

# The Experts Teach: Managing Performance

ManageTrainLearn



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# **The Experts Teach**

Managing Performance

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The Experts Teach: Managing Performance

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# Preface

## Introduction to “The Experts Teach: Managing Performance”

In each of “The Experts Teach” series, we’ve gathered together some of the world’s best thinkers to share their ideas with you. Their ideas offer new, refreshing, and insightful ways to look at old themes, allowing you to discover new perspectives, develop your understanding, and change the way you think.

## Profile of Editor Eric Garner

Eric Garner is an experienced management trainer with a knack for bringing the best out of individuals and teams. Eric founded ManageTrainLearn in 1995 as a corporate training company in the UK specialising in the 20 skills that people need for professional and personal success today. Since 2002, as part of KSA Training Ltd, ManageTrainLearn has been a major player in the e-learning market. Eric has a simple mission: to turn ManageTrainLearn into the best company in the world for producing and delivering quality online management products.

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# 1 Four Steps to Better Performance Reviews by Linda Henman

Direct reports – people who need direction and leadership – rely on their leaders to give them feedback and mentoring, not just management and evaluations. However, these people who most need their boss's help frequently lack the guidance that would enable them move to the next levels of success – theirs, their team's and the company's. Too often leaders are not prepared or trained to conduct an appraisal that stretches performance and ensures their direct reports' development. Instead, the appraisals become confrontational and judgmental; goals are not clear; neither person is prepared; and the discussion occurs when it's too late to do anything about the problem. Today's organizations demand more from their leaders. Therefore, a well thought out performance appraisal system, clear expectations, reviews that inspire, and action plans are critical to the individual's and organization's success.

## Create the System

The advantages of an effective performance appraisal system are many: better performance, improved relationships, coordination of personal goals and business objectives, identification of high potential individuals, and justification for monetary rewards. However, much depends on the efforts that go into crafting the system.

The first step is to have clearly defined job descriptions that specify the tasks, functions, and responsibilities of each job. What does it take to do this job right? What are the success indicators? What are the derailers? Answers to these questions form the foundation for deciding behavior-based competencies for the particular job, the area of the organization, or the company as a whole.

Many organizations start by defining roles and responsibilities as they relate to the level the person holds in the organization: executive, manager, or employee. Other companies choose competencies that address certain areas of the organization, such as accounting, manufacturing, human resources, or sales. Once decision makers decide how to measure performance, they are ready to identify specific behaviors that demonstrate competency in relevant areas and to choose the scale that makes sense for them.

Usually competencies relate to one of four areas: ability to get results, capacity to form relationships, decision making, and leadership. Specifically defined competencies might also include business acumen, customer focus, coaching, integrity, vision, communication, teamwork, flexibility, technical skills, and innovation. Once the company decides on 8–10 competencies, the next step is to establish the rating scale.

The most basic scale is three points: exceeds expectations, meets expectations, or fails to meet expectations. However, a four-point scale gives more options for evaluation and forces the evaluator to avoid a middle of the road review.

Once the criteria for evaluation have been determined, the decision makers need to set the timeline. In short, the year begins with goal setting, continues with ongoing feedback, and concludes with the end of the year evaluation that is often tied to raises and bonuses. This sort of schedule avoids surprises and the “once a year” mentality that dooms most performance appraisal systems. Also, the periodic reviews give the employee a chance to take corrective action when there are still opportunities to make a difference.

In general, four meetings per year work well. The first is a goal setting meeting; the second addresses progress on the goals; the third surfaces any problems that might interfere with the end of the year appraisal; and the final one is a formality that ties the progress to rewards. This does not imply that ongoing feedback should not take place between meetings. On the contrary, the four meeting format is the minimum number of meetings the boss should have with the direct report. Even though bosses often resist adding to the number of formal meetings per year, they soon learn that the increase in productivity and morale among their direct reports more than compensates for the extra time they commit to the process.

### Clarify Expectations

The purpose of goal setting is to tie individual performance to the organization’s mission, vision, and values and to link short-term objectives to long-term targets. People are most committed to goals they’ve helped construct. When the boss and the direct report work together to clarify these goals, the direct report is more likely to commit to rather than comply with the efforts that will drive success. Well written goals serve a variety of purposes: they create opportunities for objective, fair dialogue; they define the “score card” that will be used to determine rewards; they energize and motivate; and they focus efforts.

By now almost everyone has learned about SMART goals, objectives that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely. Specific and measurable mean the goal is concrete, clear, and descriptive to the point that results can be measured. For instance, giving feedback that a direct report “needs to be more positive and have a better attitude” is not helpful. Identifying the particular improved behaviors is: greeting others, smiling, saying “thank you,” and giving praise.

“Attainable” is often a source of disagreement between the appraiser and employee. The boss’s perception of results that are achievable and realistic might differ from those of the direct report. Here are some questions for the boss to consider:

- What are others in this role accomplishing?
- What is the person’s history?
- Does this person have the experience, knowledge and capability to do this?
- What evidence is there to come to this conclusion?

Relevant goals are also critical, but both bosses and direct reports continue to make some fundamental errors in this area. First, all goals are not created equal; they need to be prioritized. People are often motivated to work on things they like, things that are familiar, or things that are easy. But frequently these initiatives are not the most critical. Therefore, the boss needs to be sure that the “timely” elements of effectiveness are considered: First things are done first; deadlines are met; and direct reports separate important from unimportant uses of their time.

Second, the people involved fail to define the parameters in which the goals will occur, so the boss has one set of expectations and the employee another. If a condition of goal attainment is “with no overtime” or “with our current equipment,” these limiting conditions need to be spelled out so no one is surprised. If there are disagreements about these conditions or if the direct report considers the conditions unrealistic, the goal setting meeting, not the end of the year review, is the time to surface those issues. One way to do this during the goal setting meeting is for the boss to ask, “What factors might interfere with your achieving this goals?” This question alone can help to put things on the table and resolve differences.

A third mistake is direct reports often don’t understand their parameters for accountability and decision making. They either overstep when boundaries are not clear, or they err on the side of caution and risk-avoidance. Working together, the boss and direct report need to clarify which decisions the employee will make alone, which ones will require notification of the boss, and which ones need to be cleared with the boss. When the direct report is either not making decisions or is running to the boss with every problem, both parties are wasting time and efforts, and the boss is overlooking chances to develop talents and potential among his or her reports.

Finally, bosses frequently do not support the efforts of their direct reports. The research suggests, and multi-rater feedback reports confirm, that mentoring, giving feedback, and developing others are usually the boss’s lowest ratings, primarily because “getting the job done” is more important.

The fact that bosses overlook is that developing others is “the job,” a significant and critical part of the job. Usually coaching others is only one part of a boss’s job, so taking care of other responsibilities often takes precedence. Also, organizations frequently reward solo performance and individual efforts more than they recognize coaching others. Therefore, in order for an appraisal system to succeed, companies need to recognize and reward efforts related to leading and managing others.

Support from the boss is an inexpensive but effective way to improve performance and show a commitment to excellence. Frequently managers don't have the authority to give financial rewards, but all bosses can give the intangible rewards of attention, coaching and mentoring. Furthermore, through discussion, the boss can learn what other kinds of intangible rewards the direct might appreciate – increased responsibility, more interesting work, variety, opportunities to work alone or on a team, etc. The key is to build trust that the boss cares and wants to respond to the needs of the direct report.

### Review Performance

Another way to build trust and reduce anxiety is through scheduled conversations. Obviously, feedback about performance should occur when it can do the most good – when it is immediate and focused. When a direct report makes a mistake, addressing the problem right away is the surest way to take corrective action. Similarly, when a person excels at a task, complimenting and praising the efforts immediately will show appreciation and encourage more of the same.

However, having more formal review sessions is also critical to the direct report's development. Regularly scheduled reviews avoid the end of the year angst and allow employees to receive feedback when there is still time to take corrective action.

One of the reasons these critical discussions are not occurring is bosses feel uncomfortable, unprepared, or ineffective in such encounters. They avoid the very conversations that could help them build better relationships and increase productivity among the people who need their direction and support. One way for bosses to improve their coaching is to follow the GLAD feedback method, a step-by-step approach that can help bosses improve performance appraisals and inspire peak performance:

Get to the core of the performance issues.

Listen to the other first.

Add your own ideas.

Develop an action plan.

Getting to the core of the performance issue means focusing the discussion on actions or behaviors, things the person can control and change. If personality issues or decision making capacities are interfering with the person's performance, the problem may be an inability, rather than an unwillingness, to do the job. In that case, the boss needs to consider alternatives to either give the direct report additional help or move to him or her to an area that is better suited for that person's talents and strengths.

The performance review should be focused on goals, balanced in nature, and candid. People need to hear the things they are doing well so that they can leverage their strengths, but they also need to identify improvement areas.

Ordinarily going through each of the goals that were set at the beginning of the year is unnecessary. More often, one or two goals will be a more obvious concern. Starting the conversation by identifying those will help to keep the discussion on track and build momentum for addressing them.

The second step in the GLAD system is to listen to the other first – to elicit that person’s ideas and opinions before offering your own. Starting on a positive note can be helpful in this step. For instance, after identifying the issue, the boss can say, “Brag on yourself a little. What have you been able to do about \_\_\_\_?” This will do two things. It will help direct reports know the boss is listening, and it will give the boss a chance to understand more information. It’s also the employee’s chance to make sure accomplishments are not overlooked or forgotten, and it’s the boss’s chance to check on the accuracy of the review.

The performance appraisal should be a two-way conversation, an opportunity for both the boss and the employee to learn. Listening to the other person first shows a willingness to consider new information, and if necessary, to change the nature of the review. Similarly, hearing the other person sets the tone for the give-and-take that will be necessary to create understanding and commitment between the two.

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Before moving to the next step of the review, the boss should take advantage of the opportunity to address as many issues as possible with open questions. Asking the employees to talk about their perceptions of problem areas will reduce the defensive reaction that can accompany the boss giving a solution. For example, the boss can ask, “What things do you still need to do to improve?” or “What are some ideas for correcting that problem?” “What?” and “How?” are the magic words that open the discussion.

Another part of this step is paraphrasing what the other has said – summarize ideas and reflect emotions. Often a summary statement is more powerful when followed by another open question. For instance, the boss can restate the message by saying, “So you’re not worried because you think this will work if you give it enough time. How will you address the deadlines that are in place already?” A series of these kinds of statements and questions can frequently lead the direct reports to conclusions they had not previously considered.

At this point a common reaction is “This will take so long! I don’t have time to ask a lot of questions. It’s so much faster to just tell people the problem and tell them how to fix it.” That’s true. The most economical use of time, at least in the short run, is to tell people what to do to fix things. But that sort of behavior leads to other problems. Sometimes people resist being told what to do; the boss doesn’t give the employee the chance to discover solutions; and direct reports become reliant on the boss for decisions they should be making themselves.

However, that doesn’t mean the boss should not give direction. On the contrary, the third step, to add your own ideas, is the time to do just that. Ideally the discussion to this point should have implied a course of action for the direct report. If, in spite of the boss’s best efforts, that hasn’t happened, the third step is the time to give that direction.

Once again, clearly defining the specific behaviors that the direct report should address will help to keep the discussion focused. If the boss disagrees with the employee’s assessment of the situation, if there has been a shift in priorities, or if the two disagree on action steps, this is the time for the boss to express ideas and concerns and to begin a discussion about how to resolve differences. The direct report needs to have a clear understanding of what the boss expects, those things the employee needs to do more of or less of to improve. Employees report that they appreciate this level of candor when there’s still time to take corrective action. For example, if the boss were to say, “I would like to give you the same raise that you received last year. However, based on\_\_\_\_\_, I wouldn’t be able to do that if this were your end of year evaluation,” this would be an eye opening and direct message that would resonate with the direct report and streamline the end of the year evaluation.

## Develop the Action Plan

Many companies discuss compensations, raises, and bonuses in one end of the year discussion—the same discussion that addresses goal setting, feedback, evaluation, and action planning. When all this is lumped together in one meeting, the meeting that happens is a type of post-mortem. Even though it's too late to do anything that will make a difference, employees are somehow supposed to be motivated and enthusiastic to charge into the upcoming year, more focused and productive. It doesn't work that way. On the contrary, they are angry and resentful, especially if they have had no warning that their performance was sub-standard.

The first phase of action planning, therefore, should take place at the beginning of the year. The action plan is a fluid document, however, that should change with new information, accomplishments, unexpected events, and learning. Therefore, at the beginning of the year and at each subsequent meeting, the boss and direct report need to prioritize goals and objectives to identify the current most important two. Even though the direct report might write several goals at the beginning of the year, ongoing discussions between the boss and direct report should reexamine the importance and relevance of each objective.

Timelines for goals help this process. Sometimes the timeline will be obvious. If a person wants to finish a course of study, the beginning and ending date of the class will be established. Other timelines will need to be created, often in response to new initiatives or demands. Some people have the capacity to break large projects into manageable parts; others need direction from the boss to do so. The main payoff of action plan is not the form or the document but the discussion. Once the employee and boss know what is needed and expected, each has identified roadblocks, and the timeline is clear, the action plan is apparent.

This does not imply that writing the action plan is optional. A written action plan is the tangible agreement among the stakeholders. It serves as a kind of report card for tracking results and re-directing efforts. Therefore, both the boss and the direct report should keep a copy of the original agreement and the subsequent notes and changes. When this happens, the end of the year evaluation brings no surprises.

## Conclusion

Most performance appraisals and performance management systems are not what they could be, primarily because the system is flawed, and the participants are not prepared. Creating a coaching culture, one that is characterized by clear goals, ongoing feedback and mentoring, scheduled reviews, and focused action plans, is also likely to create a more productive culture.

People create culture, so much depends on the appraisers. Understanding how their behavior shapes the behavior of their direct reports is the first step for bosses. Once they realize that they can and should influence performance, they need to learn and practice the skills associated with performance management. Even though this is all takes time and effort, the rewards are impressive and immediate.

#### About the author

Linda holds a Bachelor of Science in communication, two Master of Arts degrees in both interpersonal communication and organization development, and a Ph.D. in organizational systems. By combining her experience as an organizational psychologist with her education in business, she offers her clients assessment, coaching, consulting, and training solutions that are pragmatic in their approach and sound in their foundation. Specializing in assessment for selection, promotion, and development, Linda helps organizations improve their succession and retention initiatives.

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## 2 Making Attitude Adjustments: Improving Customer Service Behaviors – Other Than Replacing People by Jeff Mowatt

Not long ago, if a customer service employee fouled-up, he or she was warned, then if improvements didn't happen, was shown the door. In today's workplace however, where it's so difficult just maintaining staffing levels, dismissal doesn't really fix the problem – it just changes the problem. That means it's more important than ever for managers to be able to confront unacceptable employee behaviors without causing the person to simply walk out and get a job elsewhere. Next time one of your frontline employees needs an attitude adjustment, consider how this teacher handles a surly student...

