

Making OD Impact Operations

By Dr. Scott Simmerman, Performance Management Company

Training must be connected to results. There is no way around this and it has always been the case. But sometimes we drift off course and do such things as personality surveys or even fire-walking that are interesting, fun or memorable but not really very useful in the Big Picture of hitting the numbers and desired outcomes. Results need to be the main focus (assuming that we are measuring the right things, of course!).

How do we align organizational performance effectively to training in order to impact individual behavior? How do we focus on the critical aspects of performance and people? Here are some ideas.

Companies get “average performance” from all their people. This is a simple statistical fact, not rocket science, and most managers are aware of the reality that some people do better than this norm and some do worse. A 2009 Blanchard Companies Survey polled business leaders on which practices are most viable for them in this challenging economy:

- Develop high performers 88%
- Weed out low performers 77%

We improve average performance by maintaining or increasing the results of the average and above performers and / or by increasing performance of those below average. How? This Blanchard survey showed that some of the main management challenges or solutions were seen as:

- Managing Change 59%
- Creating an engaged workforce 57%
- Developing potential leaders 50%
- Communicating the mission, vision and values 35%
- Aligning the culture with strategy 33%
- Increasing innovation 31%

Creating an engaged workforce has steadily increased in importance since 2003 from 43% to its current second place rating at 57%. It's clearer and clearer that involving and engaging people in workplace issues and opportunities makes good business sense.

So, how does the management team deal effectively with this? Here is a simple and robust answer: **teams and teamwork.**

Teams directly help in accomplishing change initiatives and generating alignment by engaging people to improve. But there are also some paradoxes in that teams need leaders and missions and congruent goals to succeed. Individuals will often resist change simply because they are comfortable with how things are right now, simply continuing to do what they have continued to do. Often, managers assume that they are resisting change; when, actually, they are just making choices as to what to do. And people will commonly resist changes that are being pushed on them.

This should help: For 20 years, I have been using an effective but very simple Change Model, comprised of four factors,

- The current level of discomfort with the way things are now
- The attractiveness of the vision of the future
- The individual or groups' previous success with change
- The peer support for making a change occur

By increasing any or all of these factors, we make change more likely. And we can address all of these with teams focused on workplace improvement. A small group of individuals, challenged with an achievable mission / goal will set mutual expectations and help each other succeed.

My flagship product is a team building exercise called, "*The Search for The Lost Dutchman's Gold Mine.*" Tables of players are given information and resources and challenged to, "*Mine as much Gold as we can.*" Used worldwide since 1993, it is always successful in getting any number of tables of 5 to 6 people totally engaged and working together. It's been run thousands of times and is truly bombproof. Players work together to manage limited resources and complex information to plan and to succeed.

And while games are fun, the key lies in debriefing to get people focused on **choice**. What choices are people making and what could they choose to do differently upon returning to the workplace? What engaged them and the tabletop team, what kinds of challenges should your management present to you, and what kinds of resources will you need to work together and generate more successes? These are the desired outcomes of any good teambuilding exercise. (*Dutchman also focuses on inter-team collaboration.*)

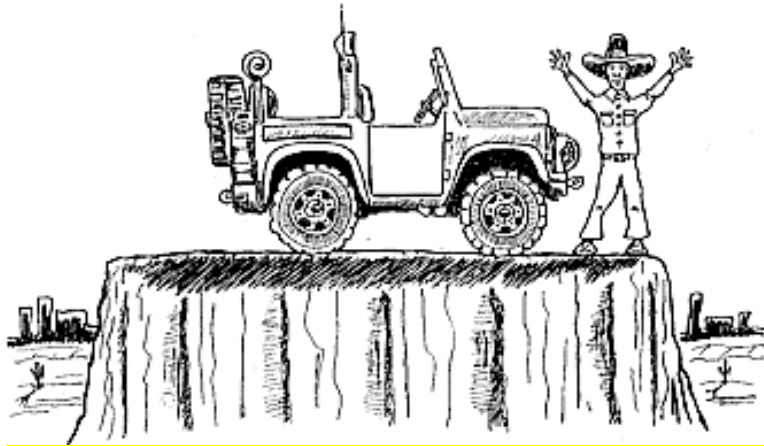
Individuals will respond to challenges if they have time and resources and if the vision of the potential accomplishment is congruent with the goals. People will push each other within a team if the goal is group success. And

most people do want to make improvements in their workplace, becoming more efficient or more effective in how they perform. But they often do not see managers interested in implementing change or even listening to ideas.

When working in teams, top performers will inevitably share strategies and tactics with others and will help push and pull the group forward. People can choose from only among those alternatives of which they are aware and involvement and teamwork with others helps broaden those choices. Thus, low performers will then make better choices.

Of course, not everyone responds well in a team and some people just do not care enough to bother. Those are two separate issues. Some good performers simply do not like working in teams, which is okay. But others plainly choose not to perform -- deal with them and find them employment with another company, which often improves morale, overall. A few people are incapable of improving their performance and they also need alternative employment, preferably within your organization, since they are trying. No one is truly happy performing poorly.

Most of us enjoy working in teams, accomplishing results and improving our performance. Most of us want to succeed. Let teams and teamwork help!



Lastly, you might want to remember this key learning point:

“Nobody ever washes a rental car.”

Enlist and involve and engage to generate commitment!

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