadlines

There is an expression in the Pentagon, "If you want it bad, you will get it bad." Try to give your folks enough time to put together a solution that you and they can be proud of.

19. Expect Exceptional Performance

Although perfectionism in a leader can be deadly in any organization, leaders must not let the pendulum swing too far in the other direction. If leaders don't ask for exceptional performance from their associates, they won't likely get it.

20. Don't Allow Yourself to Become a Wind Chime

If your primary skill is blowing with the wind by being politically agile, you will not be respected by those you lead. Have a backbone and exercise your strength of character by taking strong positions on important issues.

21. Focus on Functions, Not on Form

Peter Vaill has pointed out how important it is to be clear on the job to be done, but to be very flexible on the way to do that job. Leadership is not a position. It is a process where leadership and followership is a seamless web. Without followership, leadership always fails. Leaders and followers determine each others' success. Today you lead, tomorrow you follow, and vice versa.

22. Fight the Temptation to Get Even

If someone does something to you that is mean spirited, think of it as his or her problem not your problem. Trying to get even seldom works, lacks dignity, and makes you look petty and mean spirited too. You can never get ahead by getting even.

23. Focus on Goals Not Process

It is important to be clear about the job to be done but to be very flexible about the way you do the job.

24. Be a Blame Acceptor

If something goes wrong within the organization that you lead, you must be willing to accept the blame even though you personally may be only a tiny part of the failure. Too many bosses try to blame others, especially their subordinates. By doing so, they often lose the respect of their people and their bosses.

25. Establish Self-Reinforcing Relationships

Praise and support those who can move smoothly from competition to cooperation. Encourage those who find solutions that reconcile the opposites. The French have it right in their national motto - "liberty, equality, and fraternity."

26. Network Constantly

Every day do some networking, expand your braintrust, seek out creative and imaginative ideas. Exercise your curiosity and that of your subordinates.

27. Don't Be a Perfectionist

Leaders tend to drive their associates crazy when they are unwilling to accept very good but not perfect solutions to tough problems. Leaders must understand that perfection is seldom possible and that in many cases "the perfect is the enemy of the good."

28. Find an Anchor and Hold on to It in the Tough Times

I have been blessed with a number of wonderful anchors. My wife of more than 42 years has lifted me up when I was down and eased me down when I was sky high. My two adult children have been very helpful, especially when I was dealing with issues of integrity. A few other close friends have helped so many times when I was in great need of advice, comfort, solace, or support.

29. Leverage Opportunities

The best leaders leverage their time, their talents, their technology, and their friends. In fact, if you use leverage, many things you do will become easier and quicker. Let me give two personal examples. I am a terrible typist, but I have a fast computer that allows me to crank out written material quickly. Also, I am blessed with the talent of speed reading. It has allowed me to get through my "in-box" quickly and get out with the troops as well as maintain a regular reading program of about four books per month.

30. Be a Servant Leader

Too many leaders serve their ambitions or their egos rather than their people. As I reflect on the marvelous leadership opportunities I have enjoyed, I realize that I spent most of my time serving the people who worked for me. Whenever they reached out to me for assistance, I tried to help them.

About the Author:

A retired major general, **Perry M. Smith** served for 30 years in the U. S. Air Force. During his career he had a number of leadership experiences, including command of the F-15 wing at Bitburg, Germany where he provided leadership to 4000 personnel. Later, he served as the top Air Force planner and as the Commandant of the National War College, where he taught courses on leadership of large organizations and on strategic planning. He is the author of the book, "Rules and Tools for Leaders."