Imagine you are a twelve year old who hates school. You despise it so much that you can hardly wait till you're old enough to drop out. It's late one Friday afternoon and you're stuck in math class gazing out the window at the beautiful day, counting the minutes until the bell rings and the weekend starts. Your reverie is suddenly interrupted by the sound of your teacher's voice. He's in the middle of issuing a three-page homework assignment due on Monday. You and several other students start groaning. He looks directly at you and says in a low, serious voice, "I'd like to speak to you in the hallway – right now."

Now, you're embarrassed and you're probably angry. Mostly you're scared about what's next. Then it happens.

Looking you square in the eye in the deserted hallway the teacher says, "I've been watching you lately and I've noticed that you have real leadership potential. When you act a certain way, other students watch you and start doing the same thing. The problem is that when I give a homework assignment, you start rolling your eyes and saying, 'Oh, no! Do we have to do this?' Other students watch you and start doing the same thing. That makes my job harder. I wonder if you could do me a favour? Next time I give a homework assignment, could you just do nothing? It will help me, and I also think it will help you because with your leadership abilities you could go a long way in life. Thanks. Let's go back inside the class."

Not a bad way of handling a problem student, in theory at least. But as Paul Harvey would say, "That's not the rest of the story." The rest of the story is that the twelve-year-old was me.

I hated school so much that I counted the days until I was old enough to drop out. I remember the afternoon in Varsity Acres Elementary math class when my teacher, Mr. McCullough, gave us that homework assignment. I was trying to look cool as I was being marched into the hallway. But I was scared. When Mr. McCullough gave me that two-minute talk, however, it changed my life.

Here was a teacher telling me I could be a leader and showing me a simple way I could make it happen. My parents had always encouraged me and told me I had potential-but they were only my parents. At twelve years old, what do your parents know? I took Mr. McCullough's advice, and it changed everything. From that day forward, I got along better with teachers and, not surprisingly, received better grades. I ended up staying in school because Mr. McCullough knew how to change a cynical kid's attitude. I've thought about that conversation many times since then and realized as I began studying frontline employee motivation, that he did two things particularly well...

Two keys to corrective feedback

First, he focused on behaviour, not attitude. In other words, it doesn't do much good for a manager to tell employees that they are not friendly enough with customers. Friendliness is an attitude. The employee thinks, "I am friendly! You're being unfair." Instead, a supervisor would get better results by focusing on observable behaviour. The supervisor might say, "The customer walked in. You avoided making eye contact until she asked you a question. Then you frowned as you responded." That's observable behaviour. No one can argue the facts. That leads us to a second reason Mr. McCullough's approach worked.

He gave a positive direction. He told me exactly the behaviour change that needed to be made ("Next time I give a homework assignment, could you just do nothing?") In the case of an unfriendly employee, we might say, "The expectation here is that within ten seconds of a customer walking in the door you are expected to smile enough to show teeth and greet them." In other words, rather than saying you need to be more friendly, explain exactly what that looks like. Add to that your underlying belief in the potential of the employee and you could end up making a significant impact not only on your company but also upon the lives of your employees. Maybe, like me, they'll not only improve their behavior, they'll also remember fondly what you said decades later.

#### About the author

Customer service strategist and professional speaker, Jeff Mowatt is an authority on The Art of Client Service...Influence with Ease®. For Jeff's other tips, self-study resources, and training services on establishing rapport, click <http://www.jeffmowatt.com/individual/greetingcustomers.html>

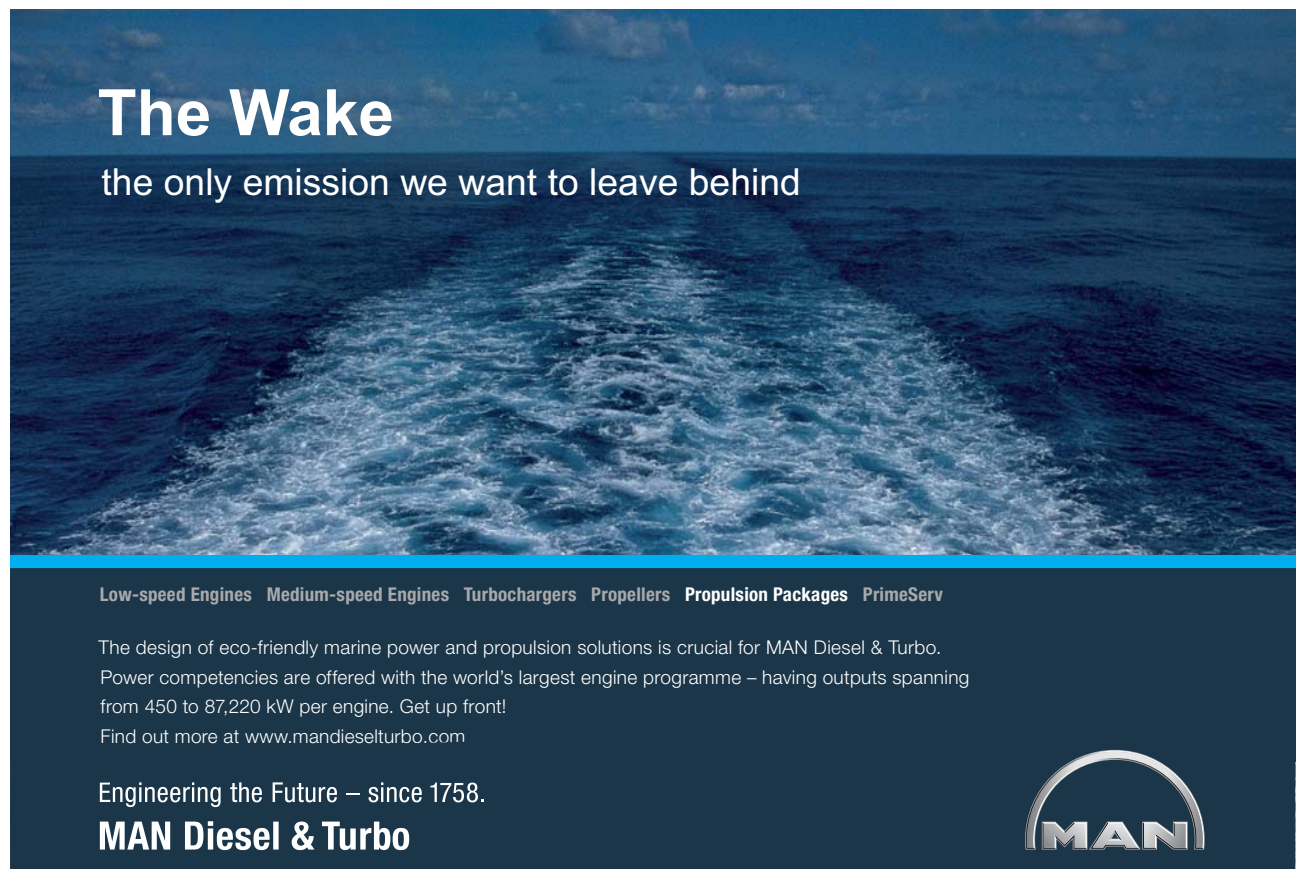
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# 3 Feedback or Criticism? A Toolbox for Dealing with Criticism in the Workplace by Judy Ringer

It started out innocuously. I asked a colleague if she'd be willing to listen to an upcoming presentation for a local non-profit. She said she would, and I plunged in.

My colleague had a lot to say and delivered it with stinging energy. "You use too much jargon; I hate jargon," she said. "And you need something besides theory. They'll fall asleep."

My hackles went up. Wow! Was there anything you liked? My left hand column was in overdrive. I was ready to leap on her but stopped, centered myself, and decided to practice what I do, in fact, teach.

## A Toolbox for Dealing With Criticism in the Workplace

I don't like criticism any more than the next person. And, in my work, it's a necessary component of excellence. So I find ways to manage it, using one or more of the following five tools:

### #1. Criticism or Feedback?

Even "constructive criticism" feels negative, so I call it "feedback", as in: Information. Positive, negative, or in between, begin to frame criticism as information that could be useful. It will help if you position your body so that you're slightly to the side of the speaker. Let the information fall into the space between you rather than on you. Adopt a curious attitude, and decide if and how the feedback can be used. Take it or leave it. Either way, say "Thank you very much."

### #2. They're right

I asked for my colleague's opinion. That's what I got. Her perception is true for her. What can I gain from knowing this?

### #3. Reframe

In the Aikido model I teach and practice, I see incoming communication as energy. The question (and practice) is: how can I use this energy? In my case, I reframed the critical "attack" as feedback and directed it toward my goal: a great presentation.

#### #4. Ask for what you want

Things would have gone more smoothly with my colleague if I'd been specific about the kind of feedback I wanted. For example, "This is a fairly educated audience. They understand my work. I'd like to know: 1) Are the transitions clear? 2) Is the opening compelling? 3) What do you like? 4) What would you change?"

#### #5. Be direct

What about unsolicited criticism? Stop the speaker and help them offer their feedback in a way you can receive it. For example, "I appreciate you have feedback, and I'd like to hear it. In fact, I'm curious about... (state what that is)." Now you're ready and more likely to experience the feedback as useful.

What did I do?

I listened. I got curious. I understood I was reacting to how she delivered the feedback: big gestures; loud voice; authoritarian affect. Easy to reject. So I stepped aside, let her big energy flow on by, and looked for what was useful.

I don't like jargon either, so I'll see if I can use words that are more inclusive.

Why did she perceive the content as theoretical? I asked and got more "feedback"!

The advertisement features a central graphic on the left consisting of a circular arrangement of four arrows pointing clockwise, with three stylized human figures and several gears in the center. To the right of this graphic, the text reads: **UNLEASHING CHANGE MANAGEMENT** in large, bold, blue letters. Below this, it says **OCTOBER 18 & 19, 2018** and **DE RODE HOED AMSTERDAM**. At the bottom, there is a silhouette of an Amsterdam skyline including a windmill and various buildings. In the bottom left corner, the text 'Global Executive Events' is visible. A hand cursor icon is positioned over the advertisement, pointing towards a green oval button at the bottom right.

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Is it criticism, or is it feedback? Whether it's constructive criticism in the workplace or elsewhere, if I'm open to learning, everything is feedback and almost always interesting. And if I don't like it, I say "Thank you very much" and move on.

#### About the author

Judy Ringer is the author of *Unlikely Teachers: Finding the Hidden Gifts in Daily Conflict* <http://www.unlikelyteachersbook.com> and the award-winning e-zine, *Ki Moments*, containing stories and practices on turning life's challenges into life teachers. Judy is a black belt in aikido and a nationally-known presenter, specializing in unique workshops on conflict, communication, and creating a positive work environment. She is the founder of Power & Presence Training and chief instructor of Portsmouth Aikido, Portsmouth, NH, USA. Visit <http://www.JudyRinger.com>

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# 4 The Parable of the Talents by Steve Pavlina

In various religious texts, there can be found some interesting personal development gems. One from the Bible is “The Parable of the Talents.”

The Parable of the Talents is one of the stories Jesus told to teach a moral lesson. Although the word “talents” in the story refers literally to money, you can obviously extend the meaning to other areas. It’s interesting to read it using the common definition of “talents.”

Here’s the story:

## The Parable of the Talents

Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

After a long time, the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. “Master,” he said, “you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.”

His master replied, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!”

The man with the two talents also came. “Master,” he said, “you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.”

His master replied, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!”

Then the man who had received the one talent came. “Master,” he said, “I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.”

His master replied, “You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

“Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

– Matthew 25:14–30 (NIV)

This simple story makes some interesting points that are applicable to the pursuit of personal development.

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First, we're all given a different starting position. Some of us are born into abundance (five talents). Others are born into scarcity (one talent). But what matters isn't what we're given – it's what we do with it that matters. So Jesus acknowledges the unfairness of life, but he also suggests that our starting conditions are irrelevant. One person earns five talents, another earns only two, but both are congratulated equally because both achieved a 100% gain. (I'd sure like to know where those servants invested their money!)

This is also a good lesson in how to deal with other human beings. Deal with other people based on their starting positions, and evaluate yourself by your own starting position. If you happen to be one of those who receives five talents, don't pat yourself on the back that you're already above average. If you have abundant talents, you should expect even more from yourself. Similarly, there may be times in your life where you only have one talent and do the best you can with it, and even though your gains appear small from an external standard, by Jesus' standard you've still made a notable accomplishment. I wrote about this previously in *Raise Your Standards*.

Another interesting aspect of the parable is that our talents are entrusted to us, like a master putting money into the care of his servants. We are stewards of our wealth, and I define wealth very loosely here, well beyond material possessions. For example, if I can write and speak fairly well, those are talents entrusted to me. I can bury them in the ground out of fear, or I can push out of my shell and strive to create increase for all.

One thing I wonder about the parable is this: What would have happened if one of the servants who invested the money realized a loss instead of a gain? There's a clue to how Jesus would have answered this because of how the master addressed the third servant: "You wicked, lazy servant!" Later the master refers to that servant as "worthless" and has him physically thrown out. That's pretty harsh language considering the servant still gave the master all his money back. Is Jesus saying that inaction is wicked? Yes, I believe so. In other words, if you do nothing with your talents...if you hide them in the ground and hoard them, you are choosing to be wicked, lazy, and worthless. You are supposed to invest what you've been given. Don't be lazy.

Another clue is how the first two servants are praised. The master praises them for being "faithful." Very interesting. It would have been different if the master praised them for being shrewd or effective or profitable. But the praise is given for their faith, not for their results.

Given the language (and hopefully my points still work with non-English versions of this scripture), I conclude that if one of the servants had invested money and lost some or all of it, they would still have been praised for their faithfulness. However, given that Jesus doesn't directly address this condition in the parable, he may also be suggesting that faith itself is the path to success – a common theme in his other teachings. So perhaps if you use your talents faithfully, you aren't really going to lose.

Another notable quality of the parable is the lack of competition. The servants aren't competing with each other for their master's favor. It's not a zero-sum game. The first two servants both contribute something of value to their master's estate.

What's the ultimate reward for the faithful servants? Although Jesus doesn't explicitly say it, it seems obvious they don't get to keep the money. The two successful servants aren't even working for their own increase. It's not their money. They're working for the increase of their master, and they share in the increase to his estate. Their true reward is to share in their master's happiness. So happiness is the reward, and happiness comes from serving others.

I know from experience that if I undertake some action to create increase only for myself, there's very little energy to it, and it doesn't usually increase my happiness. But if I focus on creating increase for others (such as by helping people grow), then I feel great joy in doing that, and it ultimately creates increase for me too.

But there's more to it than that. Happiness is a quality that I inject into my work, not something I derive from it. When I work only for myself, I'm looking for happiness outside myself. Trying to achieve happiness that way doesn't work. But when I work for others' benefit and turn off WIIFM for a while (What's In It For Me?), I tap into the deep wells of happiness that are already inside me. Instead of trying to achieve happiness, I happily achieve. Happiness flows outward from me and into the work I do, so I experience it as an outflow, not an inflow.

Happiness is something you exhale, not something you inhale. Are you one of those people who must say, "Yes, Senator, I had a supply of happiness in my gut, but I did not exhale?"

