

The High Performance Work Force

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People can make a difference in the profitability and success of an organization. This is the conclusion reached in two recent books I have read – Peak Performance by Jon Katzenbach and Hidden Value by Charles A. O’Reilly and Jeffrey Pfeffer.

Katzenbach characterizes a high performance workforce as follows:

1. A large number (more than a third) of employees consistently exceed the expectations of their leaders and customers.
2. The average worker performs better than the average competitor worker.
3. A strong emotional commitment to higher standards and aspirations is reflected across the workforce.
4. The collective performance of the workforce is a competitive advantage and is extremely difficult to copy.

What then, is the secret to developing a high performance workforce? The answer is simple – **leadership.**

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Effective Communication

As we think about our everyday life we find most problems occur because we have failed to communicate clearly with someone. If we take a moment to think about why, in almost every case, we find that someone did not listen to what was said. This holds true in sales as well as in our personal lives.

If we are to have effective communication with each person we talk with we must “tune the world out and the person in.” This action allows us to build **rapport** and **trust** much quicker with the person, to whom we are talking. The more trust between you and them, the more openly they will share information. The rapport and trust you have will only increase if you follow this simple action guide each time you communicate with people.

The following are 10 do’s and 10 don’ts that will improve your listening skills and overall communication.



Do...

- Be patient
- Make eye contact
- Take brief notes of key points
- Offer nonverbal and verbal encouragement (facial expressions, head nodding, ‘mm-hmms’)
- Read between the lines for the emotional message - wants, frustrations, etc.
- Allow for periods of silence
- Let the person speak as long as they want
- Ask clarifying questions at the end
- Summarize what’s been covered
- Assume you haven’t understood everything correctly

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ONE MINUTE IDEAS

What Value do You Place on Your Bad Habits?

Write down three of your bad habits. (It's okay, we know you have them and no one will see!)

Beside each one list the rewards from each one; next list the consequences or potential consequences associated with each one.

Were the rewards generally short term or long term? How about the consequences?

What does that tell you about what has motivated you up until now?

Is that worth a minute of thought?

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In sports, we see a new coach take over a team with essentially the same players as the year before, yet produce dramatically different results. We can look to the University of South Carolina and Lou Holtz to see a vivid example. In business, as in sports, leadership that can have dramatic impact on the performance of the team. I have personally seen examples where two groups of people from essentially the same population perform in dramatically different ways.



Although the answer is simple, the implementation is difficult. The key to unleashing the potential of people is to get the emotional commitment of the workforce to the goals and needs of the organization. This only happens when the personal needs of employees is balanced with the needs of the organization. It takes a lot of time and effort to make the change necessary to achieve a cultural change. It begins by developing an attitude within the organization that people matter and can make a difference.

Is your organization achieving all that it can? If not, are you blaming the people or are you looking at the leadership capability in the organization? Could another “coach” achieve different results?

The good news is that leadership can be developed – it is not inherited. Anyone can become a better leader.

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Don't...

- Half-listen, filter or selectively listen
- Make assumptions about what clients mean before they say something
- Jump to conclusions
- Be too eager to talk about your solution
- Agree too readily, without hearing the customer out
- Interrupt
- Finish the client's sentences
- Daydream
- Take so many notes that you never look up
- Click your pen, tap your fingers or otherwise distract the customer or yourself

Being *courteous* and *attentive* when you are communicating with people always allows them to share more detailed information and feel good about doing so.

Practicing these tips and following an action plan for twenty one to twenty eight days will make it a *habit* for you. Once you do this automatically your sales will increase and day-to-day communication with everyone will improve.

Regardless of how well you know someone, show them you really care, actively listen “**Really Listen**” to what they say each time you talk to them.

Source: Billy Williams, People Development Company, Silver City, NC