As Jesus implies in The Parable of the Talents, creating abundance requires you to move beyond fear. If you're too fearful or suspicious or distrustful, you're going to bury your talents. And this leads to "weeping and gnashing of teeth," i.e. sorrow and depression.

You might think that fear and suspicion will keep you out of trouble, but really they'll just cause you suffering and pain. You don't need fear to avoid being a gullible idiot; for that you just need common sense. To live a life of abundance, you must ultimately move beyond fear and work to create abundance for others. Otherwise you'll ultimately be cast out as worthless. Jesus doesn't pull any punches here, youse bums.

Serve to create increase for others, and happiness is your reward. Bury your talents, and you get "weeping and gnashing of teeth." The choice is yours.

And that's my parablog for the day. :)

#### About the author

Steve Pavlina (born April 14, 1971) is an American self-help author, motivational speaker and entrepreneur. He is the author of the web site [stevepavlina.com](http://stevepavlina.com) and the book *Personal Development for Smart People*. Pavlina's blog covers topics such as personal development and success; consciousness and courage; productivity, motivation and goal setting; career, wealth and business; and spirituality. (Wikipedia)

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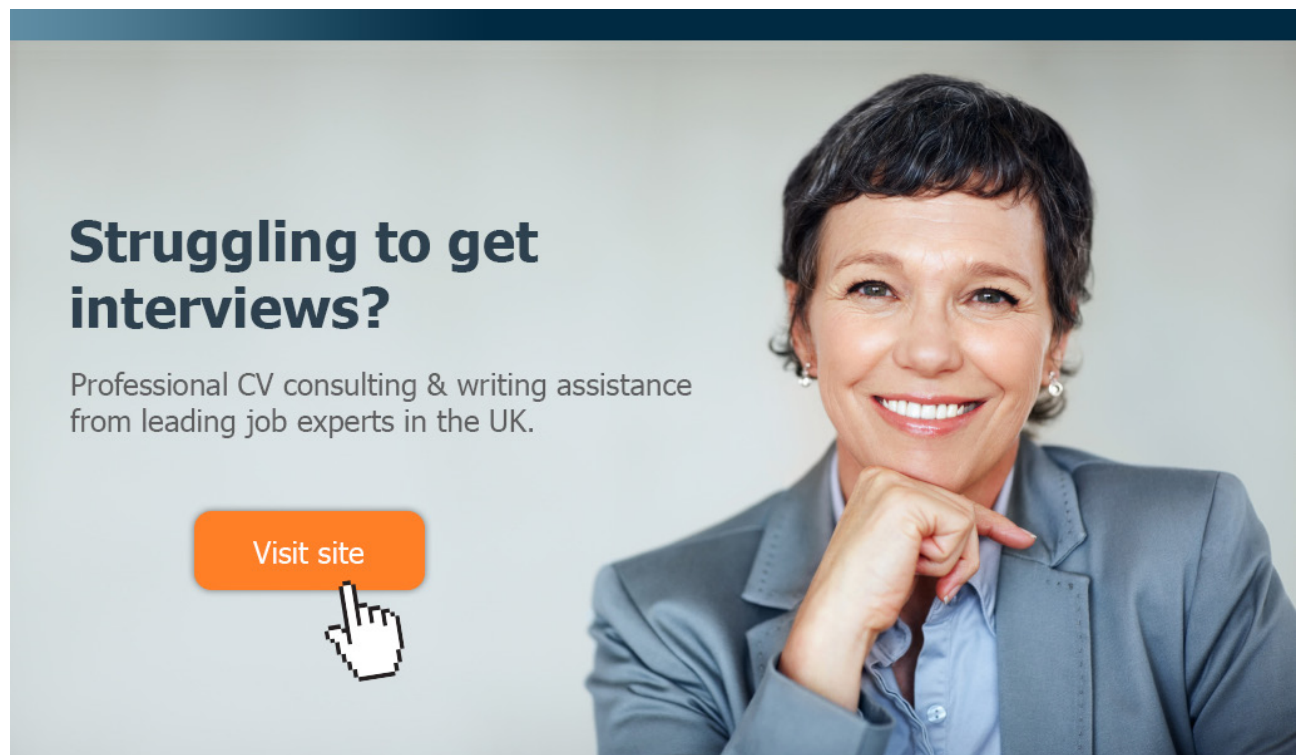
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# 5 An Encouraging Word by Steve Goodier

“Home on the Range” is a familiar American song that has become something of an unofficial anthem of the American west. Words to the song are adapted from Brewster Higley’s original poem:

Oh, give me a home where the buffalo roam,  
Where the deer and the antelope play,  
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word  
And the skies are not cloudy all day.

Since I live in the American west myself, I know something about skies that are not cloudy all day. But I sometimes find myself reflecting on a time when bison roamed the grassy prairie. And though I think I’d like to at least visit where the deer and the antelope play, I know I’d enjoy a place where seldom is heard a discouraging word. I wonder if there is such a place. Or how about somewhere that oft is heard an encouraging word? Can a place like that be found? A place of encouragement?

One man thought he might have found such a place in a bookstore where he waited in line for a guest author to autograph a copy of his latest novel. An encouraging, elderly woman at the front of the line turned around and said with obvious enthusiasm, “I just have to say – this is the BEST book I’ve ever read. Why, I couldn’t put it down until the very last page.”

Before anyone could respond, the author glanced up and said, “All right, Mother, that’s enough!”

I realize that a mother’s praise is a bit on the biased side. Besides, if we’re looking for more warm vibes and verbal support, we certainly can’t take our mothers with us wherever we go. That said, there is tremendous power in words of encouragement. Power to change lives.

A young Polish boy wanted to play piano, but his teacher told him that his fingers were too stubby and that he would never play well. The boy was advised to try the cornet, but was later told by an expert musician that he did not have the lip to ever be good. Discouraging words.

Then one day he met the great pianist Anton Rubinstein. The famous musician gave this young boy the first bit of musical encouragement he ever received. “Young man,” Rubinstein said, “you might be able to play the piano. In fact, I think you can...if you will practice seven hours a day.”

Seven hours a day might sound daunting. But that was all the boost this boy needed. The great Rubinstein had told him he could do it. He might have to dedicate most of his time to practice, but he could do it. He could be good. After all, Anton Rubinstein said so.

He did practice for many hours every day and his hard work was rewarded. Years later, Jan Paderewski became one of the most famous pianists of his time. An encouraging word carried with it enough power to ignite a young boy's eager spirit, and the resulting fire of passion burned brightly in the musician's heart for decades.

Your encouraging word, given today, may forever change a receptive life. I wonder who needs to hear it.

#### About the author

Steve Goodier holds a B.A. in anthropology and sociology (New Mexico State University) and an M.Div. degree from Emory University. He is an ordained United Methodist minister, district superintendent in the Rocky Mountain Conference UMC, and the author of numerous books about personal development, motivation, inspiration, and making needed life changes.

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<http://stevegoodier.blogspot.co.uk/2013/09/an-encouraging-word.html>

## 6 Unreasonable Requests by Paul Lemberg

Ask people for more and they will do more for you.

“The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man.” – George Bernard Shaw, Maxims for Revolutionists

It is probably the number two task of leadership – asking. You ask people to do things, and when they do – well, stuff happens.

But what really extends your ability to make big things happen is asking for things that are “unreasonable.”

What is unreasonable? Asking people for things you have no right to expect from them, which under ordinary circumstances, you would expect them to say, “no.” But asking anyway.

The trick is to expect them to say yes, and not worry about whether they do or they don’t.



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Create a game in your business. The game is for everyone to continually be unreasonable in what they ask of each other. And not just internally – externally as well. Include all your stakeholders in this game. (You choose whether or not to tell them about it's a game.) Do you think this game could rocket your project forward?

If making requests is not a normal activity for most people in businesses, unreasonable requests are doubly abnormal. Most of us don't want to risk rejection – so we ask for small things, easy things, wimpy things, and make it easy for people to say yes.

Keeping your requests small is a good strategy if you are no-o-phobic, but it limits your results.

The action in your business is moved forward in direct proportion to the size of your requests, so to move things along quickly, you have to ask big.

Think of what changes would make your requests unreasonable. Whatever you were going to ask for, ask for more. Whenever you wanted it, ask for it sooner. Whatever you were willing to pay or trade, ask for it for less Science Articles, or free. You get the idea.

Make your requests larger. Bigger. Faster. Cheaper. Outrageouser.

Make them unreasonable.

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#### About the author

Paul Lemberg is the president of Quantum Growth Coaching, the world's only fully systemized business coaching program guaranteed to help entrepreneurs rapidly create More Profits and More Life(tm). To get your copy of our free special report with detailed steps on how to grow your business at least 40% faster, even when you aren't sure what to do next, let Paul help you find your business development strategy.

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# 7 Feedback is an Essential Element of Learning and Improvement by Jim Clemmer

“The major difference between the most and least successful executives is the latter’s lack of awareness. Successful executives are critical of their own performance. Unsuccessful executives are critical of the performance of others.” – Harry Levinson, *The Exceptional Executive*

At our youngest daughter’s sixth birthday party, five-year-old Ryan hit her on the head. As Vanessa cried hysterically, I asked him to apologize. He politely refused. When I asked him why, he replied, “Mr. Clemmer, I don’t apologize unless I see teeth marks or blood.”

Many managers don’t realize the pain and problems they’ve created unless they see teeth marks or blood on those they work with. The most insensitive managers are generally the ones who don’t have good personal feedback systems and refuse to seek input on how to improve their personal performance. Their “open door policy” is, “if you don’t like the way I do things, the (exit) door is always open.”

We can’t build an organization or team that’s different from us. If my team or organization avoids or even resists performance measurement and feedback, I need to take a hard look at my own approach to personal feedback. If I don’t have a continuous system and practice of actively soliciting feedback on my behavior, our organization is reflecting my measurement values. Feedback impaired managers are usually in favor of performance measurement and strong feedback loops – for everyone else.

We first noticed this connection when we were trying to understand why some teams or organizations had rich and powerful flows of performance data and rigorous measurements. But many other organizations that seemed equally determined to improve had very weak performance measurements. It didn’t seem to be a knowledge issue. These low measurement organizations knew all about “360 degree” feedback systems, performance gap analysis, data-based tools and techniques, and the like.

But it was a lot of talk. There was little application. Then we noticed how people tiptoed around sensitive issues, especially problems that should have been raised with their immediate managers, or further up the hierarchy. We began to take note of the number of conversations we were having about how people try to gauge a senior manager’s mood to see if today was a good day to raise a sensitive issue or flag a problem. We also noticed how many managers claimed that they wanted to build a learning organization, then did little to learn how people in their organization perceived their behavior.

Personal feedback – especially about problems or faulty signals we’ve sent – can be very painful. But our frequency, sensitivity, and action (or lack of it) on personal performance feedback sets the pace and tone for the rest of our team and organization. Many of the best measurement tools and techniques are severely curtailed in a feedback-adverse culture. As consultant H. James Harrington puts it in his book, *Business Process Improvement*, “Measurement is the lock, feedback is the key. Without their interaction, you cannot open the door to improvement.”

#### About the author

Jim Clemmer has been writing and speaking about leadership, change, team, and organization effectiveness for over 30 years. His extensive research, broad experience with hundreds of organizations and thousands of people, and deep understanding of these topics makes him an internationally recognized leader in the field. Beyond his seven books, he’s written hundreds of columns and articles for newspapers and magazines.

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## 8 Performance Management – Five Simple Steps to Success by Martin Haworth

A business is nothing more than an idea without people in place to take action and make the business happen. And how well a business runs is a direct reflection of its employees.

Over time, a practice known as Performance Management has been put in place in most businesses to ensure that employees not only do the jobs they were hired to do, but do them well and are proud of the work they get done.

The five key areas of Performance Management are planning, monitoring, developing, rating and rewarding employees.

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### 1. Planning Your Business Workload

Planning is just what it sounds like: planning out not only what tasks need to get done, but the ways in which getting them done should happen. Involving employees in this process is critical because by involving them, they feel more a part of the process and less like monkeys who are trained to jump on command.

In other words, involving employees in the planning process improves morale. It also helps to make sure that there aren't any gaps in communication to keep the plans from coming to fruition.

After the planning stage, all employees should have a clear idea of what is expected from them.

### 2. Monitoring Business and Individual Performance

Monitoring is also self-explanatory. Monitoring involves the monitoring of employees by their managers to make sure their tasks are getting done efficiently and takes into consideration how well the employees are able to function.

Monitoring ensures that unrealistic expectations aren't set by management or the employees and keeps track of not only what is being accomplished but what has yet to be worked on.

### 3. Individual And Team Performance Development

Developing refers to keeping employees evolving to meet the ever increasing standards of a post millennial workplace.

It could involve teaching new skills, implementing new procedures to make the work processes more accessible.

It sometimes means assigning new responsibilities to employees who appear to have outgrown their old ones. Development ensures growth of employees and the business.

### 4. Rating Individual Performance

Rating is the way by which employee performances are evaluated. It is imperative that employees are given a "report card" on a regular basis.

Rating can address areas in which the employee needs to grow as well as the areas in which they excel.

It provides a clear map to where the employee stands at that date and time and is important to make sure the employee keeps up a good rate of development within the business.

## 5. Rewarding Great Performance

Rewarding Employees is perhaps the most important part of Performance Management. A happy employee is a productive employee and rewarding an employee whose work is exceptional is a key factor in making sure that their level of work doesn't deteriorate.

Everybody likes to make sure that they are appreciated

Studies have shown that employees who are rewarded for a job well done are far more motivated to keep performing at a high level than those who are berated or "punished" for being less than satisfactory.

Performance Management is a method by which a business owner can ensure that his or her business is constantly growing and achieving at the level they desire.

It's an easy system to put in place and is the most effective system in making sure that business goals are achieved.

About the author:

Copyright 2006 Martin Haworth is a Business and Management Coach. He works worldwide, mainly by phone, with small business owners, managers and corporate leaders. He has hundreds of hints, tips and ideas at his website, [www.coaching-businesses-to-success.com](http://www.coaching-businesses-to-success.com).

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## 9 Puppies in the Park by Eric Garner

I'm always astonished when I train to discover how unaware people are of what they're naturally good at.

Often, I'll see someone who just sparkles with others, someone who has a gift for organising, or someone who has a natural ability to lead.

Invariably, when I gently point these attributes out, those on the receiving end look blank, dismiss it, or actually believe that everyone else has the same gifts as them.

On our Appraisal Skills training at ManageTrainLearn, we discuss Strengths Theory, which says that every person can do something better than 10,000 others.

I often speculate how many people are aware of it. Probably a fraction. And then I speculate how many of those who know their strengths are actually allowed to develop them at work. Hmmm.



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In our Greek-inspired approach to education in the West, the aim has always been to create well-rounded individuals. In the zen-inspired approach to education in the East, the aim is to develop what people are already good at and allow them to blossom to their full potential.

Like many others who see a link between outstanding sports managers and outstanding business managers, I am a great admirer of Sir Alex Ferguson, manager of Manchester United football team.

This last week, he has taken his team back to the top of the English Premier League. He is a great manager and a great manager of people.

Once, when he was looking out of his office window, Ferguson saw a young kid playing football in the park. Looking back, the manager recalled, "This kid looked as relaxed and natural playing football as a puppy chasing silver paper in the wind."

That kid was Ryan Giggs. On his 14th birthday, Ferguson went to his house and signed him to his team where he has stayed ever since. Giggs is now the most decorated player in English football.

As managers, there are 3 things we can do to bring out the best in others:

1. spot their natural talent
2. find a way to nurture it
3. let them loose like puppies in the park.

So what's stopping you?

About the author

Eric Garner is Managing Director of ManageTrainLearn, the site that will change the way you learn forever. Download free samples of the biggest range of management and personal development materials anywhere and experience learning like you always dreamed possible; <http://www.managetrainlearn.com>

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# 10 Is Your Performance Ranked "A", "B" or "C"? by Bob Selden

What has management learnt from the global economic crisis (GEC) about getting the best out of their people? Two recent examples of the way in which people's performance is managed, suggest that the answer might be "a lot" and "not much".

In the first case, it's been reported that auto maker GM, the recipient of large government handouts, is actually improving its performance management system. Under the old system, senior managers were evaluated quarterly on criteria that were spelt out in exhaustive detail. Such reviews were many pages long – in fact they needed to be contained in a ring binder!

As Terry Woychowski, former GM Director of Engineering said "We measured ourselves 10 ways from Sunday." It was in fact a performance measurement system, not a performance management system.

In their new performance management system, GM managers will be evaluated using simpler criteria. The performance review will be contained on a single page. It will be annual and they will be held accountable for previously agreed performance goals.

Then there's the case of the troubled A.I.G., another recipient of government funding. What have they learnt? How are they going to improve their management processes?

Under the headline of "A.I.G. Roles Out New Pay Plan" (New York Times 10 Feb), a brave new performance based pay plan was announced. Under their new scheme, people's performance will be graded numerically which will be tied directly to their performance bonus.

Robert H. Benmosche, A.I.G.'s new chief executive is the brainchild behind the scheme. Perhaps bowing to extensive public pressure to reduce the enormous bonuses paid to employees (or at least to be able to justify them), he is reported to be introducing a forced ranking system for employees' performance.

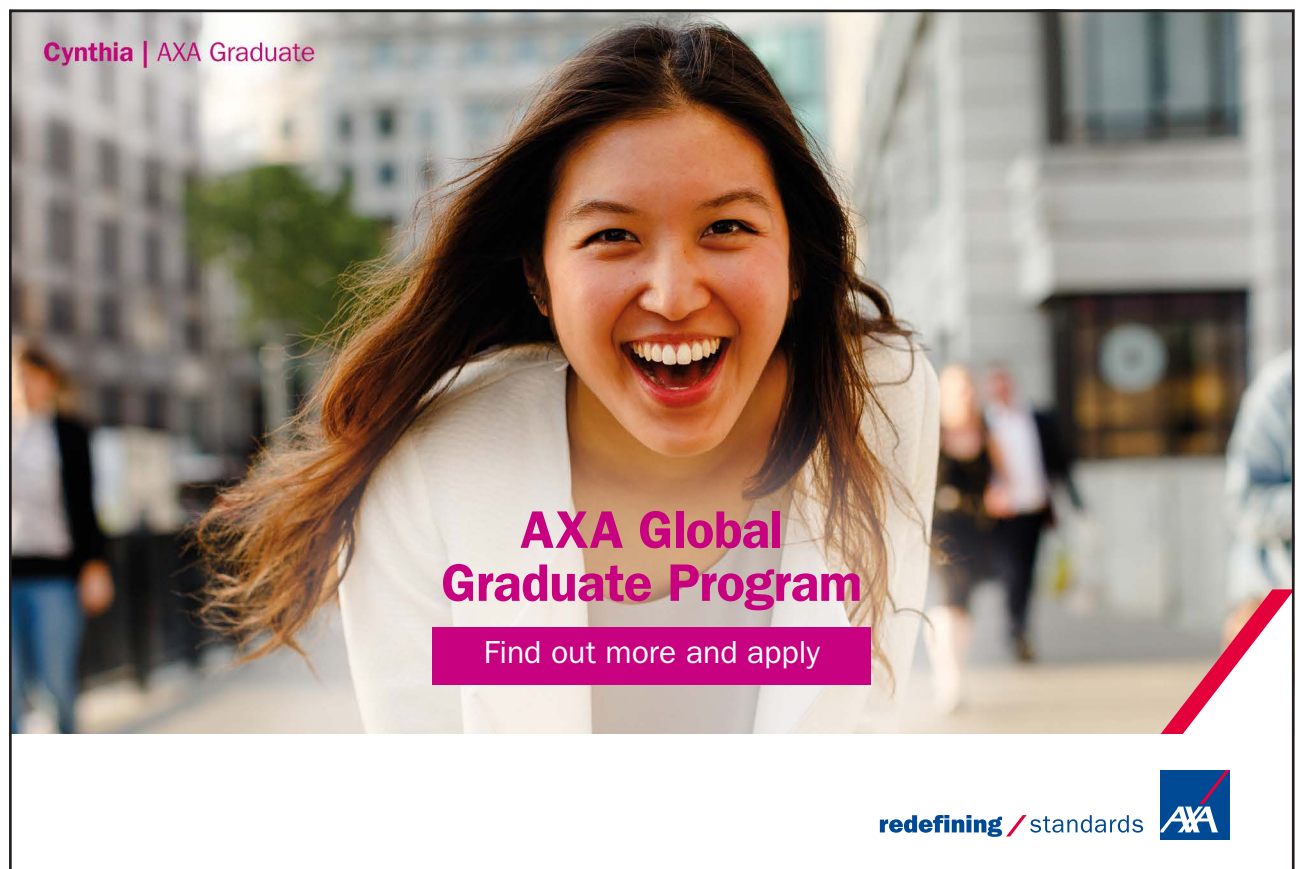
As the NY Times article reported "Under the new system, employees will be ranked on a scale from 1 to 4. Those ranked number 1, a group expected to be no larger than 10 percent, will receive much more in annual bonus payments, according to an A.I.G. spokeswoman. Those ranked 2 or 3 – together comprising about 70 percent of A.I.G. employees – will be considered as having performed above or in line with expectations. Those ranked 4 will receive lower incentive pay."

Sound familiar? Yes, it's almost the same as the 20-70-10 scheme previously used by G.E. where employees were ranked A, B or C on the basis that there should normally be 20% above expectations, 70% meeting expectations and 10% below expectations. The difference here apparently is that those ranked 4 (or C in the G.E. model) will not be immediately pushed to leave the firm as they were at G.E.

Will this new "incentive based scheme" be effective? Time will tell. However, if the G.E. experience is anything to go by the answer could be problematic. Some people suggest that the GE "yank and rank" scheme was responsible for a 28-fold increase in earnings and a five-fold increase in revenue between 1981 and 2001 (that was also the year that Jack Welch left G.E.). Critics of such schemes however, label them as a "competitive" model of managing performance (people compete against one another to achieve a better ranking) as opposed to cooperative. Even the statisticians have got onto the critique bandwagon by showing that over time, assuming that the intended aim of the scheme is successful (to get people to improve their performance and thus their ranking), there will be more As and Bs and less Cs.

If readers' comments on the NY Times article are anything to go by, the system may be doomed before it starts. Here's a taste of how some readers responded:

Employees will be ranked by whom, based on what? Unless the "what" is directly tied to long term profitability there will be no curbs on risk taking for short term profit.



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If employees ranked 3 are described as "having performed...in line with expectations," then by definition those ranked 4 will have not met expectations. Yet, "those ranked 4 will receive lower incentive pay..." means that even if they do not meet expectations, they will receive incentive pay (a.k.a. bonus).

What it fails to do is link incentives with risk containment – not an easy task, but necessary to avoid future financial crises.

And finally...

So essentially nothing changes at A.I.G. Your bonus is now openly based on how much you suck up to your manager, not on any real measure of competency (though "competency" and "A.I.G." is an oxymoron at best).

There were no positive comments for the new A.I.G. scheme.

So, what's been learnt here?

It appears that in the GM example, emphasis will now be placed on "managing" performance. The new Chairman of GM, suggests the changes are part of a much needed cultural change throughout the organisation, where layers of bureaucracy are being cut and wider managerial responsibilities being given to a younger cadre of managers. "Replacing a binder full of job expectations with a one-page set of goals is just one sign of the fresh start."

One gathers that at A.I.G. the emphasis will be on measuring performance (after the event) rather than proactively managing performance.

Can you imagine yourself sitting down to do a performance review in either GM or A.I.G. (either as a manager or receiving the review)? I'm sure your mindset would be quite different in both cases.

I've long been a critic of performance management systems, particularly those linked to individual pay incentives (see "What do you get when you pay people to perform?") – nothing should take the place of good management. However, as they are now part and parcel of most organisations they at least need to be designed in such a way that they encourage managers to "manage" rather than allow them to rely on some bureaucratic system as a crutch for poor management. Whilst the GEC might have been the catalyst, it's generally agreed that poor management got both organisations into real trouble. The way they manage their people had to change.

From their pre-GEC performances, both companies seemed to be in need of cultural change. It will be interesting to observe the results of the two quite different change processes over the coming years.

#### About the author

Bob Selden is the author of the best-selling "What To Do When You Become The Boss" – a self-help book for new managers – see details at <http://www.whenyoubecometheboss.com/>. He's also coached at one of the world's premier business schools, the Institute for Management Development in Lausanne, Switzerland and regularly advises managers around the globe on their current challenges.

<http://nationalllearning.com.au/bob-selden/>

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# 11 Hardwired Humans and...

## Appraisals by Andrew O'Keeffe

Most organisations install and persist with conventional performance systems. These same organisations experience frustration that the system doesn't deliver what they would like and are always redesigning their system one more time.

There must be deep-seated reasons as to why the conventional performance system was developed in the first place, and why its design is futile. The reasons go to the core of human nature.

The key message is that you have an either/or choice in your design: you can either have a performance system where people are rated or you can have a system that generates constructive conversations between a person and their manager. You cannot have both. Here's why.

Social systems signifying acceptance

Given that we are a social animal where leaders and followers have unequal power, it's not surprising that humans invented rating systems for signaling to a person their standing in their work group. Chimpanzees do the same thing in their communities.

Chimpanzees hunt meat. They appear to hunt for social rather than nutritional reasons. For the chimpanzees of Gombe the most common prey is a red colobus monkey. For the energy expended for the meagre 1kg of meat on a baby monkey, chimps would be better off foraging for nuts and fruit if the purpose was nutritional. But chimps appear to hunt for social reasons. A hunting party is most successful when the gang numbers between four and ten members. When a kill is made, the prey is appropriated by the alpha male. At Gombe, the alpha male shares the meat in a deliberate, consistent way – he gives a greater share to his allies and he ignores his rivals. Members of this social group get to know where they stand and the regard in which they are held by the boss.

Appraisal ratings is no more elaborate than meat sharing as a way for people to know how they are regarded in their social group. By "ratings" we mean numbers or words on a scale where people are scored and labelled.

Natural for humans to invent appraisal ratings

On the one hand we should not be surprised that humans invented ratings. There are six reasons why ratings are a natural invention for humans.

First, like any human group, power in organisations is distributed unevenly between leaders and followers. Leaders use their power. Ratings are based on the presumption of power: "I rate you a 3?" is the statement of the power of one person over another.

Second, we have an instinct to classify other people (eg, "good/bad", "like me/not like me"). The labelling of people into high/medium/low performers is just one more classification.

Third, we are generally working in organisations much larger than our natural sized clan of up to 150. Consequently, leaders and followers in large, often global, organisations are strangers to each other. It's easy for leaders in large organisations to treat their staff as if they are not clan. This is partly why leaders require other managers in their organisation to conduct reviews yet often do not complete them with their own team (after all, we don't conduct ratings on our family).

Fourth, we gain confidence in social imitation, so a practice implemented by an influential individual or highly-regarded organisation quickly becomes fashion and spreads as common practice. Many organisations followed GE's lead with forced ratings and "A", "B" and "C" performers. While GE has reportedly rejected its own practice as unsustainable, other organisations continue to advocate the system.

Fifth, our instinct of confidence before realism means we are attracted to simple solutions. This attraction to simplicity allows us to convince ourselves that we can convert a year's performance of a person to a single score, allows us to ignore the complex behaviours and emotions that are triggered by ratings, and to believe that managers across the organisation have the ability to handle the sensitivities of the reviews and the dispensing of ratings.

Sixth, appraisals are not objective as advocates claim. Given the nature of humans, one cannot take subjectivity out of the process. In fact, the evidence is that a person is more likely to be rated highly if they were appointed to their role by the appraising manager. If your manager did not appoint you, you are less likely to receive a good rating (see Pfeffer and Sutton, *Hard Facts, Dangerous Half-Truths & Total Nonsense*, page 92).

If that's the case for why appraisal ratings were invented in the first place, why do they cause so much tension and frustration across organisations?

Why appraisal ratings are destructive

We can predict from instincts why ratings have a destructive impact on the energy of an organisation.

First, for staff the prospect of being rated triggers the instinct of loss aversion. Potential loss is not just in the form of pay and bonus. The greater fear is the possible negative impact on a person's social standing. Loss of social reputation is the greatest loss humans face after the loss of family. When faced with the threat of loss, people become guarded and defensive. This sets the tone for the review and the rating dominates the conversation between managers and their people. The possibility of an open, constructive, developmental conversation is all but destroyed.

Second, the rating raises the emotional stakes for both parties. We might design our system on the assumption that the reviews are rational, but for both managers and staff the reviews leading to a rating are primarily emotional. We are put in a position of judging and of being judged. In our executive programs we ask participants to list how employees might be feeling the morning of their appraisals, and to list how managers are feeling the morning of appraisals. Not surprisingly, the lists are similar and almost always include emotions of anxiety and defensiveness.

Third, with the bell-curve of ratings (where there are few high performers and few low performers with the bulk of people in the middle) the system is designed so that once a year the managers in your organisation are required to rate most of their people average. For most people, being average in their social group is demoralising. So, bizarrely, the system is designed so that most people in your organisation are deflated and sapped of their energy and less inclined to contribute discretionary effort. If you have a rating system at least design it to expect a bell-curve skewed to the right so that the damage is contained.



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Fourth, employees quickly crack the code that their manager cannot rate all of their team as “high” performers. The best chance of a person receiving a high rating is that they look good compared to their peers. Hence competition within the family-sized work team is created. Most organisations prefer collaboration within teams.

Fifth, managers, being the leaders of the family-sized team, sense that they are dividing the team through ratings and causing angst to individuals. A possible response from managers is to diminish the value of the process and treat the system as a “tick the box” exercise. Managers are instinctively seeking to lead the group as if they are family, and ratings are contrary to this instinct. It's why managers generally refuse to undertake mid-year reviews (so that they at least contain the negative aspects to a single review) and why they often need to be forced to complete the annual reviews.

Sixth, the value of people doing routine work is diminished as employees in these roles are more exposed to an average rating. People doing the heroic work are more likely to receive the few morsels of high ratings.

Seventh, having completed the review meeting and obtained their rating, gossip can now work overtime. Staff will gossip with each other (which managers are intuitively sensitive about) and staff will gossip that night when they get home, starting with, “Guess what darling, today I had my appraisal.” What do you want staff to then say? For organisations with rating systems, most employees will then say, “I got average – can you believe that that's all the thanks I get.” You have successfully diminished their energy.

#### Solution

There is a preferred design – have a review system that does not include ratings.

Staff members know that their manager has views about them and their performance. Likewise, managers want to share their perspective if they can only find a way to do so that doesn't cause the employee to be defensive.

The review should cover the topics that an employee and their manager most want to talk about:

What I did well this last year

What I did not do so well and can learn from

How I developed last year and development plans this coming year

Career opportunities

Potential meaningful discussion on these topics will be derailed if ratings are attached.

Organisations we have assisted or that we know which use a system without ratings find that managers and staff say, often for the first time, that they are having the conversations they would like to have with each other. One staff member told us, "I told my wife how lucky we are to have a system without ratings, and she in her organisation is still struggling with the old punitive system." In another organisation the HR manager reported managers and staff are having meaningful conversations lasting two hours, unheard of before now.

#### Life without ratings

The question often arises as to how pay reviews, bonuses and promotions are handled without ratings. While this deserves a more comprehensive explanation, the brief answer is that there is life without ratings.

Pay reviews are more influenced by market rates and position in the salary range. Performance does play a part and the pay review message should still be consistent with the performance discussion. Bonuses relate mostly to measurable KPIs and team and company performance. Ratings purport to take judgment out of pay and bonus decisions which is not, or should not be, the case.

In terms of promotability and succession planning, you don't need a rating system to know who your future leaders whose development needs to be accelerated, or for that matter the freeloaders who need to be attended to.

In any event, it still comes down to the choice outlined at the beginning: we either want a system that delivers ratings so we can apply to pay and bonus, or we want a system that gives a greater chance of managers and staff having meaningful conversations.

#### Cultural choice

The choice in our performance system is cultural – just like meat sharing with chimpanzees. While the chimps of Gombe share meat based on the power of the boss, a different community of chimps in the Ivory Coast shares meat equally with whoever participated in the hunt.

#### About the author

Andrew O'Keeffe is the Principal of Hardwired Humans which assists business leaders design and implement people strategies based on human instincts. Through understanding human instincts leaders can predict what will work and can avoid the predictable mistakes if instincts are ignored. You can subscribe to Andrew's monthly newsletter at [www.hardwiredhumans.com](http://www.hardwiredhumans.com). He is contactable at [andrewo@hardwiredhumans.com](mailto:andrewo@hardwiredhumans.com)

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# 12 Evaluating Staff Performance, Redux by Thomas Cox

It's the end of Q4 and leaders are once more pondering staff performance evaluations.

Most people evaluate too little too late. Here's how you can get way, way ahead of the curve for 2013.

As I've mentioned before, you'll make your staff happier – and you'll be more effective – when your evaluations are:

Praise and Acknowledgment are uplifting.

- Timely
- Specific to Observable Behavior
- Connected to their Role

Here's what you should do, how to do it, and why. For additional guidance on giving feedback, consult the “basics” page at [Manager-Tools.com](http://Manager-Tools.com), my go-to resource for many of the fundamentals of good management.

Timely

The sooner you give someone feedback on their performance – good or bad – the better. It's true of any organism that can learn – the quicker in time the feedback is, the easier we learn, and thus the more effective that feedback is in helping us alter our behavior.

Ideally, you give feedback within a few seconds or a minute of seeing something, and 80% or more of your feedback should be either “neutral” acknowledgments (which your people will interpret as “positive” – see below) or actually be positive. Only 20% should be negative or “correcting” feedback.

(One exception is in training when you expect to give lots of corrective guidance.)

Feedback can also be extremely brief – one or two sentences, and less than 30 seconds. So a restaurant manager can walk by the hostess and say “Eyes up, ten feet” and that's feedback – if the hostess was previously trained that part of her job is to keep her eyes up and to acknowledge with a smile and a word every customer who comes within ten feet of her. And in the context of the hostess having just done it correctly a few seconds earlier, the manager can say this with a smile and a thumbs up, and it's neutral or positive feedback.

As we learn from the exceptional book “The Progress Principle,” humans are highly impacted by having even their small successes noticed. You don’t need to give awards or assemble the team for a public presentation. Just notice, like the restaurant manager above, and acknowledge. You don’t have to say “good job” – just acknowledgement by a person in a position of authority is pleasant. And being ignored is unpleasant.

### Overcome Reluctance

Most leaders give far too little feedback, usually for these underlying reasons:

- a) we don’t know how to do it well, so we put it off
- b) we don’t know how to do it quickly, so we put it off
- c) we’re afraid it won’t be well received, so we flinch away and put it off

The key to being timely is:

- a) practice a proven formula that works
- b) use a system for capturing and delivering feedback so we can do it quickly
- c) have previously built enough trust that we know it will be well received

Also, once you get over the hump and give feedback regularly, you can (and should) easily keep track of the larger examples, making your more formal, quarterly and annual performance reports, almost trivial to write.

### Specific to Observable Behavior

We hate feedback that’s vague. So if you give feedback that’s vague, it’ll be badly received regardless of your trust level with the recipient. It also can’t be arbitrary.

Feedback is vague when the listener can’t tell what specific, observable behaviors were involved.

Feedback seems arbitrary when the standard of right and wrong is unclear or not agreed in advance.

Get away from those two pitfalls by mentioning specific behavior – a loud tone of voice, a smile, eye contact, eye rolling, being on time with an assignment, being late to a meeting, etc. If the behavior could be caught on a video camera, then it’s behavior you could describe. Being “rude” is not behavior – it’s an interpretation. So is being “polite.”

If a person is late to a meeting, you have to separately establish that lateness is not okay with you. (And that means you have to be on time yourself.) And by “separately establish” I mean you have to have mentioned it before this instance of feedback, or, you acknowledge that you hadn’t – “Hey, I don’t know if I’ve told you, I really like to start meetings on time. Can you support me in that in the future?”

## Connected to their Role

Staff evaluations, both annual and via in-the-moment feedback, are even more powerful when the specific praise or correction is connected to a role – and that role has to be defined. You need job descriptions.

Good feedback would then involve connecting language, such as “because, as the receptionist, you’re responsible for making appointments...” There’s nothing wrong and a lot right in making these connections.

I’m constantly amazed how many employees have no job or role descriptions, and how many others have written job descriptions, yet work jobs that have evolved away from that description.

What if you lack role descriptions?

Take 90 seconds at a staff meeting and pass out blank forms with just their name written in on top, and ask each person to write down the 3 to 10 major outcomes they believe that their role is, or should be, responsible for.



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For example, a receptionist at a medical clinic might write:

- set and change appointments
- friendly greetings and goodbyes to all visitors
- collection of copays
- distribution of paperwork to, and collection from, patients
- clear and timely communication among doctor, medical assistant, and patient

The clinic director might edit this list later to include

- communicate with pharmacies and suppliers

Merge these lists to come up with the new, agreed role description. Total time investment – just a few minutes. (You can also search for pre-written standard job descriptions at the US Department of Labor’s O\*NET web site – however I would do that only after asking for staff input.)

#### Practice It

When I start an interim job, or start leading a team, I keep a log. It’s just the date, time, person, and what they did and what I said.

When first learning it, use a fill-in-the-blank format first, build the 1–2 sentences, look it over, then go deliver it.

Once a group of managers were all practicing this feedback format, literally based on notes and filling in a form. Then they role played with each other. Several of them had examples that involved other people who were also present, so I had them practice with the actual target.

The delivery was, of course, stilted and a little rough.

How did the speaker feel? “It felt awkward! It was unnatural. The sentences seemed stilted.” (Like every other new behavior you’ve ever tried.)

How did the listener feel? “I loved it.” Didn’t the speaker seem a little...awkward? “Yeah, I didn’t care.”

If your feedback is honest, brief, heartfelt, timely, and 80% positive – believe me, people will wait very patiently for you to say the words.

### From Feedback to Evaluations

Stick your log entries into a folder and revisit them at the end of each quarter. Have each staff member self-evaluate each quarter. You then edit that and turn it into your evaluation of them, adding in any positive or negative feedback that's relevant. (If your evaluation differs from their self-evaluation, you've not done a good job giving daily feedback. Fix that quickly before another quarter goes by. If one of your people is surprised by a bad review, that's your fault.)

At year-end, consolidate the quarterly reviews. Bingo, you're done, and your staff are unsurprised at the results.

### About the author

Tom Cox is CEO at B-Studio Business Videos, Managing Consultant at Cox Business Consulting, Inc., and CEO at GrowthMaps

<http://tomonleadership.com/>

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# 13 Compliment the Thing, not the Person by Erica Rowntree

Paying compliments is an important way to build rapport with others, whether they are colleagues, customers, or casual contacts.

But there is a right way to do it; and a wrong way.

The wrong way is to pay a compliment as an excuse to suck up, smarm, and seduce. People usually see through such compliments and dismiss the compliment as meaningless and you as a fake.

The right way is, first, to mean it; secondly, to deliver it in a way that doesn't embarrass the other person; and, thirdly, to explain the effect it has on you and others.

One of the ways you can do this is to focus on a thing you admire about the other person, rather than on the person themselves. For example, "Jude, you're the best secretary in the world", might well be received with a disbelieving "yeah, yeah" and a roll of the eyes to heaven.



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But, tell her, “Jude, Bill in Accounts told me that that report of yours really made him sit up and think”, and you will be praising the report and, by association, your secretary too.

In “Business as a Game”, Albert Carr relates the story of a speech given by a chief executive. The man was not an accomplished speaker and knew it. Nevertheless, shortly after he had sat down, he was approached by one of his department managers. “Mr. Rossen, that was a terrific speech. A great performance. Churchill couldn’t have done better!”

The chief replied amiably: “Thank you, Larry. Glad you liked it.”

A few days later, another manager came up to the chief during lunch and said: “Mr. Rossen, I’ve been thinking about what you said the other night. It’s got me thinking about some changes we could make in our department. Would you mind if I sent you my thoughts?”

“Not at all, Bill,” said the chief. “I’m glad the speech got you thinking.”

It’s not difficult to work out which compliment mattered most.

All of us love compliments. Few of us love flattery.

If you can deliver a compliment in a way that is honest, sincere, and focuses on the effect people have on others, then you will make people feel good, open them up and light up their day.

#### About the author

Erica Rowntree is an article contributor of ManageTrainLearn, the site that will change the way you learn forever. Download free samples of the biggest range of management and personal development materials anywhere and experience learning like you always dreamed possible; <http://www.managetrainlearn.com>

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# 14 Maintaining a Focus on Professional Development Goals by Nelson Scott

Working with your staff to set goals for professional development sends a powerful message that you value your staff, and you are committed to their growth. An even stronger, negative message is sent if those goals are ignored until the annual performance appraisal time rolls around again. You create the impression that the goal setting exercise was something that “had” to be done, likely on direction of someone higher up the chain of command. Now that it is checked off your to-do list, you can get on with doing the really important tasks.

On the other hand, when you review your staff’s goals from time to time throughout the year, you reinforce the message that staff development is important to you and the organization. A commitment exists to each staff member’s growth.

Here is a simple, low tech way to maintain your focus on all staff members’ goals throughout the year. Write each staff member’s goals on a 5 × 8 index card. Place the cards in your top drawer or in some other convenient location. Make a commitment to yourself and to your staff members to meet with them individually once every four to eight weeks to discuss what they have done to meet their goals. Summarize the meetings on the card, noting the date prominently.

Whenever you have a moment in your day – waiting for a meeting to start, while on hold or as you pack up at the end of the day – shuffle through the cards. Is there someone with whom you have not discussed goals in the past month? Make a point to schedule time with that person.

This card system maintains your commitment to your staff’s development. Staff members will feel that you value them as employees and as a result will be more focused on their professional growth plans. Both the staff member and the organization benefit from your consistent involvement.

#### About the author

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A professional trainer, speaker, and consultant since 1995, Nelson Scott works with organizations that are committed to making the right hiring decisions, developing and retaining productive staff, and strengthening relationships with customers. Learn more by visiting [www.seaconsultingonline.com](http://www.seaconsultingonline.com) or e-mailing [nmscott@telus.net](mailto:nmscott@telus.net).

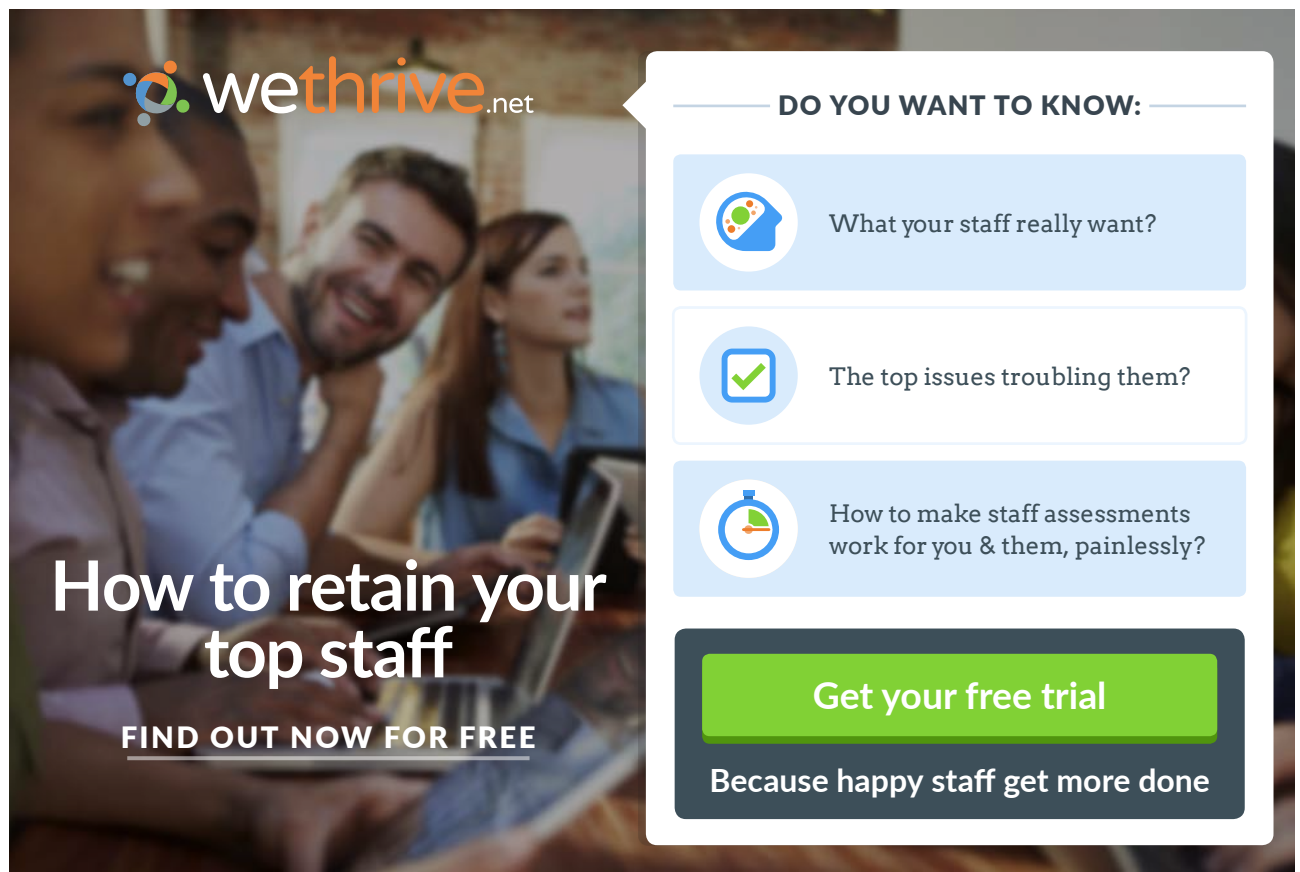
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# 15 Judgment vs. Feedback by Marnie Green

Part of a manager's job is to give feedback to employees to help them meet and exceed expectations for performance. This article provides some distinctions between judgment and feedback.

Part of a manager's job is to give feedback to employees to help them meet and exceed expectations for performance. It should be easy, right? Just share your perspectives with the employee and they will improve, grow, and develop. As easy as this concept sounds, most managers struggle with giving feedback that is constructive, productive, and received the way it was intended.

Why is feedback so hard to give? One reason is because managers often don't really give feedback; they make judgments. Let's draw a distinction between judgment and feedback. Judgments include opinions or conclusions. Feedback is a presentation of the facts. Here are some other distinctions:

Judgment:

Opinion

Conclusions

Conceptual

Emotion-driven

Provided for the benefit of the giver

Intended to influence change

Feedback:

Factual

Evidence

Concrete

Free of emotional influence

Provided for the benefit of the receiver

Intended to influence growth

Often, when we intend to provide helpful feedback it is heard as if we are passing judgment. And, when a judgment is lobbed, resistance usually results. An essential principle of a Painless Performance Conversation is to recognize this important difference. Here are some examples:

Judgment: "You didn't prepare enough for that important presentation."

Feedback: “There were critical details and statistics that were not included in your presentation. For example...”

Judgment: “You are not carrying your weight in the office.”

Feedback: “You have completed three case files this week. Your peers are completing an average of six case files per week.”

Judgment: “You did a great job today! Nice work!”

Feedback: “Your ideas for solving the Jones complaint were innovative and effective. You gave the customer several options, all of which were appropriate given the situation.”

Judgment: “Many of your assignments are not getting done thoroughly.”

Feedback: “This month there were four projects that were not submitted by the deadline that we agreed upon.”

Feedback is the tool great managers use to encourage self-assessment and accountability. It takes some thought but the results are more meaningful to the employee and more productive for the manager. The last time you gave an employee feedback, was it really feedback or was it judgment?

#### About the author

Marnie E. Green is Principal Consultant of the Chandler, AZ-based Management Education Group, Inc. Green is a speaker, author, and consultant who helps organizations develop confident leaders. Contact Green at phone: 480-705-9394 email: [mgreen@managementeducationgroup.com](mailto:mgreen@managementeducationgroup.com) web site: <http://www.managementeducationgroup.com>.

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# 16 The Secret to Set SMART Goals by Joshua Uebergang

Setting SMART goals is key to being successful. If you want to learn what ‘SMART Goals’ are and what they can do for your life, read this article now.

“The reason most people never reach their goals is that they don’t define them, learn about them, or even seriously consider them as believable or achievable,” said motivational speaker and productivity expert Denis Waitley. “Winners can tell you where they are going, what they plan to do along the way, and who will be sharing the adventure with them.”



The advertisement features a black header with the CMO Inspired Conference logo on the left, which consists of a green speech bubble containing the letters 'CMO'. To the right of the logo, the text reads 'INSPIRED CONFERENCE' in large white letters, followed by '25 OCTOBER | DE VERE BEAUMONT ESTATE | OLD WINDSOR UK' in smaller white letters. Below the header is a photograph of a large, white, classical-style building with a fountain in the foreground. At the bottom of the advertisement is a collage of four images: a panel discussion on a stage, a woman speaking into a microphone, a large audience seated in a hall, and a man presenting at a podium. A green banner at the bottom of the collage contains the text 'Join Over 100 Chief Marketing Officers & Digital Innovators' in white.



## Get Personal

Managers cannot motivate employees on an ongoing basis, just like people or circumstances cannot keep you motivated. Research shows that when your goals are personal and mean something important to you, the following occurs:

1. Tasks are filtered through the goals. You do the activities aligned with your goals while you ignore irrelevant activities.
2. You work harder towards the end result. Effort becomes more effortless.
3. You use knowledge that otherwise goes unused to deal with difficulties.
4. Persistence is increased to endure challenges.

There are several techniques to set and achieve goals that complement each other so you can use multiple techniques to increase the likelihood of achieving your goal, but one goal-setting technique that has been effective for me is SMART goals. SMART is an acronym with minor variations:

**Specific.** As discussed earlier, a good goal is specific. Make a goal as specific as possible so expectations are developed, clarity is formed, and the path towards success is evident. A specific goal gives you excellent awareness and understanding of the requirements to achieve it. Develop an exact long-term goal, then break it down into goals for one year, one month, one week, and day-to-day activities.

**Measurable.** Another common problem discussed earlier is people do not set measurable goals. How can your progress be tracked so you achieve the goal in a set time period? Do your best to quantify your goal. Let's say your goal is to overcome shyness. Set a measurable goal where you aim to meet and briefly converse with 10 new people next week. The number "10" within 1 week makes this goal measurable and specific. This makes it easy for you to track your progress in becoming a socially confident person.

**Attainable.** An attainable goal is one that you have or can develop the necessary skills to achieve. You have no doubt heard the saying: "You can achieve anything you want if you set your mind to it." In other words, if you align your attitude, ability, thoughts, and emotions towards your goal, then it is attainable. An attainable goal is within your potential. A goal within your potential is key to setting SMART goals.

**Realistic.** A realistic goal is one you believe is reachable. It is related to "Attainable". An example of a realistic goal is one reached by someone. It is realistic if you have the time and chances to gather the resources to achieve it. (Do not underestimate your ability to gather required resources.) Realism will lead to belief, motivation, and action.

Tangible. Too often goals float around in our minds. Create as many tangible forms of your goal then witness this amazing affect as your goal manifests itself. Write your goals on paper to create tangibility. Hear, see, feel, taste, or smell your goal. Use your five senses to stir a powerful, inner desire to hunt down your goals. Your emotions will intensify with tangible goals. Also, track your progress not based on an uncertain feeling of development, but on tangible changes, this will make you self-motivated. Look for solid evidence that you are progressing towards your goals.

When you set a SMART goalComputer Technology Articles, you create a map for success. You give yourself a challenging yet achievable goal. Master SMART goal-setting and you will have the ultimate skill to get what you want.

#### About the author

More commonly known as the “Tower of Power”, Joshua is an inspiring communication skills coach, author, and speaker.

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# 17 I Just Wish They'd...Seven Keys to Helping Mediocre Performers by Kevin Eikenberry

When it comes to employees turning “mediocre” into “magnificent” could be as simple as changing your attitude about their capabilities and/or commitment.

Why can't people just get their job done?

Why is it so hard?

Why are some people so difficult?

Do any of these sound familiar? Most of us have asked these questions (or similar ones) many times.

Regardless of our role – as a leader or a team member – we've all worked with people whose performance is...well...less than we wish it would be. These people are not real performance problems, but they don't perform like stars either. They always seem to do just enough to get by – they never stand out positively or negatively. Yet, on the whole, the performance is definitely less than is desirable.

I believe there are at least seven keys to helping these team members change their performance.

## The Seven Keys

1. The right attitude. First things first. If you are thinking about someone as “a slacker” or as someone who is not really pulling his or her weight or just generally not being a great performer, then how likely are you to really see chances for them to improve? Too often our attitude about someone spirals downward leaving us no mental way to see the other keys you are about to read. We have to remember – and believe – there is a difference between the person and the performance. Keep your focus on people's performance. It is fine to label performance as less than valuable, but when we label people that way we leave ourselves little mental space to help them.
2. The right role. Have you ever had someone try to change you? How much did you resist those efforts? Ultimately, how successful were they? When you remember these experiences you'll quickly learn that to help others change their performance we have to keep our role clear. Whether we are a supervisor or a peer, our role needs to be one of helping and assisting, not pushing or demanding. This mindset from the start is critical.

3. The right work. Sometimes people aren't performing at their best because they aren't doing the work that is best suited for them. Sure, people were hired to do a specific job, but we can help them craft their job to focus on things they are naturally better at – or find other ways to give them chances to utilize their talents more effectively. As a fellow team member that may look like shifting responsibilities around a bit. As a supervisor, a more drastic measure might be placing someone in a new job with responsibilities that better match their talents.
4. The right purpose. We all are motivated by doing things that we see have a greater purpose. Too often people are given tasks or a job but they can't see the value or purpose in their work. Help people see a bigger picture of how their work fits into the overall picture, and you might be surprised at the change in their performance.
5. The right expectations. People tend to rise and fall to the level of our expectations – and these aren't just the things we say, but also the things we believe. Reflect on your beliefs about this person's performance and what you think is possible for them. Once you raise your expectations and sights, theirs may begin to shift upward as well.
6. The right support. Have you ever been given a task without a lot of training or support? Have you ever wished you would have gotten that support? Guess what? Sometimes people are performing to the level of their understanding and skills. Once you put some of these other keys in place, help people think about what additional skills or help they need. It might be a small insight or one new skill that makes all the difference in the world.
7. The right passion. That's right, passion. We can't give people a passion for their work, but when we apply the other six keys and help people in those ways don't be surprised if their passion has been ignited (or re-ignited) for their work. Maybe a full-fledged flame won't ensue. But considering where this person's performance started, wouldn't you be pleased with a flickering flame?

### One More Thing

All of these keys are things that you can do. You can't change a person's performance by brute strength or force of will. But you can, regardless of your position, find ways to help the person improve performance on their own.

In the end then, the biggest key is to recognize what we can do to help and provide that help. We'll be happier and more productive, and chances are so will the other person.

#### About the author

Kevin Eikenberry is a leadership expert and the Chief Potential Officer of The Kevin Eikenberry Group (KevinEikenberry.com), a learning consulting company. To receive a free Special Report on leadership that includes resources, ideas, and advice go to [kevineikenberry.com/leadership.asp](http://kevineikenberry.com/leadership.asp) or call us at (317) 387-1424 or 888.LEARNER.

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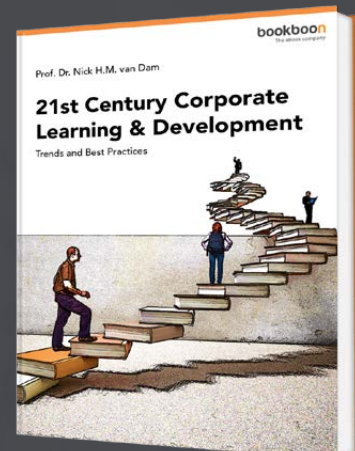
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# 18 Reduce Your Stress Before Giving Performance Evaluations by Angela Huffmon

Most managers find giving performance evaluations as a stressful responsibility. However, they can reduce that stress by taking notes of their employees' performance all year round. This process doesn't have to be a stressful task.

The time of the year for performance evaluations is stressful for employees and managers alike. For most managers, stress is a result of not being prepared for these individual meetings. In addition, most managers forget to anticipate the possible reactions from employees who will receive less than glowing reviews. The best way to reduce your stress is to be well prepared before you meet with your staff.

Before you meet with your employees

1. The first step you need to do is take each employee's knowledge of their job, their ability to communicate and their initiative as an employee under consideration. In addition, consider how well they follow directives, and their adherence to accuracy and policy procedures. Think also about their attitude on the job and make your notes on each of these characteristics.
2. Make a note of their strengths, as well as, their opportunities of improvement. Give specific examples of what they did right during the past year. This will let them know what they should continue doing. When referring to their areas of improvement, explain the problems, but also give details of how they can do better. Suggest courses they can take, or perhaps allow them to shadow another employee.
3. Anticipate any possible reaction your employee may have as result of hearing of a poor evaluation. Take precautions to make sure everyone in the office is safe.
4. While writing your evaluations, try not to let any personal friendships with your employees cloud your judgment. Make sure your evaluation is based solely on their work performance.
5. Have your employees complete a self-evaluation. This will help you see where the two of you differ in opinion. It may also help you remember some additional achievements the employee had during the year.

### During the meeting with your employees

1. Meet each employee in a private office or conference room. It's important to have all conversations regarding job performance in a private location. This includes verbal warnings that occur during the year.
2. Don't blind-sight your employee with a poor performance evaluation when you haven't already spoken to them about their areas of improvement prior to the meeting. Blind-sighting the employee will only serve to demoralize him or her. You will not receive a positive response from your employee and it may cause the opposite result you want.
3. Be conscience of your demeanor during the meeting. You don't want to be too kind to the employee by sugar coating or glossing over areas where he or she may be falling short. This will lose the effectiveness of the performance evaluation. Also, you don't want to be overly harsh either. When you are too direct your comments will not be received and once again the meeting will have little effect.
4. Use the performance evaluation as an opportunity to discover if your employees desire to promote within the organization. Eliminate some of your company's turnover by encouraging your employees to seek promotional opportunities. Give them suggestions for additional training or individuals they should get to know to grow within the company.
5. Set goals and progress dates to review improvement in performance. This should be the last thing you do before ending the meeting.

### After the meeting

Get started preparing for next year's evaluations. Waiting until the last minute to prepare for performance evaluations is what adds to manager stress. Taking copious notes throughout the year on each of your employees on where they succeed and where they need to improve will help you next year. Most of the time managers try to rely on their memory when completing performance paperwork. By taking notes throughout the year, you can draw directly from your thoughts at the time. This responsibility will be much easier next time.

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#### About the author

Angela Huffmon is a professional speaker, writer, and corporate trainer. She speaks to groups of managers and employees helping them to improve their business relationships. Angela helps corporate executives, and managers solve their 3 biggest problems: 1) employee retention, 2) productivity, and 3) manager employee communication.

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# 19 The Power of 360 Degree Feedback by Duncan Brodie

Many organisations have set up appraisals systems. Those that are most effective include 360 degree feedback. So what is 360 degree feedback and how can you start to put it in place?

## 360 Degree Feedback

The basic concept behind 360 feedback is getting views from those that manage you, those in your peer group and those that you manage. The idea is to get a rounded picture of your performance from a number of different sources in order to build up a picture of your strengths and development needs. In a well-designed 360 feedback process you will also complete your own self-assessment.

When you are first faced with the possibility of 360 feedback it can be daunting. The reality is very different. You discover:

1. Qualities that you never even noticed in yourself
2. People are delighted to have the opportunity to contribute to your growth
3. You are often your biggest critic and people think much more highly of you than you do
4. Where greatest benefit will be derived from your personal development activities as you will know where to focus your attention
5. You have many more strengths than you have development needs

## Setting up 360 Feedback

There are a range of options open to you and one consideration will be financial. At the most basic level, you can send out an e-mail to people. Another alternative is to use software if there is a system in your company. There are also options to use technology even if your company does not have its own computer package. A Google search will identify some options.

In terms of those that you ask for feedback:

1. Aim for about 10–15 people
2. Have a range of managers, peers and subordinates
3. Choose some people who you anticipate will give you a high rating
4. Choose some people who you will anticipate will give you a low rating
5. Choose some people who you are unclear as to how they will rate you

When carrying out your own self-assessment:

1. Don't forget to recognise your strengths
2. Be honest with yourself
3. See weaknesses as an opportunity for development

Go on give it a try and see the power of 360 degree feedback for yourself.

About the author

Duncan Brodie helps individuals and organisations to reach their true potential. Sign up today for his free e-course and monthly newsletter at <http://www.goalsandachievements.co.uk>

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# 20 5 Ways to Motivate a High-Performing Employee

## by R J Sullivan

High-performing employees are motivated in different ways than the average employee. They need a clear vision of where their careers are going and welcome more responsibility and expect more from their employers than many of their counterparts. Learn how to motivate and keep these excellent employees.

You probably have an employee in your work group that is highly focused and productive and has risen above the rest of the group in terms of value. If you do, this type of success-driven individual has specific things that motivate them and you should endeavor to meet these needs.

### More Responsibility

Yes, while many people are looking for ways to do less work, the high performing employee thrives on having more responsibility. They are looking for ways to challenge themselves and distinguish themselves in the workplace. They are upwardly mobile and want to prove their worth to the company. In addition, success-driven people get bored with a lack of responsibility and boredom leads to de-motivation.

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### Career Path

The high-performing employee has probably set her sights on being a manager and moving up the corporate ladder. They need to know that the career path they have envisioned is possible in your company. Discuss the dynamics of the company and what is needed for a promotion. They will be much more motivated when they know their goals are within reach.

### Mentoring

You are a manager and thus you are the perfect candidate to be their mentor. Having a mentor who has attained what they have envisioned will be highly motivating for them. They have a thirst for knowledge and are driven to put that knowledge to work in their careers.

### Recognition

Most everyone loves recognition but most likely your success-driven employee sees it as validation for all their hard work and they thrive on it. They have probably been successful in other aspects of their lives and received recognition, so they have come to expect it as a reward for hard work. Giving it to them is a necessity because if you're not, they could feel undervalued and they could leave and the last thing you want is another company giving them the recognition.

### Training

The high-performing employee wants to be an expert in their job. They want to be trained so that they are producing at the highest level possible. Give them that chance by offering training whenever possible. Even if it means losing them for a couple of days at a seminar or conference, it will pay huge dividends in the end.

They are focused, production and efficient and you can afford to lose them. Take the time to give them more responsibility, a career path, training, mentoring and recognition. Motivating a high-performing employee is imperative.

About the author

RJ Sullivan is the VP of Creative Content for TrainingABC. A corporate and safety training video and DVD distributor.

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# 21 Performance Management Gone Haywire by Megan Tough

What has happened with Performance Management? Has it gone haywire? See if there are things that could change to make it work in a more positive process.

When you ask employees about their impressions of Performance Management processes, the answer is invariably negative or neutral. It's not often that the process is positively endorsed by those who use it. So where are we going wrong?

As managers, we know we need a management system of some kind for all the components of performance:

- getting people to work on things that will help the business achieve its goals
- identifying and overcoming obstacles that might prevent success
- understand and checking our progress regularly
- giving people a forum for talking about what they are doing and how it's going
- providing the appropriate checks and balances
- recognising and rewarding performance

I believe there are 5 fundamental reasons why Performance Management is not viewed positively.

1. Reviewers don't have the skills or confidence to give feedback appropriately

Giving feedback constructively is a learned skill. Unfortunately for their team members, many managers haven't had any training or support in learning this critical skill. So when it comes to review time, feedback is either:

- 1) blunt and delivered with no thought for the impact or consequence,
- 2) not provided at all because the manager wants to avoid disagreement or conflict, or
- 3) is given in such a wishy washy way that the reviewee actually misses the fact they are being given feedback!

This is one of the most critical capabilities a manager can have, with far-reaching positive or negative consequences. Providing ongoing coaching and support should be part of the approach to managing performance.

2. Employees don't see Performance Management (PM) as a 2 way street

Is PM something that is 'done' to employees, or is it jointly owned with equal responsibility between the reviewer and the reviewee?

Imagine a review session where the employee turns up having evaluated their own performance, provided examples of how and when they achieved each objective, had references from other people about their attitude and behaviour, and already had drafted some challenges they wanted to work on in the next 12 months. When ownership for the process lies with the employee, this is the result.

Getting to this stage takes time. The business needs to consistently communicate expectations and help the manager's adapt to the new positioning. Instead of PM being viewed a bureaucratic process over which they have no control, employees own their own performance and contribute equally to the discussion about performance levels and results achieved.

3. The annual review is the prime focus

If PM consists only of an annual or bi-annual review, the business is really missing the point. Reviews are useful checkpoints, but PM occurs 365 days a year. When review time comes around there should be no surprises. And I mean none. If there is, the manager is not doing their job effectively. Any performance issues, or comments about achievement, need to be given as they arise, not saved up for discussion 3 months later in a review.

On this basis, the review becomes more of a confirmation of what each party already knows. This shouldn't take long to go through, leaving plenty of time to discuss development needs and new opportunities (see next point).

4. Not enough attention is given to the future

In many cases the entire review is spent dissecting the previous 12 months. Objectives and goals do need to be evaluated and measured – don't get me wrong – but the real value of a review lies in the discussion about the future.

What skills will the employee need to develop to become even more effective in their job? What work-related challenges can they get involved in that will grow them beyond where they are today? How can the business utilize their strengths in other areas? What goals do they want to set themselves over the next 12 months? How can the manager help them achieve these things?

It's this focus on future development and opportunities that energizes people, makes them feel valued and keeps them engaged with the business.

In an ideal world, reviewing past performance and discussing future skills and opportunities will take equal time in a review.

5. There is no follow-up

This is the credibility killer. All throughout the performance year, managers will make commitments to take actions and follow-up. If this doesn't happen, the whole process loses integrity. Once employees experience this firsthand, it's a long road back.

Commitments must be upheld, and managers and employees equally need to be accountable for their part in this.

Getting employees to think about Performance Management as a positive process that adds value is the goal. This only happens when the managers have the right skills, the business adopts an ongoing approach that consists of much more than annual reviews, when commitments are made and kept, and when employees own the process equally with managers.

About the author

Megan Tough is director of complete potential, a leadership and HR consultancy based in Sydney, Australia. At complete potential we understand people – what engages them, what encourages them to perform, and what drives them away. With over 20 years' experience working on HR issues in business, our job is to help you make the most of your investment in people. To learn more visit [www.completepotential.com](http://www.completepotential.com)

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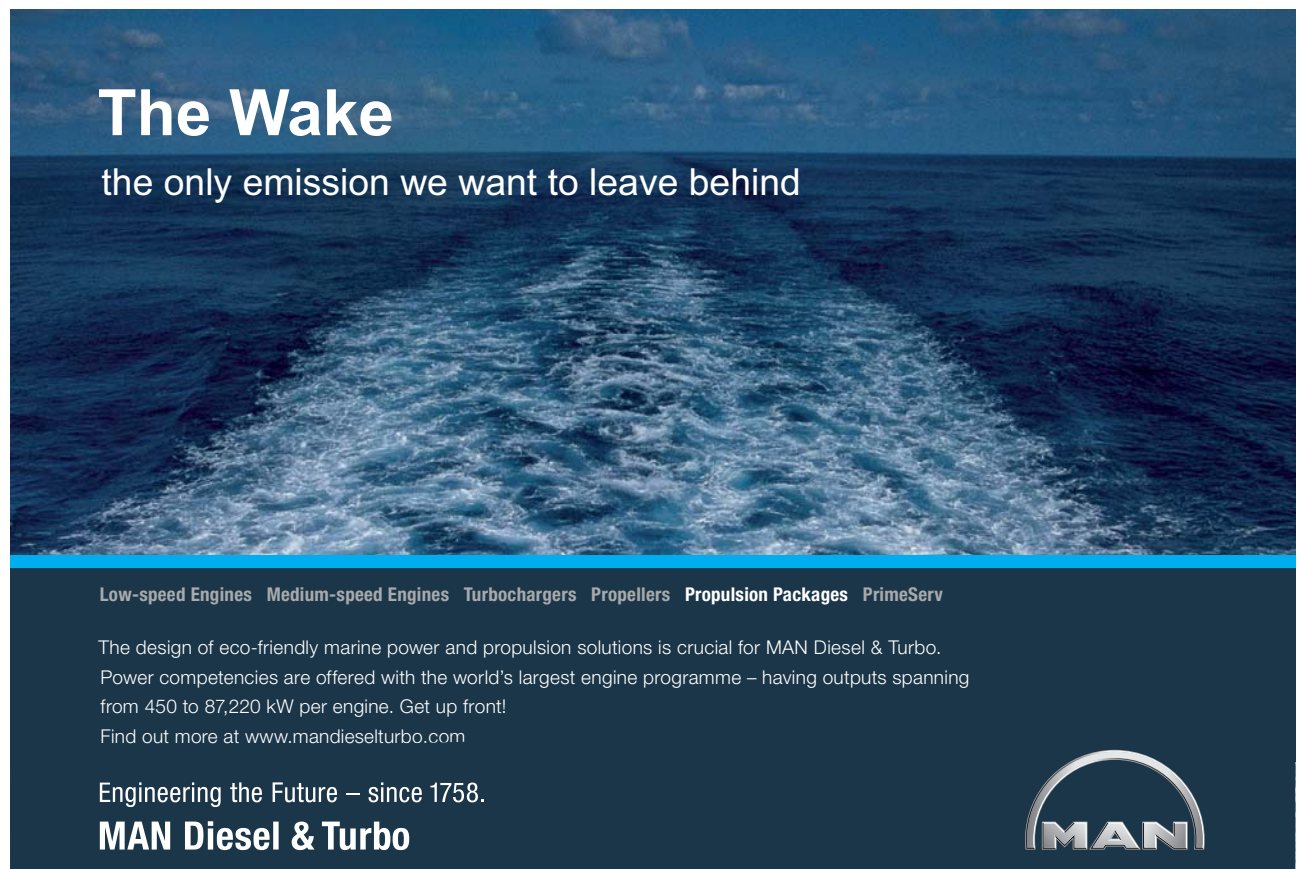
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## 22 Staffing Shortages? Maybe You're the Problem by Jeff Mowatt

When I speak at conferences about customer service strategies, I often hear managers discuss how hard it is to recruit and retain good frontline employees. Too many managers mistakenly assume the only way to keep people is to bite the bullet and pay more in salaries, benefits and perks. Unfortunately, those managers are often 'fixing' the wrong problem. Marcus Buckingham of the Gallop organization reported that the number one reason employees quit was their personal feelings about their immediate supervisor. Ask yourself if it's time your company took measures to fix the real problem when it comes to staff turnover – managers and supervisors are not equipped with the necessary skills to make their team members feel valued.




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Before you roll your eyes and figure, “Yah, Yah, we do all that touchy-feely pat-on-the-back stuff,” let me ask you: When was the last time you or your management team received current professional training on staff recognition? The old days of you're doing a good job comments and employee-of-the-month programs don't work anymore. Frankly, they make matters worse. Next time you are celebrating the successes of your employees, keep in mind these three keys that make employee recognition easier, more consistent, and more powerful.

1. Be specific

Telling an employee, “You're doing a good job,” doesn't accomplish much. In fact, it may even result in the employee feeling they're doing so well that they can coast – exactly the opposite effect the manager had when making the comment. To truly motivate others, a compliment needs to be specific; the more precise the better. For example, rather than saying, “You're doing a good job,” the savvy manager says, “You did a great job in handling that upset customer. You listened without interrupting, you expressed empathy, apologized on behalf of the company, and you not only replaced the item but compensated them for their inconvenience. Well done!” The employee knows exactly what behaviours get rewarded. And more importantly, they're more likely to repeat them. Make your compliments specific and you not only generate good feelings, you also create a behaviour shift.

2. Catch them in the act

Years ago I did a series of management and frontline training seminars for retail store employees in Halifax. While in town I worked-out at a local gym and in its childcare area there was a sign reminding daycare supervisors to “Catch them doing something good!” That's good advice for managers as well.

The impact of giving employees praise once a year during a formal job review is minimal. If we don't express our appreciation until a formal performance review, that means for several months high performers may be doing extra work and getting the feeling that no one has noticed or cared. By the time we get around to recognizing them, it may be too late – they've already become demoralized or started looking at opportunities elsewhere. As the sign said, we need to catch them doing something good. Recognition needs to be immediate.

### 3. Tailor it to the person

Of course, it's easy to think of ways to reward your star performers: promotions, greater responsibility, perks, etc. The challenge is that when we recognize only the stars we can actually serve to demoralize others who aren't endowed with the same talents. By definition, star performers love challenge. It makes perfect sense to reward them with more responsibility. On the other hand, consider marginal performers who barely manage to show-up. For instance, if we notice that our underperformer, Biff finally starts improving, it does not necessarily mean we should give him the same recognition that we give our star. If you offer Biff more responsibility his first reaction might be, "How much more are you going to pay me?" On the other hand when we notice that his performance has been improving we might say, "Biff I notice that since we had that conversation three weeks ago about the importance of being on time, you are consistently five minutes early for everything. Normally, your shift ends at 4:30, but why don't take the rest of the afternoon off right now. Good job!" Now Biff's delighted.

The lesson is that we can't always hold employees to the same standard when it comes to recognizing performance. No two employees are exactly alike. If we want to motivate the folks who are struggling we need to help them create some wins that are achievable for them. That's one of several reasons employee-of-the-month programs – that measure everyone by the same standard – often backfire. Recognition needs to be tailored to the individual.

#### Bottom line benefit

The demographers are predicting that staffing shortages are only going to worsen in the coming years. With that dismal outlook, perhaps it's time companies did some upgrading on their leaderships team's supervisory skills. One thing is certain – to reduce staff turnover it's less costly to pay a well-thought, well-timed compliment, than to simply pay higher wages.

#### About the author

Customer service strategist and professional speaker, Jeff Mowatt is an authority on The Art of Client Service ... Influence with Ease®. For Jeff's other tips, self-study resources, and training services on establishing rapport, click <http://www.jeffmowatt.com/individual/greetingcustomers.html>

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## 23 In Some Workplaces, Criticism is Common... Praise Isn't by Nelson Scott

You may have seen the commercial. It begins with people hurrying about in a typical office. The camera shifts its focus to an open office door.

A voice booms from within: "Hey...who shipped the 200 cartons to our client in Boston?"

Immediately, all activity in the outer office stops. Employees scurry away, doing their best to disappear into the background. A frightened and confused young man stands alone. A gruff-looking, older man who obviously occupies a position of authority, steps from his office.

He points at the young man standing before him. "Was it you, Lewis?"

"I shipped them with FedEx," he admits hesitantly.

The advertisement features a circular logo on the left with three stylized human figures in the center, surrounded by gears and four arrows pointing clockwise. To the right of the logo, the text reads: **UNLEASHING CHANGE MANAGEMENT** in large, bold, blue letters. Below this, it says **OCTOBER 18 & 19, 2018** and **DE RODE HOED AMSTERDAM**. At the bottom, there is a silhouette of an Amsterdam skyline including a windmill and a bridge. In the bottom left corner, the text 'Global Executive Events' is visible. A hand cursor icon is positioned over a green oval at the bottom right of the ad, which contains the text 'Click on the ad to read more'.

With his demeanor unchanged, the manager continues. "Lewis, you are a heck of a man doing a heck of a job!" That said, he turns and returns to his office, leaving a dazed Lewis uncertain about what just happened. Behind him, co-workers emerge from their hiding places, safe in the knowledge that the manager has retreated to his lair.

This commercial is effective because so many viewers can relate to what Lewis and his co-workers experience. Managers appear only when it is time to criticize. In this kind of workplace, positive feedback and recognition are unknown.

The manager wanted to praise Lewis for doing his job well, but failed to do so effectively. Seeing the manager headed his way, Lewis anticipated criticism for selecting the wrong shipping company. Even after hearing what the manager said, Lewis remained confused. Had he really chosen the right courier company? Was the boss pleased with his choice?

It seems clear that praise was appropriate in this situation. Lewis had made the right choice of shipping companies. What he did was relevant to the company meetings its goals. But did Lewis understand this? Did his co-workers?

When recognition is done well, it specifically identifies what the recipient has done well. It also reminds co-workers what behaviours are valued by the organization and relevant to its success. In an organization where praise is more common, co-workers would not have gone into hiding when the manager appeared. They would have stayed and heard him describe what Lewis had done and why it was important.

About the author

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A professional trainer, speaker, and consultant since 1995, Nelson Scott works with organizations that are committed to making the right hiring decisions, developing and retaining productive staff, and strengthening relationships with customers. Learn more by visiting [www.seaconsultingonline.com](http://www.seaconsultingonline.com) or e-mailing [nmscott@telus.net](mailto:nmscott@telus.net).

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# 24 Play to Your Strengths by Astrid Baumgardner

Our culture is rampant with negativity. From report cards to annual reviews at work to billboard advertising, we tend to hear what's wrong with us, where we are weak and what we need to do in order to improve. Wouldn't it be nice to live in a society where everyone's talents were recognized, validated, encouraged and admired? That's why strengths are such a positive factor in creating success: they tell you what is right with you. Strengths are the tendencies and skills at which you naturally excel. Strengths can be developed, deepened and even resuscitated after lying dormant for many years.

My message to clients is to play to your strengths. It is one of the keys to creating success in your life.

In my experience, you are more likely to reach your goals and be a success if you are doing things that you are good at. You can read about my own experience playing to strengths in my piano life where my choice of repertoire can make the difference between extreme frustration and total self-mastery! It's much easier to play to your strengths rather than compensate for weaknesses. The more you develop your natural talents, the stronger they become. And, the more you use your strengths, the less of a struggle life becomes.

## Find Your Strengths

The first step in working with strengths is to identify them. There are a number of good strengths assessments that are easily accessible. One is the StrengthsFinder 2.0 based on research by the Gallup Organization. This assessment measures your strengths as you have applied them. Another is the VIA Character Strengths Profile which measures character and values. It stands for "Values In Action". Since each assessment measures slightly different aspects of your talents, it is enlightening to take both of them.

## Use Your Strengths

Once you know your strengths, consider how well you are living your strengths. Often, people who experience a lack of fulfillment in their lives may not be using their strengths enough.

One of my clients, for example, loves to take things from good to great (this is the “Maximizer” strength in StrengthsFinder 2.0). For example, she was excited when she was asked to take on a project at work that had the potential for improving the overall level of performance at her organization. She became frustrated because she perceived that her co-workers were satisfied with the status quo and unwilling to take the project seriously. Her first step was to use her “Empathy” strength to figure out what would motivate her co-workers. Putting these two strengths together helped her to inspire her co-workers to sign onto the project so that they could all work together to take the organization from good to great. She is feeling a lot better about her job these days now that she can put her strengths to work!

Another helpful strategy is to apply a strength in all areas of your life, not simply to your career. One of my other clients has a top strength of achievement, which has motivated him to achieve remarkable results in his composing career. Yet he felt that his personal life was lacking. We figured out that he could apply his achievement strength to his relationships and to creating more free time, leading him to set goals around meeting new people, expanding his network and carving out time for fun. And because he is so good at accomplishing his goals, in no time he was achieving in these other areas and feeling much better about the quality of his life.

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## Embrace Your Strengths

Your strengths are your inherent talents and your potential for excellence. They are your natural way of doing things easily. So embrace those strengths and don't fight them!

For example, one of my clients is frustrated that he has not figured out his career path yet. He is someone with the Input strength: collecting and storing information and then making the "aha" connections when you have amassed enough information to make the right decisions. Recognizing his input strength made him realize that it takes time to gather this information. As a result, he relishes the notion that his life right now is a series of experiments where he is taking in the information that will enable him to make the right choices.

Since input is one of my strengths as well, I have learned how to embrace this strength and tie all the different strands of learning in my life to my own career as a coach and teacher.

What are your strengths? How are you using them? Once you begin to play to your strengths, I bet you will find that things will come much more easily to you. And if you do not have opportunities to use your strengths, see what you can do to change that up.

### About the author

Astrid Baumgardner, JD, PCC is a professional life coach and lawyer, Coordinator of Career Strategies and Lecturer at the Yale School of Music and the founder and President of Astrid Baumgardner Coaching + Training, which is dedicated to helping musicians, lawyers and creative professionals take charge of their lives and experience authentic success. In addition to her work at YSM and her individual coaching practice, Astrid presents workshops at leading conservatories and law firms on topics including Career Planning, Goal-Setting, Time Management, Dynamic Communication, Conflict Management and Personal Branding and Networking. She is the author of numerous articles on the various aspects of how to achieve and live authentic success.

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# 25 Quiet Heroes by Alan Arthur

It's likely that most of the time that you spend on managing your team is spent with problem people such as the persistent late-comer, the low performer, and the troublemaker. If so, then you're in danger of neglecting an important group in your team: the quiet heroes. Quiet heroes are those who get on with the work even when there's nobody around. They value discretion, confidentiality, and not making a fuss and they are often the ones who make all the difference to the performance of your team. Not noticing them runs the risk that, at some point, you may lose them, either because they move on to a more appreciative manager or because the more appreciative manager sees they're like gold-dust and poaches them from you. That's why, in managing your team, you need to find, reward, and keep your quiet heroes.

## Quiet Heroes: A Discrete Word in the Ear

In "Business as a Game", Albert Carr relates one way in which a chief executive discovered one of the quiet heroes on his team.

"I sent out a memo to all 12 of my immediate team about our stock participation plan only for my secretary Martha to inform me an hour later that she had made a printing error in the memo. Rather than showing a figure of £100,000, she'd missed out a nought and typed £10,000 instead.

I was about to send out a correction when one of the team came to see me on another matter and didn't even mention the error even though he had received the note. That gave me an idea. I decided to leave it for a while and see what happened.

Well, you know, only 3 people did anything about the memo. One wrote a rude reply criticising Martha. One sent me a formal note making a big deal of it and how the error could lead to a big loss on the books. And the other was the chap who had found an excuse to come to me on another matter and had quietly had a word in Martha's ear. By the way, that chap's now my personal assistant."

## Finding the Quiet Heroes on Your Team

Because they are quiet, it's not always easy to spot the quiet heroes on your team. But you can do it by answering the following questions:

Who is rarely if ever absent?

Who never says "No"?

Who enjoys pressure?

Who delivers on time?

Who takes up the slack?

Who doesn't pester for help?

Who is so unassuming you forget they're there?

Who quietly lends others a hand?

Who smoothes conflicts and builds morale?

Who carries on even when the boss is not around?

Who shuns the limelight?

Who never takes the credit?

Who goes the extra mile without making a fuss?

And then, once you know who they are, go out of your way to let them know how valuable they are in managing your team.

### About the author

Alan Arthur is an article contributor to ManageTrainLearn, the site that will change the way you learn forever. Download free samples of the biggest range of management and personal development materials anywhere and experience learning like you always dreamed possible; <http://www.managetrainlearn.com>

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## 26 Good Compliments by Steve Goodier

A man walked into a bar, sat at the counter and ordered a beer. As he sipped the brew, he heard a soothing voice say, “Nice tie.” He looked around but nobody was there. The place was empty save for himself and the bartender, washing glasses at the far end of the counter. A few moments later he heard the disembodied voice again: “Beautiful shirt.” A little shaken, the man called the bartender over.

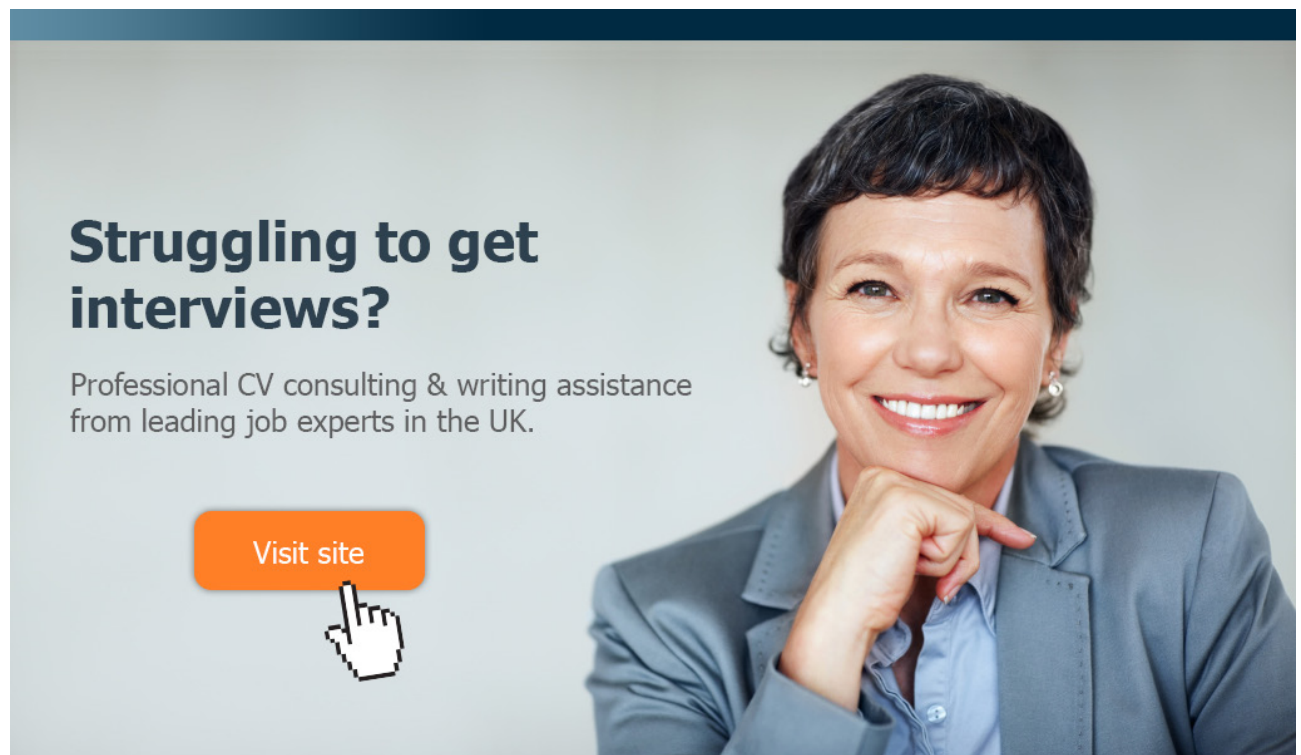
“Hey, I must be losing my mind,” he said. “I keep hearing these voices saying nice things, and there’s not a soul in here but us.”

“It’s the peanuts,” answered the bartender.

“Say what?” replied the man in disbelief.

“You heard me,” said the barkeep. “It’s the peanuts...they’re complimentary.”

(Hmm. I should probably apologize for that. But let’s talk about compliments.)



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Fulton Sheen once said, “Baloney is flattery laid on so thick it cannot be true, and blarney is flattery so thin we love it.” I’m not talking about baloney or blarney, but rather about sincere compliments and power they can have.

Eleanor Roosevelt never remembered being complimented by her mother. Anna was deeply disappointed in her daughter’s looks and demeanor. She often called young Eleanor “Granny.” To visitors, she would say, “She is such a funny child, so old-fashioned that we always call her Granny.”

“I wanted to sink through the floor in shame,” an older and wiser Eleanor later recalled.

In a similarly harsh vein, Anna sometimes admonished her young daughter, “You have no looks, so see to it that you have manners.” Yet through it all, Eleanor forever wanted her mother’s approval. But it wasn’t to be, for Anna died at the age of 29, when her daughter was only eight.

What could it have been like for little Eleanor if her mother shamed less and complimented more? Sincere compliments and acts of appreciation have the power to transform. We often remember them for years and they have a proven way of influencing future behavior.

Using compliments wisely was one of the secrets of the phenomenal success of Mary Kay Ash (of Mary Kay Cosmetics). “Everyone wants to be appreciated,” she often said, “so if you appreciate someone, don’t keep it a secret.” Likewise, Mark Twain famously said, “I can live for two months on a good compliment.” That probably goes for most of us.

What’s a GOOD compliment? It’s one that is both sincere and timely. Insincere flattery is false. It patronizes at best. But a sincere compliment is a heart-felt expression of appreciation. And when said in the right way at the right time, it has the power to call forth something beautiful in another.

One man changed his life by learning how to offer a simple compliment. “I never let a day go by without giving at least three people a compliment,” he says. He challenges others to give it a try. Since adopting this exercise, he says he has discovered an extraordinary response from other people. He adds that he is experiencing a growing appreciation for the various people in his life.

I have begun practicing the exercise myself. I am discovering that few things can so quickly change a relationship as the right word said at the right time. And what’s more, surprising someone with a compliment can be a fun thing to do.

Besides – you can’t always depend on the peanuts to be complimentary.

### About the author

Steve Goodier holds a B.A. in anthropology and sociology (New Mexico State University) and an M.Div. degree from Emory University. He is an ordained United Methodist minister, district superintendent in the Rocky Mountain Conference UMC, and the author of numerous books about personal development, motivation, inspiration, and making needed life changes.

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